

THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT THE NEXT ETD MEETING

ESTUARY TRANSIT DISTRICT
RIVER VALLEY TRANSIT
REGULAR MEETING
Friday, December 13, 2024
91 N. Main Street, Middletown, CT and
Via ZOOM

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Strauss called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. In attendance included: Charlie Norz, Leslie Strauss, Tim Griswold, John Hall, Kathryn Russell, David Lahm (ZOOM), Joan Gay, Christine Marques, Michelle Benivegna, Jim Irish (ZOOM), and Beverly Lawrence (arrived at 10:17 p.m.), DG Fitton, David Cox, Bob McGarry (arrived at 10:10 a.m.).

Staff: Chris Dennison (ZOOM), Brendan Geraghty, Joe Comerford, Halyna Famiglietti, Jared Whitcomb, Jake Layman

VISITOR COMMENTS – None.

SECRETARY’S REPORT

Tim Griswold made a motion to accept the minutes of the 10/11/24 Expansion Committee meeting as presented. Charlie Norz seconded the motion. The motion passed with DG Fitton abstaining from the vote.

John Hall made a motion to accept the minutes of the 10/11/24 Board meeting as presented. Joan Gay seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Joan Gay made a motion to accept the minutes of the 12/2/24 Legislative Committee meeting as presented. Charlie Norz seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously,

Leslie Strauss made a motion to accept the minutes of the 12/5/24 Marketing Committee meeting as presented. Jim Irish seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously

John Hall made a motion to accept the minutes of the 12/5/24 Facilities Committee meeting as presented. Joan Gay seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously

Tim Griswold made a motion to accept the minutes of the 12/10/24 Transit Advisory meeting as presented. Leslie Strauss seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously

Kathryn Russell made a motion to accept the minutes of the 12/11/24 Finance Committee meeting as presented. Charlie Norz seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously

COMMUNICATIONS – None.

TREASURER’S REPORT – No report.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Facilities Committee – The minutes of the Facilities Committee meeting were included in the Board’s packet. Joan Gay, Chairman, reported that progress has been made in all areas. She updated the Board on the Facilities initiatives including DOT update, Facilities update, both Middletown and Shoreline (property at the Westbrook outlet mall is not viable for the district; other locations are being pursued), electrification, the Bus Shelter program and the Middletown Terminal renovation project. Joan was available to address questions/comments posed by Board members.

Joan Gay made a motion to accept the Facilities Report as presented. John Hall seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Finance Committee

The Committee reviewed all Financial documents and no issues were reported.

Charlie Norz reported that the Salaries line item is over budget due to recent pay increases to staff and drivers. In addition, the Committee recommends that the Board approve a 3% increase in Town dues for FY25/26.

DG Fitton made a motion to accept the Finance Committee Report as presented. Kathryn Russell seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Marketing Committee

The contract with SRMC for promotion of the District has been extended. Tap and Ride marketing initiatives are on-going. The DOT is funding the marketing of Tap and Ride. Disabled and Elderly fare will be included in Tap and Ride when finalized.

The Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for the Electric Buses is scheduled on 12/17/24 @ 11 a.m. in Middletown. All were encouraged to attend.

An RFP for the installation of signage for bus stops has been published. Note that riders will still be able to “flag” a bus.

DG Fitton made a motion to accept the Marketing Report as presented. Joan Gay seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Legislative Committee

The minutes of the Legislative Committee meeting were included in the Board’s packet. Joan Gay, Chairman, reported that the Legislative Breakfast is scheduled on 1/6/25 @ 8 a.m. All were encouraged to attend.

Kathryn Russell made a motion to accept the Legislative Committee Report as presented. DG Fitton seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Transit Advisory Committee

Tim Griswold provided an update on the initiatives of the Transit Advisory Committee including:

- Tap and Ride Program – program launched in October at the Meriden Train station.
 - Goal is to allow riders to connect seamlessly with other transit districts and to provide uniform rates.
- Bus Shelter Enhancement Program – 4 shelters are planned for installation in Middletown.
- Electric Buses – first 2 electric buses have been received. “Test” service will begin on Rtes. 581 and 585.

Kathryn Russell made a motion to accept the Transit Advisory Committee Report as presented. Charlie Norz seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Expansion Committee

Tim Griswold reported that the Committee met this morning and is working on a uniform formula to assign town dues for new members.

The Committee made a motion to invite East Haddam and Haddam to join the District. Dues for these towns to consider are \$23,500 and \$28,400 respectively.

Joe Comerford reported on the process for the state’s funding of transit districts. The District makes a proposal to the State/Feds for their consideration. There is no per capita formula. Funding sources are dependent on programs. There is no automatic money tied to a town with the exception of the Municipal Grant.

DG Fitton made a motion to accept the Expansion Report as presented. Joan Gay seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

HR Committee – No report.

COG Update – Brendan reported on COG initiatives as follows:

- THRIVE Grant – meeting with THRIVE communities to review study results.
- Successful wastewater analysis capacity for the shoreline for TOD development.
- The COG’s Legislative Agenda has been approved and includes:
 - Housing, early voting, invasive species, transportation infrastructure
- Waste Authority – firm selected for waste management authority study.

Kathryn Russell made a motion to accept the COG Update as presented. Charlie Norz seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Joe reported:

- Electric Buses – Ribbon Cutting scheduled 12/17/24 @ 11 a.m. in Middletown.
 - Buses received
 - Temporary charging station is across the street from the Middletown office– a

massive (\$20 million) renovation of the facility is needed to allow the electrical upgrades necessary to charge buses. In addition, upgrades to the fire suppression system are required to charge the buses.

- Equipment is being installed on the buses
- Operators are currently being trained
 - All Middletown drivers will be trained (the buses will only be used in Middletown)
 - Are Fire Departments and First Responders have been trained on the buses.
- Plan is to put the buses in service in January
 - Pilot Program
 - These buses do not replace the current fleet buses, they are in addition to them.
- Fare Study - moving forward – work with consultant is on-going
 - The goal is to have uniform fares and equipment to allow for easy travel across districts
 - The final stage is to look at uniform fare equipment
 - Needs assessment for fare equipment being developed.
- Software has been purchased to assist with planning and analyzing data, i.e. ridership data and on-time performance data.
- COG Legislative Meeting – Senator Murphy and Congressman Courtney attended the COG meeting and discussed the status of Federal Grant funding. The COG is strategizing to obtain as much grant funding as possible before the new Federal Administration is installed in January.
 - The status of a Continuing Resolution relative to the Federal Budget was discussed.
- Joe reported on the Hartford Healthcare lawsuit. Attorney Shipiro is available to attend a Board meeting to discuss further (in Executive Session).
- The District's Maintenance Director (Pat) has left the District. A replacement has been hired.
- Statistics on the Tap & Ride program were screen shared and discussed.

Joe was available to address questions/comments posed by Board members.

DG Fitton made a motion to accept the Executive Director's Report as presented. Tim Griswold seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

TRANSIT PLANNERS REPORT

Brendan provided an overview of the Expansion and Xtra Mile ridership numbers. Ridership is growing and a Marketing Campaign is being developed.

- Bus Stop Transition – the goal is to eventually transition from a flag stop to a bus stop system

- An RFP will be released to replace existing signs with RVT signage, installing new signs and signposts.
- Bus shelters, benches and solar lighting may be installed at high ridership stops
- Towns will be asked to assist in the permitting process and to provide feedback on stop locations.
- A grant was received for Saturday service on the 644 Rte. (Old Saybrook to Middletown) – scheduled to begin in April.

Brendan was available to address questions/comments posed by board members

Charlie Norz made a motion to accept the Transit Planner’s Report as presented. Kathryn Russell seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

FINANCE DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Copies of the financial reports were included in the Board packet and screenshared.

Halyna clarified that funds are available to off-set the deficit in the salary line as reported in the Finance Committee’s report above. There are no budgetary issues regarding the salary increases.

Halyna was available to address questions/comments posed by Board members.

DG Fitton made a motion to accept the Finance Director’s Report as presented. John Hall seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

OPERATIONS DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Ridership figures were included in the Board packet and screenshared. There were issues with the ridership counting software in Middletown, however, it was determined that overall ridership has increased.

Jared reported that the District is experiencing the “normal” staffing turn-over. He has been able to hire drivers due to the increased rate of pay.

Training initiatives are the focus now and are on-going.

The new Shoreline Operations Manager Jake Layman was welcomed to the District and provided an overview of the Q1 System. Q1 is a Pilot Program on 2 buses that facilitates the restraint system for wheelchairs/scooters.

DG Fitton made a motion to accept the Operations Director’s Report as presented. Joan Gay seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

MAINTENANCE DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Joe reported on the difficulties in hiring mechanics. This is delaying the District from doing more work at the Shoreline facility “in-house”.

DG Fitton made a motion to accept the Maintenance Director’s Report as presented. Joan Gay

seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

2025/26 Town Dues

DG Fitton made a motion to approve a 3% increase in Town Dues for FY25-26. Joan Gay seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Committee Assignments

Finance Committee – Jim Irish will come off of the Finance Committee and Kathryn Russell will be added to it.

HR/Personnel Committee – John Hall will Chair the Committee. Michelle Benivegna will be added to the Committee.

Any Board members interested in joining a Committee should contact Leslie Strauss.

DG Fitton made a motion to approve the above committee appointments. Kathryn Russell seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

Board Retreat - A “Doodle Poll” will be forward to Board Officers to identify a date (possibly in April) for the Board Retreat.

2025 Meeting Schedule

DG Fitton made a motion to approve the 2025 Regular Board Meeting dates as follows: 2/14, 4/11, 6/13, 8/8, 10/10, 12/12. Joan Gay seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

CHAIR COMMENTS – None.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS – DG Fitton thanked the Board and staff for their support during a recent illness.

EXECUTIVE SESSION – None.

ADJOURNMENT

Leslie Strauss made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:50 a.m. Charlie Norz seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Next meeting – February 14, 2025 - 9 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Suzanne Helchowski
Clerk