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Loudoun County School Board, Finance & Operations Committee Meeting, Tuesday, June 4, 2024

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- BoardDocs (School Board): <https://go.boarddocs.com/vsba/loudoun/Board.nsf/Public>

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[00:00:01] Hi, everyone. Thank you for being here. I'd like to call to order this meeting of the Finance and Operations Committee, this June 4th meeting of the Finance and Operations Committee, to order. My name is Arben Estreffi, and I'm the chair of this committee. I'm joined by Chair Mansfield, and Mrs. Griffiths is also a member of the committee, but she is absent today.

[00:00:21] Welcome, everyone. We'll start with the first item, which is public comment. Do we have any public comment for today? No public comment? Okay. So then we'll move on to the approval of the minutes.

[00:00:37] Do I have a motion to, well, first of all, have any questions about the previous minutes from May 21st? Has everyone had a chance to review them? If there's any questions, seeing no questions, do I have a motion to approve the minutes?

[00:00:54] I make a motion to approve the minutes. Thank you, and I would second that, and we'll take it to a vote. All those in favor, aye? Aye. Aye. That motion passes with Mrs. Griffiths absent for the vote. We'll move on to the consent agenda. Do I have a motion to approve the consent agenda? I move to approve the consent agenda. I second that and we'll take it to a vote. All those in favor? Aye. Aye. That motion passes

[00:01:33] with Mrs. Griffiths absent for the vote. Brings us to our information item. So we'll start with Item 5.1, Business and Financial Services, FY24 Supplemental Request for Self-Insurance Funds.

[00:01:51] Good afternoon. LCPS maintains four separate insurance funds to manage employee health benefits, workers compensation claims, and disability programs. The school division is self-insured, meaning that LCPS is fiscally responsible for program and administration and the cost of claims and benefits.

[00:02:08] The school board reviewed the FY24 third quarter financial review during the board meeting on April 23, 2024. During the presentation, staff identified two self-insurance funds that were expected to have total expenses in excess of budget, and that supplemental budget increases would be necessary.

[00:02:24] The specific funds were the Health Self-Insurance Fund and the Short-Term Disability Fund. The requested supplemental for the Health Self-Insurance Fund is \$12 million. Contributing drivers of expenses above budget include significant year-over-year increases for pharmacy claims, above-predicted increases for medical care, and an increase in contractual services including a large premium increase for our stop-loss coverage.

[00:02:48] The requested supplemental increase for the short-term disability fund is \$160,000. Expenses in the short-term disability fund are almost exclusively payroll for covered employees where the costs are sensitive to the pay rate of individual employees receiving short-term disability coverage.

[00:03:04] Revenues to offset the increased budget for the short-term disability fund will be transfers from the operating fund, which is the sole source of funding. The revenue to offset the health self-insurance fund will come from the fund balance. I am glad to address questions you have and unless directed otherwise this item will be brought forward to the Finance and Operations Committee as an action or consent item on June 18th and to the school board consent agenda on June 25th.

[00:03:27] Thank you. Thank you very much. Do we have any questions or discussion? No discussion from myself as well, pretty familiar with the offsetting process. Is there interest in putting this on consent for the next F&O meeting?

[00:03:44] Maybe do a thumbs up. we will then move this to consent for the next F&O meeting thank you we'll move on to the next information item 5.2 business and financial services r23261 fresh produce renewal good evening and thank you this evening I bring before you some renewals for our food for our school cafeteria programs the first one that I'm bringing to you is our fresh produce this is actually the first of

[00:04:24] four renewals for this contract with the same vendor for services the contract is estimated to be valued at 300,000 and actually as part of the school nutrition services budget thank you very much I'll just start off this is this was just this was the only proposal and I remember from previous discussions produce and food items I think are a challenge in general in terms of getting the volume of vendors to participate in the process - You are absolutely correct.

[00:05:00] Due to the size of Loudoun and the spread, the way we are spread out from border to border, it's just too large of an area. We don't get the vendor response because of the wide range and the number of times they deliver and the deliveries to each location as opposed to a centralized location.

[00:05:19] - Thank you. Any other questions or discussion? Seeing none, thank you very much. We'll move on to 5.3, business financial, oops, sorry. Oh yes, we can move this onto consent the next F&O meeting thumbs up so with that said we'll move on to 5.3 business financial services R23263 ice cream renewal a very important one for the division I was going to echo that myself this is very important to the children in our schools that they get their ice cream so this is the contract

[00:05:56] with Garber's ice cream this also is the first of four renewals for this contract with the funding being in the school nutrition program and an estimated value of \$475,000. Thank you. Any questions or discussion? So I have a child with a nut allergy and peanut allergies and so I was all over this and I will be happy to report that this particular vendor is there's nut free, sesame seed free, they are allergy friendly and and I thought that was really great because nothing's worse than having a kid coming back home and saying I couldn't have

[00:06:36] any ice cream. There was nothing for me there. So I just want to thank you for being aware of the allergies and providing options. Thank you. I'll make sure to share that with Ms. Mills. Thank you very much. Thank you very much. So thumbs up if we'd like to have this on consent for the next F&O meeting. So we'll move this to consent for the next finance and operations. Yes. So I went to visit the some health clinics today. I mean this I guess last

[00:07:11] Friday and to do some research on diabetes management something that was interesting to me was that they didn't have a list of carbohydrates for the ice cream that we had in the in the schools so if we could I know this isn't student services but if there was any way we could provide like a list of the carbohydrates and things because there's a list here so we should probably if it was be okay to give it to the school nurses, just so they're aware.

[00:07:46] - I will definitely take that back to Ms. Mills, 'cause we're working on it. As you know, we've got the wellness policy and various things with that, but I'll take that back to her in relation to the other nutritional information that she shares with the products and see what they can do regarding that. - Thank you.

[00:08:02] So this will go on consent for the next meeting, and we will move on to 5.4, Business Financial Services R23267 Groceries Renewal. Ms. Villio? This contract's value is actually about \$15 million. This is the primary source of our product for our school cafeterias, both the meals that are served as well as the a la carte items that are served in our cafeterias.

[00:08:26] This was brought before you. I think we brought this previously in January, I believe, at the six-month mark because we allow them time to adjust their prices as necessary based on inflationary rate. So this contract is being brought before you for a period of one year now.

[00:08:42] Now that we've worked this out with the new vendor, Cisco's new to us. This is the first year working with Cisco. They provide their deliveries on Saturday mornings to all of our schools into the kitchen area. So I'm bringing this before you this evening to award to Cisco from August 1, 2024 through July 31, 2025, the groceries contract.

[00:09:02] Thank you. Is there any questions or discussion? No real discussion for me. I just have a general curiosity around when we have such large food vendors and limited submissions on RFPs for these types of things, what do price increases look like in those next option years?

[00:09:26] Generally speaking, the groceries follow the consumer price index. Whatever the consumer price index is, that's what we adhere to. If they add a new product, we may see a price fluctuation, But for the most part, we rely on the current Consumer Price Index when addressing increases in cost.

[00:09:44] Thank you. So is there interest in putting this on consent for the next F&O meeting? Thumbs up. So we'll have this on consent for the next Finance and Operations Committee meeting. We'll move on to 5.05, Business and Financial Services, I-21331, Milk and Related Items Renewal.

[00:10:04] This, once again, is also being brought before you as a renewal for our milk contract. This contract is to provide those milk products for the school cafeterias and is being brought to you for award this evening.

[00:10:23] Thank you. Any discussion or questions? Yes, Madam Chair. Going back to that peanut allergy and everything else, I was wondering, and I know this is a dairy one, do we have other alternative milk options at times in other contracts?

[00:10:42] Because I know this is specifically for milk, but I'm just wondering. know that in like our grocery contract we have some gluten-free items and some various items as well sugar-free and so on I can get that information from Miss Mills to provide you further detail on that but we do ensure that we meet those needs of all those students that have those dietary limitations to ensure they can partake in school lunch thank you thank you any other questions or discussion can we move this to consent for the next F&O meeting thumbs up so

[00:11:21] So we'll move this to consent for the next Finance and Operations Committee meeting and move on to 5.06 Business and Financial Services IFB I24332 Cafeteria Paper Supplies. Once again this is for our school nutrition program.

[00:11:38] This is their paper supplies for the cafeteria. This includes things such as paper bags, trays, the cups and various things related. There's gloves on here as you can see with the attachment. is a new solicitation for Loudoun County Public Schools previously we had the paper supplies combined with the grocery supplies and found we weren't getting as good of pricing we then went to a cooperative agreement which allowed us to use another jurisdictions contract for pricing this year with the inception of the new chef over at the cafeteria program we have now put out a paper

[00:12:14] product solicitation for Loudoun County Public Schools based on our buying volume and that's what you're seeing before you this evening thank you very much and I see 10 vendors responded which is great any questions or discussion seeing no other discussion can we move this to the consent to consent for the next meeting thumbs up sounds good so we will move this to consent in for the next F&O

[00:12:50] committee meeting move on to five dots seven business and financial services RFP are two four two six six lease purchase financing of vehicles and equipment following adoption of the FY25 budget we put out a solicitation in order to secure the funding for our lease purchase program the lease purchase program is approved in the budget for a cost of 10 million 7.2 million of that is for technology purchases and 2.8 million is for vehicles such as buses the white fleet vehicles and so on before you this evening you will see the

[00:13:29] contract award to TD Bank for at 4.05% compared to last year's interest rate of two point nine three percent as we expected we expected the interest rate to rise there is in fact this also includes a resolution and a draft equipment lease agreement that will be provided at action you'll need to have this at

action at the next meeting those are the documents that chairman mansfield will sign and also chairman mansfield will participate in the closing of this lease purchase i believe it's in july that you'll be participating in the signing of those documents as well. And we have been, just so you know, we have been with TD Bank in the past.

[00:14:09] So this should be a pretty straightforward process because we can rely on the documents that we used previously in working out the final contract documents for this lease purchase. Thank you very much. Any questions or discussion? Madam Chair. So this is just a mechanism to purchase cars and technology. And what kind of technology are we talking? Like computers? What kind of things?

[00:14:34] Yes, computers, peripherals, any type of computer hardware and equipment can be purchased with these funds. Are there any other contract vehicles for the purchase of computer equipment? The actual purchase of the computer equipment, we use state of Virginia contracts as well as other cooperative agreements to purchase our computer equipment.

[00:14:57] So, yes, you are correct. This is just for the funding, and then we have a contract to actually purchase the devices. Any other questions or discussion? Seeing no other discussion, would we like to put this on consent for the next F&O committee meeting?

[00:15:17] Does it have to go to action first? It needs to go to action. That's right. Okay. Thank you. No consent. All right. We'll move on to 5.08, business and financial services, RFP R22283, property and casualty insurance program renewal.

[00:15:34] First of all, I promise this is my last one. This is for our property and casualty insurance. this is insurance as you can see i provided you the line of business that this falls under the deductibles the rate we paid last year and the rate we paid this year or will be paying this year it's an increase of approximately 7.5 percent but we are adding two new schools we're adding additional vehicles we did see an uptick in educators liability due to some of our litigation claims so there's been an uptick in that area and just an overall increase in some of our

[00:16:11] equipment that we have so this is presented to you this evening for the renewal with VACORP this is the third renewal option for this contract with the current contract expiring on June 30th 2024 questions or discussion okay so there's a my math ain't great but it's \$35,000 increase in premiums for educators legal liability yes ma'am and part of that is not due just to educators We have some special ed claims that fall under educators' legal liability as well

[00:16:49] that we're starting to funnel through the property and casualty insurance to have them help offset the costs of those legal claims. So I'd like to know the increase in our legal claims that has affected this and also a little bit of a history of the premiums.

[00:17:17] if I could have another three more years below of the history, so I have like a five-year to look at, please. Across the board, the increases, yes. Well, across, yes, like how it is here, please. Yes, I have those, yep. And then because I think that is a concern of mine is special education, and if there's more, I think that we need to keep a tab on what's increasing and why it's increasing and what we can do about it.

[00:17:53] I will say that last year was the first year we started working with the insurance company to help with our cost for our legal claims. Previously, we were not using the insurance to help us with that, but I'll see what data I can't get together for you, and then I'll also work with special ed in regards to that matter.

[00:18:12] I think we also can use some of those legal claims. We can use some federal funds as well sometimes or grants or something. Sometimes that happens, depending if you're looking at reimbursement for private school. So if we could look at that as well, I would like to see the different funds that we are using for special education litigation, if that makes sense.

[00:18:38] There's different pots of money that you can send, that we take from, right? And this is another pot of money that we're trying to use. Is that correct? This is a pot of money we're using. Most of their legal claims do come from their operating fund. Yes. And there's a line on there, but that has been decreased by utilizing the insurance company to help offset some of those costs.

[00:18:59] I can get you some additional information. That would be great, because, of course, we don't want to decrease that operation fund. We need more funding for them. Okay, thank you. Thank you. Yeah, from my side, just looking at, and this is for the approval of the insurance or the renewal of the insurance itself, but the underlying data that Chair Mansfield is suggesting I think is very helpful, even from my perspective, And just seeing the cyber bundle and the crime bundle not moving is great.

[00:19:30] Just shows that, you know, in terms of claims or things that, you know. The cyber bundle, I just want to share, we're maxed out on that. That's the highest limit they provide. Yep. And I think the majority of it coming from educators' legal liability is an interesting data point.

[00:19:48] So I'd be curious as to the data behind that as well. Property bundle makes sense to me. I think that there would be claims in that category as well. So I don't have any other comments or questions. Any other questions, Chair Mansfield?

[00:20:06] - And so could you help me understand how many other people, so this is, okay I'm trying to read fast. This is the third renewal option. Okay, so we have, and it expires June 30th, which is soon, yeah.

[00:20:29] - Historically I just wanna share, And when we've put this solicitation out, VACorp's the only one that responds. That was my next question. It's the only one that responds. We've been with them for a number of years. We would really have to take a look at the model we're using and other things to determine if there's other options out there.

[00:20:45] But VACorp is such a large pool, they're able to financially support our needs with their property and casualty insurance. Thank you for that. And are we okay to put this on consent for the next F&O meeting?

[00:21:03] Thumbs up? Sure. We can push it to action with the understanding that I think there is a timeline for this. So I think, but we have the time to do it, so. Go through the full board before January 30th?

[00:21:29] It actually needs to get, the way we've scheduled it is two weeks from now, you'd bring it back as consent or action. Then it would go to the following board meeting for approval. And it would need to be approved at that following board meeting to be in place by July 1.

[00:21:46] That's going to be a full board meeting, but okay, yeah, all right. So we want to keep it for action the next meeting. all right so we'll move on to 5.9 support services school bus driver recruitment thank you mr streffi um mr davies and i are here tonight to provide some information to you on driver recruitment and we appreciate your request to have this information to give us a chance to showcase our fabulous relationship we have with hrtd who is here with us tonight as well

[00:22:25] but also with the school board who over time the last several years has made a point to recognize the importance of drivers and our attendance and the whole transportation department and be able to increase our benefits and and pay to have us be competitive and and to be able to say something tonight we've never been able to do i moved from the construction department into this position in 2013 and at that time the driver shortage was floating around 100 on a regular basis and you'll see tonight that and you we've been updating the board that we are in the positive side now for that for the first time ever and that's because of the the great efforts that we've had with our team

[00:23:02] to recruit drivers and keep drivers, and we still have challenges, and we'll share those with you tonight as well, but we are very pleased to be able to share with you the success of that program up to date, and I'll turn it to Mr. Davies to introduce our other compadres here tonight with us and take you through the slides. Good evening. My name is Scott Davies, Director of Transportation.

[00:23:25] I'd like to introduce Nicole Davis and Gary Gerhart from HRTD, who we work extensively with, As well as members of my team, Kathleen Guarini, Sue Carlson, Jody Kenney, and Akoji Abba, who work together as a great team to help us meet our needs for driver recruitment.

[00:23:44] So without further ado, we'll go ahead and get going. First, we wanted to illustrate what is, these are the requirements and the training requirements that are above and beyond just to become an LCPS employee. So not only do we have, obviously, a good driving record, but they must be a minimum of 20 years of age.

[00:24:03] Lift, carry, and pull, 50 pounds. Minimum of four years of driving experience. The ability to maintain a CDL with the school bus and passenger endorsement, as well as no airbrake restrictions. Two moral character forms, English proficiency, which sometimes is a challenge for some of our applicants.

[00:24:23] PHMSA drug testing and a BDOE annual physical exam. On the training side, they have to do at least 70 hours of classroom training. So there's about two weeks of classroom training. That includes CPR, first aid, seizure, blood board pathogen, EPI, I'm sorry, EpiPen, and glucagon administration.

[00:24:44] There's also MANT and VCU autism training. Also understanding special needs equipment. Because all of our drivers, well, only about 150 of our drivers will actually drive special needs routes. All of our drivers are trained to do that. Obviously, pre-trip inspections for the bus each morning, driving fundamentals, safely loading and unloading students, defensive driving, hazmat situations, accidents and emergencies.

[00:25:13] And then there's a minimum of 25 hours of driving with instructor support. That's behind-the-wheel training. And then another 10 hours, once they pass their CDL license, there's 10 hours of driving with students under supervision. which we call loaded runs.

[00:25:31] This gives you those requirements laid out in a timeline fashion. So from the time we get an online application to the time that we get them into a class is roughly about six weeks.

[00:25:49] And if you have any questions specifically on any segment of the timeline here, we can certainly answer those. Then there's about two weeks of classroom training and then about another three weeks of practical training behind the wheel. And then usually that takes about one week of loaded runs.

[00:26:06] And you can see there the thresholds for each of those segments are we run one class each month. So if somebody gets cleared for training and the class has already started, they sometimes have to

wait another few weeks for the next monthly class to start.

[00:26:25] And our goal is to have about 20 people per class. We don't always reach that, but that is our goal. We have, and then once they complete the classroom portion, there's a written DMV exam that they have to get to get their learner's permit.

[00:26:41] And so that's another threshold that they have to pass to move to the next segment. And then once, then they have the DMV practical exam that they have to pass. And so from start to finish, from the time someone shows up on our radar to the time that they're sitting behind the white wheel of a bus carrying students without any supervision is roughly about three months.

[00:27:05] This gives you a quick overview of our pay rate and how we stack against our surrounding public school districts as well as local transit and private sector as well. And you can see we pay a very competitive rate and we have the best bonus, obviously, and our minimum contract rate is six hours.

[00:27:29] And so sometimes that's a little bit of a difference between us and, say, a private bus company or the transit. They pay lower rates, but they pay more hours. And that's because of our split shift. This is our progress to date.

[00:27:45] So you can see in September of 21, we had a total of 532 filled driver FTEs and a shortage of 67. Today, as Mr. Lewis mentioned, we have 559, so we've net gained 27 drivers over that two and a half years, and we have a surplus of five drivers today.

[00:28:08] So really proud of that fact, and that's because of the efforts of these folks here and our staff back in the office. So made a lot of progress, and so very proud of that. Looking ahead, we have some upcoming requirements that are not currently we're doing this year but are going to be part of next year health and medical sciences that's a new program that's countywide that's going to require about nine drivers in addition to what we're doing today we're expanding some international baccalaureate hub stops that will require two additional drivers we've seen some enrollment growth with thomas jefferson high school that is going to require

[00:28:46] another driver and then the most recent bell schedule change is moving those 10 elementaries from 730 to 745. That's going to require seven additional drivers. And then right now we have 10 drivers that have already put in their paperwork for retirement. And that's standard.

[00:29:05] We see retirements usually in the June timeframe. And then some will also wait until August to put in their paperwork as well. So right now we're showing a recruiting requirement for the start the next school year of 29 drivers this gives you some history of of our hiring and contracted contracted and resignation trends over the last five years since 2019 so the blue line shows you how many we've hired I mean on boarded which is at the beginning of that that timeline I mentioned and

[00:29:41] contracted is the orange line so the Delta there between the blue line and the orange line is our fallout rate of drivers that show up but don't ultimately complete the training. And then the gray line shows our resignation. So you can see in 2022 and this year the gray line was below the orange. So we were able to hire more than we lost through resignations and retirements. So our goal is to always keep that orange line above the gray, but sometimes You can see there in 2020 and in the year prior, we lost quite a few, more than we've gained.

[00:30:18] So we've been able to reverse that trend, and we want to keep that going. This gives you a little bit of background on just demographics regarding our drivers and regarding there's been a little bit of a transition.

[00:30:38] Historically, it was more female applicants. Lately, we've seen more male applicants, and then just some ethnicity, demographic trends have been pretty consistent throughout the years regarding the ethnicity of our applicants.

[00:31:00] Day in the life of the driver. So most of our, and this is really key, most of our drivers serve LCPS with a split shift, meaning they'll work three hours in the morning and three hours in the afternoon. And then they'll sometimes they'll pick up some midday runs.

[00:31:16] We used to have a half day kindergarten. We also have some half day special needs programs. And we went to full day kindergarten. So those midday runs went away. And then we're also going to full day with some of our special needs programs on preschool next year.

[00:31:34] So that's that will move get that will reduce the number of midday runs that make up those larger hour contracts. A typical route driver's day will start between 5.30 and 6.45 a.m., ending around 4.45 to 6.00 p.m. with a four- to five-hour midday break.

[00:31:56] So a lot of our drivers will have midday jobs if they don't have a midday assignment to cover. Or they'll pick up a field trip. If the field trips can start after their high school run is done, they can do field trips that are more locally based here. contracted substitute drivers so we have our average absentee rate which is a large driver of our of our driver shortage or right now driver surplus we have 48 full-time employees that are dedicated substitutes meaning they are given an eight-hour contract and they are required to

[00:32:32] report in at 5 30 a.m every morning and they must be willing to drive anywhere in the county to cover any routes our field trip drivers are also given an eight-hour contract but they are must be available pretty much 24-7 to cover overnights weekends late night athletic activities band competitions things like that so and then many of our drivers as I mentioned have mid-day jobs and a lot of them live outside of the county due to the cost of living so they face long commutes

[00:33:07] And so one of the things that we've been working on is obviously we have a facility out west with a break room where they can spend some of their midday time if they don't have a job or another assignment. We also have our central garage where we have facilities for them to stage.

[00:33:26] We're working with the parks and rec to open up the county's recreation facilities in Dulles South and Claude Moore and Sterling to give our drivers in those areas a place to go as well.

[00:33:42] So that I think will help improve some of the working environment for our staff. You can see, as Mr. Lewis mentioned, we've seen a large increase in our salary, and that's made a big impact on our recruiting numbers, and that's why we've seen what we've seen in terms of the hiring trend.

[00:34:07] Also, our minimum contracts have evolved from four hours to six hours, and that's really a result of the growth in the county. We have a lot more schools than we had, say, 20 years ago, And so we've been able to expand the number of hours that drivers work because of that.

[00:34:23] There's more to do. There's more schools and more students to transport. Historically, drivers were served in a secondary income capacity. They took the driving job as a means to bring benefits to their

families and to bring in a little extra money.

[00:34:43] We've seen a transition of that to where it's more of a people are doing the job as their primary career, as their primary means of income. And also, as Mr. Lewis mentioned, we've been able to increase benefits over time.

[00:35:03] I think a few years ago there was more, there was a phased, a tiered benefits package. So depending on the number of hours you worked, that dictated how much benefits you received.

[00:35:22] All of our drivers now are treated as full-time employees, regardless of the hours that they work, as long as they are contracted and filled in a full-time position. And so they receive full benefits because of that, which makes us very attractive. We've also seen a lot of growth in technology utilization with the application of radios, the addition of radios, the addition of cameras on the bus.

[00:35:47] Tablets, we now have turn-by-turn directions, so we don't have paper route sheets anymore. So the directions and the routes are transmitted directly to the tablet, which is great if you're substitute driving. You don't have to chase paper. You can pull it up right up on your tablet and go drive the route and pick up the students.

[00:36:05] It also helps reduce some of our tardy or late buses. And then, obviously, a transition to electronic communications and e-mails. We do a lot of effort is focused on recruiting, and we do bi-monthly recruitment events, including one-stop shops, which is something what we started a few years ago, and that's focused on trying to reduce that long window between when someone shows up on our radar with an application to when they can start.

[00:36:40] We are trying to get as much of those requirements done in one shot, and so all their drug testing, Their medical, physical requirements, badging, fingerprinting, background check, all of that stuff can be done in one sitting through one of these one-stop shops. In fact, we have, well it's not a one-stop shop tonight, but we do have a recruitment event that's going on today, this evening, so that will help fill our July class.

[00:37:06] Our monthly training classes, as I mentioned, every month we have a training class with a goal of having at least 20 drivers in each class. We have our \$2,500 sign-on bonus, and that's paid out over a three, six, and nine month period to keep the drivers on board.

[00:37:22] And then we also have a \$1,000 employee referral bonus so that if an existing LCPS employee refers a new driver and that driver completes training and accepts a contract, the employee will receive \$1,000.

[00:37:38] And that's any LCPS employee, not just our existing transportation employees. But I will say our drivers are our biggest and best recruiting force. We also hand a referral.

[00:37:55] We have each driver has business cards that they can hand out that have QR codes for recruitment as well as concern registry information. We send out flyers to our existing LCPS staff, our teaching staff, coaching staff, reminding them that this is an opportunity as a secondary assignment.

[00:38:15] We conduct, as I mentioned, We have we're doing interviews tonight and we are looking at transportation opportunities at community Northern Virginia Community College and career fairs. So we look everywhere far and wide to try and reach as many potential applicants as we can to make sure that they are aware of this opportunity and try to attract them to it because it's a great opportunity.

[00:38:43] It's a great way to have an impact on a student's life. If you're not in the teaching career path, this is a great way to have that impact. Some of our challenges, as I mentioned, the split shift. You essentially have to be available for a 12-hour period.

[00:39:00] For six hours of pay, you're paying three in the morning, three in the afternoon with that midday break. Some of the extended commutes due to the high cost of living in Loudoun as the community has grown over the years. Equalized pay.

[00:39:16] As you know, we're paid, a 10-month employee, they receive their pay spread out over 12 months. So that can sometimes be, in terms of the weekly paycheck, it reduces the size of the weekly paycheck.

[00:39:34] So if you're trying to make ends meet, that can be a challenge for them. 50% of the driving force, as I mentioned, live outside Loudoun County. Our special needs drivers, that's the majority of our midday programs are special needs programs. So those drivers, and they're driving longer distances throughout the county, so they can be driving for up to 12 hours a day with very minimal breaks because they're going from program to program all over the county.

[00:40:04] Our field trip drivers can be gone on weekends and overnights supporting all of our athletic and extracurricular programs. Long-serving drivers used to experience consistent routes, however, with boundary changes and just the general growth and the the need to you know do more with the existing resources.

[00:40:25] We have to make route adjustments and that can impact you know the the route that they have enjoyed for for years. Obviously respect from students staff and parents. We have I will say that the vast majority of our of our community loves our drivers and treats them very very well.

[00:40:43] And so it's and that's great. The adverse conditions during extreme weather. So if it's cold and rainy or snowy outside, as long as we're still open, they're required to be on their bus and they're required to commute.

[00:41:01] If they have a moving violation in their private vehicle, that can impact them. So if they have an accident or a speeding ticket, that can have a direct impact on their employment, especially if they have multiple ones. And the desire for division-wide long-term employee recognition, which we are working on with HRTD and building out that program more robustly to recognize all of our employees.

[00:41:29] And then bus vandalism, that happens, but we deal with it. And that's all I have, sir. Happy to take your questions. Thank you very much for this update and providing all of that context to the committee. Really appreciate the work that went into that.

[00:41:46] And all the efforts of the entire team. so thank you. Any questions or discussion? I do, of course. So all this training, are they paid for that training? Yes, yes, and thank you for asking because that's an excellent question and I did not mention it, but yes, the training is paid. And are we helping at all with English proficiency at all?

[00:42:12] Not directly. We do refer them to local programs that will help them with their English proficiency, but we don't have a direct means of support for that, and that's something that we can look at as well. Perhaps looking at the EL instruction here and see if there's some thoughts there.

[00:42:32] I don't know. So the minimum hours are six, three and three. When does that start? Does that start when they get there after they, I mean, does it start? Every driver's day is different depending on the schools they're served and the routes they drive.

[00:42:53] Generally, so when the route gets published and given to them, there'll be a start time that they have to depart their parking location. And we add 20 minutes prior to that time for their pre-trip inspection. So their day starts 20 minutes before they start their route.

[00:43:11] Okay, and they get paid for that 20 minutes? They do, yes, ma'am. First thing they should do is clock in and out on their tablet on the bus. Sorry, I have to go like through.

[00:43:30] So I see that on 2023 to 2024, there was a lot, there were a lot of, it seemed like there was a trend of more resignations. Do we know why? Was there any survey done? Do we have any understanding of why they might want to leave?

[00:43:49] So we interview every person that resigns because we don't want them to. And a lot of them that resign or retire, a lot of them are retiring. because that's the one great thing. I mean, LCBS is a great place to work, and a lot of our drivers, in fact, I spent most of my day handing out service pins for people that have been here for, you know, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30 years.

[00:44:13] I have one that's been here for over 40. So people that come and stay, this is a great place to work, and most of them stay with us for a very long time. But, you know, we have an aging workforce, and so that's part of the driving factor.

[00:44:29] change in lifestyle or change in life circumstances if their other their spouse has taken another job somewhere we've seen people move out of the community and that has driven some of the resignations that we've had I don't know if our HR folks have any Gary Nicole so Scott is correct it's a variety of reasons along with the interviews that he does we also have data that we capture for all separations that the employee inputs when they

[00:45:06] resign or leave LCPS I don't have the data readily available but we could pull the information to see if there's a trend but a lot of the times that we've seen recently our retirements so this might be a silly question too now that I got you so we have okay so they get paid do we pay their benefits at all or is it still taken out of their paycheck they have the same that we do and so they

[00:45:39] still have to and so I'm wondering if we're seeing more of a trend towards this being a full-time job, and benefits packages can take a lot out of your pay. I'm wondering

[00:46:18] what we can do about that, if anything. Has anybody, I mean, we're having a compensation study coming up, right? And so that might be something to, I mean, if you're getting paid so much an hour, and you're getting \$10 taken out of that or something, I mean, it can be significant and I would think maybe something we could do to offset that you know so we can definitely look into that and as you mentioned with the classification and compensation study benefits will be part of that and we're working closely with Jeanette and her team on that as well for not just this these positions but all of the positions within the division and in that

[00:46:58] same vein I think that them that you guys trying to work with Dulles South and Claude Moore is a fantastic idea because I can't think of anything that I would I mean that three four hour period of time and to be available 12 hours and then have that three to four period of time when you don't like live in the

county and you can't go home quickly I mean that's really hard it is yes ma'am and that's and that's one of the that's one of the things that we're doing uh and we're also we also work with the schools as well to find room for them if there if there is room at the school

[00:47:34] for them to to stage or or to find a place to go we've also worked extensively to make sure that that they have good restroom access when they show up in the morning and as they go to the schools, 'cause that was a concern of the drivers as well.

[00:47:59] - So when the field trip drivers are gone on the weekends and overnight, I'm assuming we're paying for their lodging and everything else? - Yes, ma'am. And they also receive per diem. They receive a per diem amount. - I'm sorry if I'm asking ridiculous questions.

[00:48:14] I just, this is a lot and it's interesting to me and I want to help.

[00:48:28] - Thank you, Chair Mansfield. So just, if you can go back to the timeline slide, if you don't mind, just a few comments from me. So the hiring, the onboarding process, so six weeks is on average.

[00:48:44] And I really appreciate all the things you're doing to try to knock as many of those items out in one shot. And I'm just wondering if there's a, if they could actually, they express interest and they can come onsite to complete some of those things rather than wait for one of the opportunities that might exist through a fair or through one of the interviewing nights.

[00:49:04] Has that been discussed? And then also, what is the process of once they actually apply, interview, and they get an offer? Or they get an offer and then they have to submit all of those things.

[00:49:22] How long is that process? Is that five weeks or is it two weeks? Well, I'll let my HRTD partners here talk a little bit more in depth because they handle that process. But it is largely individual-driven. uh so the applicant it's largely applicant driven um but i'll let gary if he wants to talk some more good evening we actually last year our leadership within hrted hired a part-time hourly employee that works within our department that sits with applicants that are in need of support with a lot of the online checklists that need to be done um she's offered at every offer that we do

[00:49:59] over the phone so when we talk to a bus driver candidate we ask what their comfort level is with the checklist and we offer that up myself and my coordinator we work on site at transportation at least once a week we've offered to sit with those applicants as well maybe we'll continue to do that but as Mr. Davies mentioned this is all very candidate driven they are responsible for going into our online checklist to complete the checklist they have to do certain tasks before they're even invited in for their fingerprints all the while they have to schedule a physical they have to go get their TB screening taken care of so there's a lot of state and federal

[00:50:35] requirements that are that are expected of them before they can even step foot on day one in the in the training class so we we offer support the one-stop shop was a wonderful opportunity for us to do exactly what Scott had mentioned which is get them into a room with our physicians to do the TB and the physical to get in front of our PES staff to do their fingerprints their badge photos everything you all experienced a couple months ago as you onboarded to our organization.

[00:51:02] So we will continue to streamline that, but to try to answer your question, I don't have the data right now from when they apply to the interview to an offer, but we can find that and send that to you at a

later date if need be. Thank you. And then what percentage, I know you shared some of this data in the visual, but what percentage dropped from the training or in the first six months, let's say?

[00:51:23] Do you have that readily available, Scott? Oh, from the time that they start training to the time that they complete training? Oh, yeah. Well, I want to say, looking at the chart here, where is it?

[00:51:45] It varies, but on average, it's, I don't know, I'm looking at my training supervisor. 20 to 30 percent. Thank you. Okay. Got it. And then I was just thinking, because we mentioned Claude Moore and the others, And I, as, and to, to just reflect on some of the chair Mansfield's comments is as that complexity of the job or the stress of the job and the commute increases, um, I was just thinking of other ways that we could supplement that employment if we couldn't increase it

[00:52:19] on our side is, is there, are there any part time opportunities where we could arrange some, um, preferential, preferential treatment with Loudoun County part time opportunities that, that might match. I know that's a Pandora's box, but it's just an idea where, you know, we don't want to lose somebody to Loudoun County, but maybe there's some supplemental income.

[00:52:44] So we've looked at secondary assignments. In fact, historically, a lot of our drivers that have been with us for years had secondary assignments. They would come in and work in the cafeteria as cafeteria monitors or our servers. There's been challenges with that because of the compensation, because the rates are different for those two different positions.

[00:53:07] And when you run into overtime, where does the overtime come from and things of that nature. So those have been somewhat obstacles. I mean, it's not impossible, though. So we can certainly look at that a lot more intently than we have.

[00:53:24] Yeah, so, again, my last Friday with Mr. Dolson was eye-opening in many ways when I went to go to the health clinics. And one of the things at the health clinic was they would really like AIDS for, like, two or three hours, four hours.

[00:53:41] And so what I'm thinking and kind of, like, what Vice Chair Streffi is thinking is if there was a way that we could, like, okay, so you have three and then you have another four hours, right? and in in a school as a staff aid because here they have all first aid glucagon all the rest of that right and teacher assistant or something for that four hours and then and so then they would be done at that particular at one or two o'clock and then you would have your second I mean your second your your a and your b I don't know I'm just thinking outside the box and I'm sure this

[00:54:19] is other things that you've thought about but something more like a staff aid might be or a Health care aid might be different. No, I love the idea, and we're definitely going to take it back and explore it because there's no lack of work.

[00:54:38] There is opportunity here within LCPS, especially during that midday time period. I think it's just a matter of working through the details to find how do we make this work holistically. I just don't want them, but I want it to stop at that one or two o'clock time.

[00:54:53] I want them to have to, like, have another three or four hours afterwards. But I want to, you know, like, A and B kind of a thing. Just a thought. And just something anecdotally on the topic of morale and, like, the complexity and the stress of the job. I had the opportunity to interact with a bunch of bus drivers through previous, like, staff appreciation weeks and stuff.

[00:55:14] And during some of the idle time, waiting for students and just chatting. And you could definitely see, and it's not representative, so I don't want to assume anything. But just anecdotally, that there were bus drivers that were really stressed and really just tired and a bit of burnout that you could see.

[00:55:32] And so as I was going between schools, I would see the same bus drivers because of the routes. I would see them at the different schools. Oh, you're here again. What are you doing here? And just got an opportunity to talk to some of them. And I was just wondering maybe if as some of the ancillary kind of morale boosters is maybe figuring out a way to tie them more to the school community or interaction with the school communities that they serve beyond just the students on the bus.

[00:56:01] If there's an opportunity to really have them feel more included into the school community in some way. I know we by default look for those but just wanted to throw that out there. I appreciate that. And a lot of our schools, not all of them, but a lot of them do a great job of including our drivers and our attendants and their staff in their events.

[00:56:23] And, you know, when we have Bus Driver Appreciation Day, they'll have a smorgasbord out on the bus loop and serve them breakfast and all those kinds of things to recognize them as part of the school community. And it's really appreciated. I would like to get more of our schools to do those kinds of things.

[00:56:40] We do a lot. I think, and we work really closely with HRTD to do staff recognition, Bus Driver of the Year, and we're looking at doing more of that. Today we had an event in Sterling for our drivers that work in the East, a training event, but we provided food and things like that for them.

[00:57:00] So we try to do as much as we can, and we're always looking for opportunities to recognize our drivers and continue those morale building opportunities. - Thank you. topics and I'll just stop with this. One of the topics that we think about is kind of student behavior and accountability and discipline and in different varying levels and when it comes to the different ways that we can look at that one of the things just to simplify that conversation is to look at it from a tier one perspective like how do you deal with some of the simple

[00:57:38] behavioral issues that might happen on a bus or in a classroom and so what tools can we give maybe bus drivers or other educators to you know figure out how to deal with those types of things that might reduce stress or have them be more successful on a day-to-day basis building those relationships and if we can somehow offer more training or more just bring them out and just give them more tools to deal with those types of things in a way that might reduce overall stress in that role. Yes and as you alluded to that a lot of the it depends on the route and depends

[00:58:14] on the students and as to the stress level of the drivers and and we do a lot of training like on student management but there's always more we can do and more support and so we'll look at that as well. Thank you any other comments or questions. So when you're looking at Claude Moore and Dulles South are you're thinking more of they could go swim they could do something like that okay I just wanted to be sure they're not just sitting there hanging out doing you know If they so choose, they can do that too.

[00:58:45] - Yes, yes. - But yeah, okay. I love that you're thinking about options. Anything we can do. Thank you. - Thank you. - Thank you very much. - Thank you all. - Thank you, appreciate this presentation.

[00:59:05] That concludes our information items. Is there any new business? Seeing no new business, I will now adjourn. So this meeting of the Finance and Operations Committee on June 4th is now adjourned. Thank you very much.



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