



Worcester Regional Transit Authority Advisory Board Meeting Minutes April 20, 2023

Chairperson Rosen called the meeting to order at 8:30a.m.

AB MEMBERS ATTENDANCE VIA TELECONFERENCE

Present by teleconference: Mark Binnall – Auburn, Kevin Mizikar - Shrewsbury, Doug Belanger – Leicester, Laura Wilson – Oxford, Heather-Lyn Haley – RCP, Brian Bullock - Holden, Andrew Golas – Charlton, Shannon Smith – Grafton, Robin Grimm – Sturbridge, Jasmin Rivas - Southbridge, Michael Ward – Clinton Heather Crump – DP, Adam Menard – Auburn Alt Brian Pigeon – Worcester Alt, Gary Rosen – Worcester.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

Motion: To accept the minutes for March 16, 2023

By: Doug Belanger. 2nd: Mark Binnall.

Vote: All in Favor (13 in favor 0 opposed) vote passed.

BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC – Out of Order

Request for bathrooms services to return to the WRTA Hub lobby. Heather-Lyn Haley commented in favor of bathrooms. Chairperson Rosen stated there are many issues in providing public bathrooms.

BUSSINESS FROM THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE - CHAIRPERSON

Update board on March 20, 2023 working personnel committee meeting.

Chairperson Belanger commented on how the notice for the administration’s position will be out shortly. The personnel committee is seeking to recommend up to five candidates for the board to interview. The exact numbers will depend upon the responses received. Chairperson Belanger asked the board members to post the job description within their communities.

Update on public meeting April 19, 2023

Chairperson Belanger stated that about 30 persons were in attendance including Zoom participation. The consultant will be taking into consideration the topics of concern and adding them to the qualifications and requirements during the personal interviews. Heather-Lyn Haley commented on the need for the survey to be in other languages and expressed an opinion that more community outreach should have been done by the consulting firm.

BUSINESS FROM THE AUDIT & FINANCE COMMITTEE - CHAIRPERSON

Update Board on March 29, 2023 Working Audit & Finance Committee Meeting

Chairperson Belanger gave an overview of the meeting. It was confirmed that a motion of recommendation to extend the suspension of fares for FY`24. The committee asked the administration to amend the budget to reflect this change when addressing the board on April 20, 2023. Chairperson Belanger commented on the need for further financial support from the legislature as being paramount for long term considerations. Encouraging all those that support the WRTA and especially “no fares” to make lobbying their priority.

FY`24 BUDGET

Dennis Lipka introduced Tom Coyne, Deputy Administrator & CEO to give the presentation. Tom Coyne reviewed the amended Consolidated Budget for 2024. This budget covers the cost of existing services and does not cover any new service or expansion. The CARES ACT monies is being used to offset increases in the budget (FY`24 figure was \$2,297,694) which will now increase by \$3,646,253 to cover the originally budgeted fare revenues. The total money spent from the CARES Act for FY`24 in this amended budget will be \$5,943,947. The budget submitted at the April 20, 2023 has been amended to the recommendation vote from the Audit and Finance Committee meeting on March 29, 2023 to the full board. The total for FY`24 is \$34,440,125 and increase of 6.2% over FY`23.

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

	FY 2024 Budget	FY2023 Budget	\$ Increase / (Decrease)	% Increase / (Decrease)
Expenses:				
Transit Services				
Fixed Route	\$ 24,585,621	\$ 23,005,283	\$ 1,580,339	6.9%
Demand Response	5,365,793	5,339,217	26,576	0.5%
Brokerage / Customer Service	1,786,859	1,694,967	91,892	5.4%
Administration	1,819,036	1,730,070	88,966	5.1%
Debt Service	467,448	258,025	209,423	81.2%
Management Fee	415,368	402,332	13,036	3.2%
Total Expenses	34,440,125	32,429,893	2,010,232	6.2%

	FY 2024 Budget	FY2023 Budget	\$ Increase / (Decrease)	% Increase / (Decrease)
Revenues:				
MassDOT Community Transit Grants	72,000	72,000	-	0.0%
Administration Revenues	261,540	241,700	19,840	8.2%
Other - Non-Transportation	25,488	30,855	(5,367)	-17.4%
Total Revenues	359,028	749,492	(390,464)	-52.1%
Federal Operating Assistance:				
Operating Assistance Special Rule	6,785,903	6,125,575	660,328	10.8%
CARES Act	5,943,947	5,435,911	508,036	9.3%
American Rescue Plan	842,359	813,873	28,486	3.5%
CMAQ - Westborough/VIA	500,705	486,198	14,507	3.0%
Project Administration	20,818	20,310	508	2.5%
Total Federal Operating Assistance	14,093,732	12,881,867	1,211,865	9.4%

Motion: I move that the WRTA Advisory Board votes to approve the FY'24 WRTA Budget as presented and recommended by the Audit and Finance committee.

By: Doug Belanger. 2nd: Mark Binnall. The WRTA Advisory Board voted to approve the FY'24 budget as presented and recommended by the Audit and Finance committee. Vote by roll call: (13 in favor 0 opposed) vote passed.

Gary Rosen	yes
Doug Belanger	yes
Brian Bullock	yes
Mark Binnall	yes
Michael Ward	yes
Andrew Golas	yes
Shannon Smith	yes
Heather-Lyn Haley	yes
Kevin Mizikar	yes
Robin Grimm	yes
Laura Wilson	yes
Heather Crump	yes
Jasmin Rivas	yes

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PRESENTATION FOR UPDATED PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION AGENCY SAFETY PLAN (PTASP).

Dennis Lipka introduced Nick Burnham who gave a presentation. Mr. Burnham gave a brief history of the document and the latest changes/updates required by the FTA. The plan details the safety processes & procedures for the WRTA & utilizes existing safety practices (CMTM). The plan includes the implementation of a Safety Committee which requires equal representation between frontline employees and management. The plan will be presented yearly to the board in April or May for approval. *A full copy of the document was emailed to the board members ahead of the meeting.* The Administration is asking the board to endorse the PTASP.

Motion: I move that the WRTA Advisory Board votes to approve the updated PTASP document as presented to the board on April 20, 2023.

By: Gary Rosen, 2nd: Doug Belanger. The WRTA Advisory Board voted to approve the updated PTASP document as presented to the board on April 20, 2023. Vote: all in favor (13 in favor 0 opposed) vote passed.

ADMINISTRATOR REPORT – Out of Order

Dennis Lipka informed the board that Jet Security was chosen and started on April 17, 2023. The WRTA went out with an RFP and received nine responses and interviewed three. Dennis Lipka thanked his staff, Tom Coyne, Jamie Winters and Nick Burnham for the work on this project. The guard coverage has been doubled and expanded to meet the bus schedules. The WRTA anticipates a learning curve and is encouraged by the recent noticeable changes at the Hub. The goal is to provide a secure and safe environment. The WRTA continues to work on driver availability and how to improve service going forward. Tom Coyne mentioned that there has been an uptake in employee badges issued. Dennis Lipka informed the board that the budget figures are not final and it is likely they will be back in the fall to amend. This is a yearly occurrence due to the legislative process for the agreement of the total budget. There is hope however that this year a timelier conclusion may be possible.

BUSINESS FROM THE ADVISORY BOARD Out of Order

Robin Grimm commented on the need to think about the structural hole forming if the WRTA continues using CARES ACT or other non-dedicated funding for “no fares”. Robin Grimm voted for extending the suspension of fares however was concerned about future demands due to labor contracts/raising expenses. Chairperson Rosen spoke briefly about the WRTA’s successful recovery after the pandemic. Chairperson Rosen listed ongoing priorities; making the Hub more welcoming, improving public outreach, and redesigning bus stop signage, and spreading word about the accomplishments of the WRTA. Chairperson Rosen gave an overview on the recent Worcester City Council Sub-Committee meeting attended by the Chair and Mr. Lipka, WRTA Administrator. Chairperson Rosen commented on the productiveness of the meeting and the importance of the committee council members concerns. Chairperson Rosen expects that a future meeting is likely. Chairperson Rosen announced that the Governor has extended virtual meetings until March 31, 2025. The WRTA meetings (if hybrid) would not be from the Hub due to technical/spacing issues. There was no further discussion on this matter. Doug Belanger asked if the board would consider starting the meeting at 8 a.m. instead of 8:30 a.m. Chairperson Rosen asked if Elizabeth or Jamie could pole the members regarding this issue. Elizabeth Pokoly of administration stated that an email would be out by the afternoon.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: To Adjourn at 9:30 a.m.

By: Doug Belanger, 2nd: Mark Binnall

Vote: All in favor (13 in favor 0 opposed)

NEXT MEETING DATE

The next WRTA Advisory Board Meeting will be on May18, 2023 at 8:30 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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