

THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT THE NEXT RVT MEETING

ESTUARY TRANSIT DISTRICT
RIVER VALLEY TRANSIT
NINE TOWN TRANSIT
REGULAR MEETING
February 10, 2023
Middletown Offices and via ZOOM

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Leslie Strauss, Chairman at 9:02 a.m. A quorum was established with the following board members present: DG Fitton, John Hall (left at 10:00 a.m.), Beverly Lawrence (left at 10:09 a.m.), Tim Griswold (left at 10:15 a.m.), Charlie Norz, Joan Gay, Karl Kilduff, Angus McDonald, Jim Irish, Bobby Knoll Peterson, David Lahm (arrived at 9:06 a.m. and left at 10:30 a.m.).

Also in attendance: Joe Comerford, Chris Denison, Lisa Gibson, Brendan Geraghty, Jared Whitcomb, Halyna Famiglietti and Mutez Ennab.

Note that Congressman Courtney will be attending a meeting at RiverCOG this morning. Several Board members plan on attending that meeting.

DG Fitton made a motion to adjust the order of the agenda (moving “New Business ahead of “Committee Reports”). Charlie Norz seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

VISITOR COMMENTS – None.

SECRETARY’S REPORT

John Hall made a motion to accept the minutes from the Board meeting dated 1/13/23 as presented Joan Gay. seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Joan Gay made a motion to accept the minutes from the Legislative Committee meeting dated 2/6/23 as presented. Charlie Norz seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Joan Gay made a motion to accept the minutes from the Finance meeting dated 2/8/23 as presented. Karl Kilduff seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

Election of Officers

Angus reported that the current officers have agreed to continue in their respective positions.

DG Fitton made a motion to appoint the following individuals as officers of the Board: Leslie Strauss, Chairman, Joan Gay, Vice Chairman, Tim Griswold, Secretary, and Charlie Norz, Treasurer. Charlie Norz seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

AAA Authorizing Resolution

DG Fitton made the following motion:

RESOLVED, that the Executive Director, Joseph Comerford, and/or in his absence or inability to act, the Chairperson, Leslie B. Strauss, are hereby authorized on behalf of the Estuary Transit District to negotiate and execute all necessary contract documents required to obtain funds from the Senior Resources Agency on Aging.

Joan Gay seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

DOT Authorizing Resolution

DG Fitton made the following motion:

WHEREAS, the Estuary Transit District, pursuant to Chapter 103a, Section 7-273k of the General Statutes of the State of Connecticut, as revised, is empowered to enter into contracts for the purpose of subsidizing transit services, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Chairperson, Leslie B. Strauss, and/or in her absence or inability to act, the Vice Chairperson, Joan Gay, having been since February 10, 2023, are hereby authorized on behalf of the Estuary Transit District to negotiate and execute all necessary contract documents required to obtain funds from the Connecticut Department of Transportation.

Joan Gay seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Appointment of Committees

Chairman Strauss recommended the following appointments:

- Finance Committee – Charlie Norz (Chairman), Karl Kilduff, Joan Gay, Jim Irish
- Marketing Committee – Leslie Strauss (Chairman), David Lahm, Jim Irish
- Facilities Committee– Joan Gay (Chairman), Karl Kilduff, Angus McDonald
- Personnel Committee – Karl Kilduff (Chairman), DG Fitton, John Hall
- Legislative Committee – Joan Gay, (Chairman), Karl Kilfuff, Angus McDonald
- Service Study Committee – Charlie Norz (Chairman), Beverly Lawrence, Tim Griswold, David Lahm
- Nomination Committee - Angus McDonald (Chairman), Charlie Norz, Bobbye Knoll Peterson
- Transit Advisory Committee – Tim Griswold (Chairman), Beverly Lawrence
- Management Contract Committee – DG Fitton (Chairman), Charlie Norz, John Hall

Charlie Norz made a motion to accept the Committee appointments as recommended. Tim Griswold seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Advertising Contract

Joe Comerford reported that the current advertising contact expires 6/30/23. The Board discussed the possible continuation of the advertising contract (going out to RFP). The revenue currently generated by the advertisements located on the back of the busses is approximately \$55,000 per year. Note that the Board has limited control over what may be placed in the advertisements. State law prohibits political ads on the vehicles.

Angus McDonald made a motion to authorize the Executive Director to develop an RFP for advertisements on the busses (back only). DG Fitton seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

Approval of Fare Structure

A copy of the Fare Study Public Outreach report was “screen shared”. The goal is to make ridership available to all. The four main policy changes include:

- Simplify the fare structure.
- Affordability – low income and student discount – (eligibility will be determined by state agencies (DSS).
- Fare capping.
- Free fare for ADA eligible riders on fixed routes.

Positive feedback was generated at the Outreach meetings.

Brendan provided an overview of the report and was available to address questions/comments posed by Board members.

DG Fitton made a motion to approve the proposed fare structure as presented, pending DOT approval. Dave Lahm seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Change of Name

As discussed at the last meeting, the District’s attorney researched the recommendation to eliminate “Estuary Transit District” as the District’s “official” name. Joe Comerford reported that to do so would require a Board Resolution/Motion to amend the by-laws.

Tim Griswold made a motion to adopt River Valley Transit as the District’s official name, subject to all appropriate procedures. DG Fitton seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Facilities – None.

Finance Committee – The Committee met and reviewed the Financial reports as prepared by Halyna. The audit report has not yet been received.

Joan Gay made a motion to accept the Finance Committee Report as presented. Angus McDonald seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Marketing Committee

A copy of the Marketing Committee report was included in the Board packet and “screen shared. Of note:

- The Brand Guide is complete.
- Bus designs are being finalized.
- The Marketing Plan is an on-going task with an anticipated April 1 “launch”.

Joan Gay made a motion to accept the Marketing Committee Report as presented. David Lahm seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Legislative Committee – Joan reported that the Committee will continue the First Selectman/Legislative Breakfast as a combined event (scheduled Wednesday, 4/29/23, 8 a.m.). In addition, the Committee discussed proposed legislation including:

- Funding of transit districts in urban areas – Joe will develop testimony in support of this Bill.
- Task Force to Study Barriers to Transit – “watching” this legislation.
- Fare Free Public Transportation – The District does not support this Bill as written (we do support a study on budget impacts). Joe and Leslie will develop testimony.
- Micro-Transit – Madison, and possibly other towns, are interested in “joining” the District. We would like the Legislature to support same.

Charlie Norz made a motion to accept the Legislative Committee report as presented. Angus McDonald seconded the motion the motion passed unanimously.

Note that several Board members exited the meeting.

No quorum as of 10:10 a.m.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS AS FOLLOWS:

Transit Advisory Committee – None.

Service Study Committee – None.

Personnel Committee – None.

COG Update

Brendan reported:

- Comments are open on the COG’s website regarding the Common Development Plan.
- The District provided input on the Metropolitan Transportation Plan currently being developed.

Joe reported:

- The Governor is again proposing combining MPOS. This would not be positive for the District.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT

A copy of the Executive Director’s report was included in the Board’s packet.

Joe Comerford reported:

- There has been no movement on the electric bus procurement.
- We are awaiting the FY 23 Transit Operating Documents.
- Radio project complete. All vehicles are now on the same radio system.
- MTD grants are closed and are in the process of being re-opened as ETD grants.
- Working on paper fare media for 4/1 fare resumption.
- Met with Gillig to finalize order; delivery expected in September 2023.
- Received 4 new body-on-chassis buses for the Middletown Division.
- The Governor’s budget includes \$700,000 in service improvements for ETD.

TRANSIT PLANNER’S REPORT

Brendan reported:

- New maps of the combined system are being developed.
- Bus improvements (voice announcements, kiosks, etc.) – project on-going.
- Micro Transit RFP being developed. We have an application for state funding of a 2-year pilot program.
- X-mile service is back via a 50/50 match with Wesleyan (services reduced slightly from last semester). A Wesleyan intern is working with the District.
- Talking with drivers to identify areas that need improved lighting.

FINANCE DIRECTOR’S REPORT – Budget vs. Actual, Statement of Cash Flow

Budget vs. Actual and the Statement of Cash Flow was included in the Board packet. Halyna was available to respond to board questions/comments.

Halyna reported that at the MAT meeting this morning, the board approved the FY end 2022 audit (their last audit). Also, since July, the District has issued almost \$5 million in purchase orders (busses, AVL, radios, etc.).

OPERATIONS DIRECTOR’S REPORT

The Operations Director’s reported included an update on staffing and ridership (growing). Jared reported on some staffing issues. He is now focused on hiring staff.

MAINTENANCE DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Pat reported:

- A service worker started last week. Duties include cleaning and fueling the buses at night.
- Preparation is being done in anticipation of the start of fare collection.
- A list of “spare” parts has been developed.

CHAIR COMMENTS

Leslie thanked board members for their service and support. She requested that a letter be sent to the Middletown Mayor and Bobbye Knoll Peterson regarding the by-laws specification that if two consecutive Board meetings are missed, the Mayor/First Selectman and Board member are informed, in writing.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS – None.

EXECUTIVE SESSION – to discuss contract negotiations – None.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting ended at 10:48 a.m.

Next Meeting – March 10, 2023 – 9:00 a.m. with remote options.

Respectfully Submitted,

Suzanne Helchowski
Clerk