



**Worcester Regional Transit Authority
Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
July 21, 2022**

Vice Chairperson Belanger called the meeting to order at 8:32a.m.

Vice Chairperson Belanger announced that Gary Rosen will be absence due to attendance of community leader and friend Gary Vecchio’s funeral. Vice Chairperson introduced (guest to board participation) Heather-Lyn Haley. Who was appointed by the town of Leicester as a Ridership Representative to the board.

AB MEMBERS ATTENDANCE VIA TELECONFERENCE

Present by teleconference: Mark Binnall – Auburn, Kristen Las – Shrewsbury, Laura Wilson – Oxford, Robert Spain – Millbury, James Delage – Worcester DP, Robin Grimm – Sturbridge, Jacquelyn Ryan – Southbridge Alt, Brian Bullock – Holden, Adam Menard – Auburn Alt Brian Pigeon – Worcester Alt, Douglas Belanger – Leicester., Members entering meeting after call to order: James Ferrera – Warren, Michael Ward – Clinton.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

Motion: To accept the minutes for June 16, 2022

By: Robert Spain. 2nd: Mark Binnall.

Vote: All in Favor 10 in favor 0 opposed) vote passed.

Vice Chairperson Belanger introduced Mr. Lipka for the Administrator’s report.

Mr. Lipka stated that they are working on the numerous requests by the City Council. The WRTA is continuing to draw up options for hybrid in-person/webinar access to board meetings. As stated in prior meetings, the M&O Facility conference room would likely be the meeting venue. Details pertaining to the IT and all newly purchased equipment are being appraised by the administration.

PRESENT AND REVIEW PUBLIC COMMENTS ON POTENTIAL SERVICE CHANGES

Mr. Lipka reviewed the services changes and highlighted some comments by those participating in the public session. All documents were sent to the board members prior to the meeting. Vice Chairperson Belanger asked if the board wished to review the prior months service changes presentation. There was no request to review. Mr. Lipka stated that the response was agreeable to the service changes. Other responses not related to service changes were also addressed by administration.

Vice Chairperson Belanger asked for a motion to accept the service changes as presented to take effect on August 27, 2022. There was no discussion.

Motion: I move that the WRTA Advisory Board votes to accept the service changes (as presented) effective August 27, 2022.

By: Robert Spain. 2nd: Mark Binnall.

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

Brian Pigeon	yes
Douglas Belanger	yes
Brian Bullock	yes
Mark Binnall	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	



Worcester Regional Transit Authority

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Robin Grimm	yes
Laura Wilson	yes
Jacquelyn Ryan	yes
James Delage	yes
James Ferrera	yes

ADMINISTRATION’S RECOMMENTDATION TO POSTPONE ACTION ON A FARE POLICY UNTIL THE FALL 2022.

Mr. Lipka recommended to postpone action on a new fare policy due to the following factors: Upcoming ATU Union negotiations, pending legislative budgeting, increases in operations/expenses as well as more time to appropriate a sustainable budgeting due. Fares would remain suspended, as voted by the board, until December 31, 2022. This suspension covers fixed route, paratransit, COA’s and SCM Elderbus. Mr. Lipka informed the board that the administration would be presenting the amended budget in the fall.

REQUEST IN-PERSON MEETING OF THE AUDIT AND FINANCE COMMITTEE IN EXECUTIVE SESSION FOR CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS

Mr. Lipka asked the board members to vote to authorize the audit and finance Committee to meeting with the administration and CMTM on July 28, 2022 at 8:30am to review in-person, in executive session, the status of contract negotiations with the union.

Vice Chairperson Belanger asked for a vote to authorize the audit and finance committee to meeting in executive session (in-person) for the purpose of reviewing the status of the contract negotiations.

Motion: I move that the WRTA Advisory Board vote to authorize the Audit and Finance Committee to meet with the Administration and CMTM on July 28, 2022 at 8:30am to review in-person, in executive session, the status of contract negotiations with the union.

By: Robert Spain. 2nd: Brian Bullock.

Vote by roll call: (12 in favor 0 opposed) vote passed.

Brian Pigeon	yes
Douglas Belanger	yes
Brian Bullock	yes
Mark Binnall	yes
Robert Spain	yes
Kristen Las	yes
Robin Grimm	yes
Laura Wilson	yes
Jacquelyn Ryan	yes
James Delage	yes
James Ferrera	yes
Michael Ward	yes

The WRTA voted to authorize the Audit and Finance committee to meet with the administration and CMTM on July 28, 2022 at 8:30am to review in-person, in executive session, the status of contract negotiations with the union. This falls under a meeting being held under executive session to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on bargaining or litigating position of the WRTA and the chair so declares, pursuant, to G.L.c30A, sec21(3). The committee would take no votes and return to open session for the sole purpose of closing the meeting.

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BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC – Out of Order

Vice Chairperson Belanger introduced the following person requesting to address the board via Zoom participation. Adam Thielker, Project Manager, Zero Fare Coalition

Mr. Thielker spoke about the importance of having a hybrid format for WRTA Board Meetings. He requested the meetings format be changed as soon as possible. He stated that City Hall has space available for WRTA Board meeting to be held as well as the existing hybrid technology. Mr. Thielker thanked the board for expanding the system and commented on lower dwell times being due to no fare. Mr. Thielker stated that the WRTA has the money to continue with no fares.

BUSINESS FROM THE BOARD

Jacquelyn Ryan and Brian Bullock confirmed the need to research other funding options for the WRTA. Brian Bullock suggested a ser charge on parking as a means of funding revenue. Mr. Lipka stated that the WRTA continues to review funding resources and will work with the City of Worcester for any agreements that are viable. Mr. Lipka stated how the \$2.5 million is a split between the 15 RTA’s (if awarded) would impact the WRTA no fare coverage by about three weeks. Mr. Lipka outlined funding sources in general as; State Contract Assistance, Local Aid -which is under 2.5% limit per year, and Federal dollars. Federal dollars break down as follows: regular operating 5307, Capital spending and Cares Act. The ARPA money received has been voted allocated for expansion of services over 5 to 6 years. Mark Binnall asked about expanded PBSTM coverage from Auburn to the New Market Basket in Shrewsbury. Mr. Lipka confirmed that expansion would cover his request. Mark Binnall asked if a shelter would be located at or near the Market Basket. Mr. Lipka replied that Market Basket has had issues with shelters on property but nothing is ruled out at this point. Mr. Lipka commented on the excellent communication between the Town of Shrewsbury (Kristen Las) and Market Basket Executives during the expansion process. Kristen Las commented on the importance of this service and how coordination will continue through her office regarding this project.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: To Adjourn at 9:06 a.m.

By: Mark Binnall, 2nd: Robert Spain

Vote: All in favor (12 in favor 0 opposed)

NEXT MEETING DATE

The next WRTA Advisory Board Meeting will be on August 18, 2022 at 8:30 a.m., via teleconference due to the Governor’s State of Emergency provisions for public meetings extended until 3.31.2023.

Minutes prepared by: Elizabeth R Pokoly

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