



## Worcester Regional Transit Authority Advisory Board Meeting Minutes May 18, 2023

Chairperson Rosen called the meeting to order at 8:31a.m.

### AB MEMBERS ATTENDANCE VIA TELECONFERENCE

Present by teleconference: Mark Binnall – Auburn, Hollie Lucht – Shrewsbury, Andrew Golas – Charlton, Shannon Smith – Grafton, Doug Belanger – Leicester, Robin Grimm – Sturbridge, Laura Wilson – Oxford, Robert Spain – Millbury, Heather Crump – Worcester DP, Heather-Lyn Haley – Leicester RCP, Alt, Adam Menard – Auburn Alt Gary Rosen - Worcester. Members entering meeting after call to order: Sean Hendricks – Millbury, Michael Ward – Clinton.

### ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

**Motion: To accept the minutes for April 20, 2023**

**By: Robert Spain. 2<sup>nd</sup>: Mark Binnall.**

**Vote: All in Favor (11 in favor 0 opposed) vote passed.**

### BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC - no speakers

### BUSINESS FROM THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE – CHAIRPERSON

*Update regarding the Administrator’s search*

The committee reviewed and discussed the 12 applications submitted through Community Paradigm Associates. The committee narrowed the applications down to 5 semi-finalists and interviews (via zoom) will be held over the next two weeks. The committee’s goal is to bring one to two finalists to the full board for scheduling interviews in June or July 2023. The complete vetting will be done on the finalists presented to the full board. Chairperson Belanger ask for an agreement regarding initial discussions to begin with Dennis Lipka regarding wages as his contract expires June 30, 2023. There was not talk of end date or details for the transition time as the date of new administrator is not known. Gary Rosen agreed to starting this process. An executive session personnel committee meeting would be set up.

Chairperson Rosen introduced Dennis Lipka for the Administrator’s report.

### UPDATE ON BUDGET

Dennis Lipka informed that board that unofficially they may be waiting on the legislature to get the May numbers from the Department of Revenue as the April numbers were lower than expected. The WRTA is hopeful that the legislation will have a final budget for July 1<sup>st</sup>. The WRTA has an approved budget and the application for the RAN would be out for bid this month. The WRTA is working steady on the electrification of the bus fleet. In the meantime, the last diesel bus buy delivery is expected October/November 2023. As for the electric buses they are awaiting the pricing from the vendor for buses that would be delivered in 24 months. Dennis Lipka stated how their newly purchased diesel fuel should secure them for 18 months. The cost was \$2.67 per gallon total. To accomplish the electrification and secure the energy needs as well as reduce overall costs the WRTA is working with Select Energy. The letter of intent signed recently will trigger the process of connecting with National Grid. It is estimated that three thousand panels will be installed as well as the necessary battery storage. The M&O will hold the battery storage (size of a 40’ bus) as well as the solar panels. The WRTA is looking into retro fitting the WRTA Hub solar array, and if successful both building would become “net zero” buildings. When the electric buses are in full swing the WRTA is estimated to cut its fuel consumption almost in half. Dennis Lipka stated how a lot of work is being done behind the scenes with the goal of improving and utilizing new technology as well as to promote a smooth transition for the new administrator.

### **Communities Served:**

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



Worcester Regional Transit Authority

Moving Our Region Forward

Union Station Hub 60 Foster Street Worcester, MA 01608

508.453.3403 Fax: 508.752.1676 [therta.com](http://therta.com)

PREVIEW OF NEW WEBPAGE

Dennis Lipka stated that Trillion is in the last stages of testing the website for compliances. The Bus Tracker has been updated in software and server space. These changes will make linking it to the new website much easier and more accurate. Gary Rosen commented on the prior problems with Bus Tracker. Dennis Lipka stated that since the changes the Bus Tracker is running well. The roll out for the website is anticipated for early June 2023. The Administration will bring a presentation to the June 2023 board meeting. Gary Rosen commented on the home page displaying “Zero Fare”. Dennis Lipka introduced Jamie Winters for a brief presentation on the Mass Hire Job Fair at the DCU Center in Worcester. Jamie Winters informed the board that over 100 employers were at the event and about 1,500 job seekers attended. Jamie Winters stated good results from the hiring campaign promoted through Facebook. In attendance was CMTM Human Resources employee to answer any questions. It was estimated that 50-100 persons interacted with the WRTA at this event. There was a strong interest in remote customer service jobs. The WRTA operates a call center and does not have a remote policy for Customer Service jobs. Jamie Winters fielded questions pertaining to advertising with the Worcester Red Sox’s. Gary Rosen commented on the importance of persisting with swapping ad space for parking support. Gary Rosen asked about a slogan for this purpose. Jamie Winters replied that a copy has been sent to the WRS for approval “Why Play with Parking” and 500 steps to the Park etc.

BUSINESS FROM THE BOARD

Mark Binnall asked about having a sound programmed into the electric buses to assist the visually impaired. Dennis Lipka stated they will work on this as the buses comes into service. Gary Rosen asked for a breakdown of how buses are decommissioned. All electric equipment must be transferred and each bus must be WRTA branded. Also, the WRTA complies with the FDA rules on maximum usefulness requirement. Buses that are 12 years or older and vans are 7 years or older are considered to have serviced their useful life. The WRTA is looking into how long after this requirement they can still use the buses/vans. Extended use could equate to spare buses and possible use for expanding services (weekends are more viable) as would be practical. There is however no plan at this time to facilitate any such option. Dennis Lipka informed the board that he is in talks with the Center for Living and Working on services and those talks will continue. Gary Rosen asked about the Hub Lobby. Dennis Lipka stated they are seeking to hire an Architectural and Engineering firm to address the Hub property including the Lobby. Dennis Lipka explained that the lobby space priority is to accommodate getting out of bad weather and to obtain information on the WRTA’s services. Dennis Lipka spoke about the Hub security. Jet Security is the new security vendor and their transition appears to be a successful start. The WRTA has two guards per shift and covers all bus hours of operations. Heather Crump inquired as to the VIA service and lack of working handicap accessible vehicles. Heather Crump informed the board that she uses with service’s handicap accessible vehicles. Heather Crump noted very long call in times to obtain a ride and the recent no service of handicap vehicles. Heather Crump also question the number of cars parked in VIA’s parking area and questioned if the WRTA is paying for vehicles they are not using. Dennis Lipka deferred to Nick Burnham the inquiries both in the meeting and in a written response within the next two days. It was explained that the WRTA has a contract with 5 cars including accessible vehicles (given the need) as part of the contract. That contract also includes their responsibility for maintenance of all vehicles. The WRTA will contact VIA with all concerns stated to providing service. The parking area is used by VIA for all of their service contracts in the general area. Dennis Lipka stated that there has been no prior complaint in this regard but they will look into this situation as expressed.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: To Adjourn at 9:18 a.m. By: Robert Spain, 2<sup>nd</sup>: Mark Binnall Vote: All in favor (11 in favor 0 opposed)

NEXT MEETING DATE

The next WRTA Advisory Board Meeting will be on June 15, 2023 at 8:15 a.m., via teleconference due to the Governor’s State of Emergency provisions for public meetings.

Minutes prepared by: Elizabeth R Pokoly

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