



Worcester Regional Transit Authority Advisory Board Meeting Minutes February 17, 2022

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

AB MEMBERS ATTENDANCE VIA TELECONFERENCE

Present by teleconference: Douglas Belanger – Leicester, Barbara Connelly – Grafton, Laura Wilson – Oxford, Mark Binnall – Auburn, Jacquelyn Ryan- Southbridge Alt, James R. Nee – Charlton, James Delage, Worcester DP, Robert Spain-Millbury, Adam Menard – Auburn Alt, Brian Pigeon – Worcester Alt, Gary Rosen - Worcester. The following members arrived after the meeting was called to order; Kristen Las-Shrewsbury, Michael Ward-Clinton, Sean Hendricks-Millbury Michael McCall-Southbridge.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

Motion: To accept the minutes for January 20, 2022

By: Mark Binnall. 2nd: Barbara Connelly

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

Chairperson Rosen introduced Chairperson, Doug Belanger to report on the Personnel Committee

Report on Recommendation from the Personnel Committee

Chairperson Belanger announced that the personnel committee approved the contract as presented for recommendation to the advisory board. Chairperson Belanger listed the five (5) changes to the contract for Mr. Lipka.

1. Change date to January 1, 2022 to fit retro-active 2.5% increase in Salary.
2. Salary terms 2.5% increase per year.
3. The contract has a one-year extension.
4. Health reimbursement would be \$6,000 up \$1,000 from his last contract. *This item is due to his existing enrollment in Holden’s Health plan. Payable up to the amount by receipts submitted.*
5. Vacation will increase from four (4) weeks to five (5).

Chairperson Belanger stated that the Personnel Committee recommends by their vote to the full board to enter into the agreement.

Motion: I move the WRTA Advisory Board vote to enter into a contract with the Administrator and have the Chairperson sign the Contract.

On motion by Robert Spain, seconded by Mark Binnall (by roll call vote) the WRTA Advisory Board votes to enter into a contract with the Administrator (Dennis J. Lipka) and have the Chairperson sign the contract. The vote was carried: (11 in favor 0 opposed).

Douglas Belanger	yes
Barbara Connelly	yes
Laura Wilson	yes
Mark Binnall	yes
Jacquelyn Ryan	yes
James R. Nee	yes
James Delage	yes
Robert Spain	yes
Kristen Las	yes

Communities Served:

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



Michael Ward yes
Gary Rosen yes

The WRTA Advisory Board voted to enter into a contract with the Administrator (Dennis J. Lipka) and to have the Chairperson sign the Contract.

Chairperson Rosen requested that an executed copy of the contract be sent to the board members. Chairperson Rosen congratulated Mr. Lipka on behalf of the board and thanked the staff for their efforts. Chairperson Rosen stated the coming year would be challenging and looks forward to working with the administration.

Chairperson Rosen introduced Mr. Lipka to fill in with the Administrator’s report.

Mr. Lipka thanked the board for their continued support and all his staff for their good work. Mr. Lipka acknowledged there are challenges ahead and hopes to continue their ridership expansion efforts.

Mr. Lipka informed the board of the administration’s effort to secure a defined benefits (DB) retirement plan for six (6) WRTA staff members. Presently, the WRTA Administrative staff has a defined contributions plan. Under the provisions of section 161B; to change to a (DB) plan there are two options. To request enrollment from the largest municipal entity (City of Worcester) or to get special legislation to change plans. Mr. Lipka stated they are in discussion with the City Manager’s Office. They are hoping to bring the finalized issue to the board for a vote in March 2022. If so, the effective date would be July 1, 2022. Gary Rosen informed the board that the city would be answering shortly on this matter.

Mr. Lipka stated that March’s board meeting would be covering the FY’22 budget as well as the planning process for the FY’23 budget. Mr. Lipka confirmed that the Masabi contract has been signed. In March or April, the administration will put forth the fare policy report and start the public hearings process. Gary Rosen commented that within the context of a new fare policy 0-\$1.75 still remains to be determined. Jacquelyn Ryan commented on the importance of taking a more visible and boarder approach to getting information out to the public. Mr. Lipka stated that the present software running the marquee is a destination announcement system. Given this fact; when adding other wording it creates consistence problems in duration, and in timing. The system is set up to keep the destination as the priority item. When other messages can be added they bump the pre-set which offers less consistence messaging overall. Gary Rosen stated he disagrees with Mr. Lipka on this issue regarding the bus marquee usage.

Mr. Lipka informed the board that the TSA mask mandate is the priority regardless of any city/local mask changes. Therefore, under TSA policies masks are required on all buses and transit facilities until March 18, 2022. The WRTA must follow the TSA mask policies for Transit and Transit facilities.

Mr. Lipka update the board on how they are seeing slow improvements regarding the driver shortages. They are hoping to start with returning the service at North High school sometime in March.

Mr. Lipka gave a brief overview of the snow removal at shelters. While noting that the 1,100 individual bus stops are not manageable to hire for snow clearing. Mr. Lipka stated it is an imperfect system but we are asking our drivers to be extra aware at bus stops when snow is an issue. Board members discussed prior and new options for adopt a stop program. Mr. Lipka stated that the larger storms cause the most problems and every transit company faces these challenges. Issues of snow storage, snow removal, time off the roads, traffic, road conditions from plowing schedules, and others all play a part in clearance issues.

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Worcester Regional Transit Authority

Moving Our Region Forward

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BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC - out of order

No business from the public.

BUSINESS FROM THE BOARD – out of order

James Nee commented on his experience with destination signage and its specific practices regarding announcements. James Nee asked about more specific ridership data per day. Mr. Lipka briefly explained how they collected data. Mr. Lipka acknowledged he owed Mr. Nee a phone call. Mr. Lipka stated the new fare system would make collection easier and more readily available. James Delage suggested the City of Worcester place an ordinance on clearing out bus stops. Gary Rosen stated he would bring that up to the city and suggested an adopt a bus stop possibility. Mark Binnall asked that the public meeting notices go to the Audio Journal. Mark Binnall asked about the possibility for a bus shelter at the Market Basket in Shrewsbury. Mr. Lipka stated he would be speaking with Kristen Las about all the needs for the developing Shrewsbury projects. Doug Belanger announced how the personnel committee is expected to do the administrator’s evaluation in March. Doug Belanger asked for the Chairperson’s consideration regarding this matter for March/April’s agenda.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: To Adjourn at 9:25 a.m.

By Robert Spain: 2nd: Mark Binnall:

Vote: All in favor (11 in favor 0 opposed)

NEXT MEETING DATE

The next meeting will be March 17, 2022 at 8:30 a.m., via teleconference due to the Governor’s continuation of remote participation of public bodies until July 15, 2022.

Minutes prepared by: Elizabeth R Pokoly

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