



Worcester Regional Transit Authority

Moving Our Region Forward

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**WRTA ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
AUGUST 17, 2017
MINUTES**

WRTA ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

Chairperson Lehtola called the meeting to order at 8:32 a.m.

ATTENDANCE

Advisory Board Members present: Doug Belanger – Leicester, Mark Binnall - Auburn, Rudy Heller – Brookfield, John Ostrosky - Shrewsbury, Robert Spain - Millbury, Jacob Sanders – Worcester, Dennis Lipka – Holden, William Lehtola – Spencer.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

Chairperson Lehtola asked for a motion to accept the minutes for June 15, 2017. On motion by Robert Spain, seconded by Doug Belanger with one abstention by John Ostrosky, all other members voted in favor, the Advisory Board accepted the minutes of June 15, 2017.

BUSINESS FROM THE BOARD

Chairperson Lehtola announced that Mr. Dennis Lipka would no longer be serving on the WRTA Advisory Board as the Town of Holden Representative. Chairperson Lehtola commended Mr. Lipka for his 16 years of service and acknowledged his leadership as the Board’s Clerk and Chairperson of the Personnel Committee. Chairperson Lehtola on behalf of the board presented Mr. Lipka with a plaque of service. Mr. Lipka thanked the Advisory Board Members and the Administration for the honor of working with them.

Mark Binnall reported that the Blackstone Valley bus shelter was in need of repair. Mark Binnall asked if reports were completed for July’s ridership. Mr. Church stated the ridership numbers would be forthcoming. Mark Binnall inquired into advertising revenue from bus wrapping. Mr. Church informed the board that presently there are no new bus wraps.

Mr. Ostrosky asked if a back-up plan was in place should the additional service to the new development in Shrewsbury become a timing issue. Mr. Parker stated that the route would not see any changes. Mr. Parker explained that the route has short turns built in which allow for any needed time.

Communities Served:

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----------|------------|-----------------|-----------|---------------|------------------|------------|-------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Auburn | Brimfield | Douglas | Grafton | Millbury | North Brookfield | Paxton | Southbridge | Ware | West Boylston |
| Barre | Brookfield | Dudley | Holden | New Braintree | Princeton | Spencer | Warren | West Brookfield | |
| Berlin | Charlton | East Brookfield | Holland | Northborough | Oakham | Rutland | Sturbridge | Webster | Worcester |
| Boylston | Clinton | | Leicester | Northbridge | Oxford | Shrewsbury | Sutton | Westborough | |

ACTON ITEM: WRTA Drug and Alcohol Policy.

Mr. Church informed the board that the WRTA has completed the necessary revisions made by the Department of Transportation regarding the company's Drug and Alcohol Policy. Mr. Church introduced Ms. Clougherty from CMTM who reviewed the minor wording changes. Ms. Clougherty also explained the revised Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) level was increased from .02 to .04. Ms. Clougherty made reference to the fact that .08 is the standard for general vehicle driving. Mr. Belanger asked about the alcohol level variance in the report. Ms. Clougherty identified that the Federal Government guidelines show anything between .02 but under .04 requires an eight (8) hour off the road before returning to work. There was no further discussion by the board members in regards to the issue.

Motion: I move that: The Advisory Board approve the amended WRTA Drug and Alcohol Policy as presented by the Administration.

Chairperson Lehtola called for any discussion and Dennis Lipka requested to amend the motion to include "effective at approval on August 17, 2017".

On motion by Dennis Lipka, seconded by Robert Spain, and carried unanimously, the Advisory Board approved the amended WRTA Drug and Alcohol Policy as present by the Administration to be effective at approval on August 17, 2017.

BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC

The Chairperson asked if there was any business from the public and no one responded.

ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

NEW STAFF

a. Introduction of new Manager of Marketing and Communications

Mr. Church introduced Meaghan Lyver as the new Manager of Marketing and Communications.

Mr. Church stated he is working with CMRPC on a new outreach program regarding public communications. Mr. Church commented on making changes to the company's website with the assistance of Ms. Lyver. Mr. Lipka suggested making changes with public input. Mr. Church stated the City of Worcester was using a similar process to achieve that goal and he would be looking into their progress.

MEDIA/PRESS

b. Recent media/press about WRTA

Mr. Church opened the discussion on a positive note of exchange about the Worcester City Council Sub-Committee meeting regarding the WRTA. Mr. Church stated he answered questions from the committee. The purpose of the meeting was to educate as well as communicate the position of the WRTA.

Board members discussed how the public and media impressions of running a transit system can vary from the administration of running a transit system. Board members remarked on the need for specific types of buses and the limits of the all-electric buses regarding fixed route services. Board members discussed in length how often unmet expectations by a specific group of people or perspectives can lead to a reactionary approach which can undermine long term strategic planning. Mr. Belanger praised the Administration's efforts in regards to public response and outreach. Mr. Sanders commented on the need for a defined directive for the WRTA in regards to long term planning. Mr. Sanders spoke about how establishing an underlining factor can play an important role in determining a long term plan. Mr. Sanders addressed two factors; service to the existing transit population and/or service to people who do not want to own a car.

Mr. Sanders commented that the meeting was productive and explained how the City Councilors were responding to their constituents. Board members agreed that the WRTA Advisory Board strives to provide a viable service for all its ridership. Mr. Lipka stated that the WRTA services about twelve thousand (12,000) riders per day as a Regional Transit Authority. Mr. Lipka stated that if the WRTA was servicing only the City of Worcester, it would be the City of Worcester that funds the city bus services. Mr. Lipka recommended that the political process should be advocating for a five to ten year level funding plan. Board members agreed that such a commitment would allow for more consistent service and greater transit options.

CAPITAL

c. Update On New Gillig Bus

Mr. Church informed the board that the WRTA would be replacing two of the twenty-nine (29) foot buses with two thirty-five (35) foot Gillig diesel engine buses. Mr. Church gave the arrival date as Spring 2019. Mr. Church informed the board members that 2021 is the planned year to begin the next major bus purchases.

Board members discussed the importance of long range planning as it takes twenty-one (21) months for buses to be delivered. Bill Lehtola commented on the need for buses larger than the twenty-nine (29) feet due to the following factors: shorter overall life span, more maintenance concerns, and limited mobility access within the bus system. Mr. Lehtola also commented on the shorter body. He explained it adds to less stability and a bumpy ride for passengers.

FINANCE

d. Update Commonwealth Budget for FY 2018

The Commonwealth budget for the RTA's is (today) set at \$80 million. It is expected that the legislative delegation will override this amount thereby setting the amount at \$80.4 million. Mr. Coyne explained that if the override occurs, the WRTA will be two hundred and thirty thousand dollars (\$230,000) below the estimated approved budget for FY '18. Mr. Coyne stated there is no plan to cut service at this time given this specific estimated funding cut. If the override does not materialize, then the overage will increase to two hundred and sixty thousand dollars (\$260,000.00).

Board members generally discussed their concern for the downward trend in funding from both the Federal and State governments. Board members discussed how the twelve percent (12%) generated from the fare boxes presented limited options. Board members discussed the importance of legislative outreach for funding needs. Mr. Church stated he is very focused on this issue. Board members acknowledged the benefits of having a strategic plan for the WRTA and commended the Administration for their continuous efforts in this area. Mr. Belanger commented on the need to educate the legislature by providing tools; like a service to funding ratio overview. Board members discussed the limits to their absorption margins as State and Federal monies continue to remain underfunded.

e. Additional FY'17 Capital Funds update

In June, additional state capital funds became available. The WRTA put in a request for money and received one hundred and fifty thousand dollars (\$150,000). The money was used to purchase capital expenses that were originally placed in the FY'18 budget. Mr. Coyne stated that ninety-eight percent (98%) of the funding was used for transportation services. Some of the items were: vehicle tires, parts, shop related items (for the new building), and computer upgrades. Mr. Church thanked Mr. Parker and his team for accommodating the June 30, 2017 deadline in regards to the additional capital funds.

f. 5339 Bus and Bus Facilities Grant

Mr. Church explained that this year's grant requirements did not meet the size and facility needs for the WRTA's successful participation. Mr. Church informed the board members that the grant's structure appears to favor larger authorities with more facility based needs or vehicle replacements. Mr. Church informed the Board that he is working on a capital spending plan for next year. Once completed, this plan would assist in determining needs and provide for a stronger grant application(s).

SAFETY/SECURITY

a. Update on TSA site visit and ongoing work

Mr. Church announced that the Federal Transportation Security Administration has reviewed the WRTA security and safety policies. A draft of the report is being updated by CMTM and the WRTA will have a report ready in October. Mr. Church informed the board members that the potential bid for security services at the Hub is pending the recommendations of this report.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairperson Lehtola asked for a motion to adjourn. On motion by Doug Belanger, seconded by Mark Binnall, and carried unanimously, the Advisory Board meeting adjourned at 10:04 a.m.

NEXT MEETING DATE

The next WRTA Advisory Board Meeting will be on September 21, 2017 at 8:30 a.m., located at the WRTA Hub, 60 Foster Street, Worcester, MA 01608, 3rd floor.