



**Worcester Regional Transit Authority
Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
February 15, 2024**

Chairperson Belanger called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

AB MEMBERS ATTENDANCE VIA TELECONFERENCE

Present by Zoom webinar: Stephen Rolle – Worcester, Brian Pigeon – Worcester Alt. Mark Binnall – Auburn, Robert Spain – Millbury, Robert Blair – Berlin, Douglas Belanger – Leicester, John Jovan – Southbridge, Jasmin Rivas – Southbridge Alt, Robin Grimm – Sturbridge, Austin Cyganiewicz-Rutland, Marcelino Guerra - Southbridge, (DP). Members entering after call to order: Winifred Octave – Worcester (RCP), Michael Ward – Clinton, Adam Menard – Auburn Alt, Heather-Lyn Haley – Leicester Alt. Kelly Bol – Northbridge.

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

Motion: To accept the minutes for January 18, 2024

By: Robert Spain. 2nd: Mark Binnall. Vote: All in Favor (9 in favor 0 opposed) vote passed.

BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC

The Chairperson called for any business from the public. There was no request from the public.

PERSONAL COMMITTEE

Chairperson Belanger gave a brief summary of the evaluation process for the Administrator. The contractual agreement requires a yearly evaluation (raises are from 2% to 5% maximum). Raises are based on the performance, goals and objectives over a years’ time. Under the present situation the administrator has only been on the job for 6 months. Due to this exception and upon board approval a 5 percent raise for FY’25 (starting July 1, 2024) was recommended. This number is based upon the work done and goals stated while under the interview process. Board members discussed Joshua’s handling of the snow storm, consistent board communications and working well with the City of Worcester. A few members questioned whether a raise should be considered within 6 months of employment. Chairperson stated the Joshua Rickman will have his goals and objectives for the board meeting in March 2024. These goals and objectives would when support the FY’25 evaluation process for FY’26.

Motion: The WRTA Advisory Board votes to authorize the maximum of 5 percent increase to Joshua Rickman, WRTA Administrator effective July 1, 2024. By: Robin Grimm. 2nd: Steven Rolle. Roll Call Vote:

Steve Rolle	yes
Doug Belanger	yes
Robert Spain	yes
Mark Binnall	yes
Robert Blair	yes
Michael Ward	yes
Austin Cyganiewicz	yes
Jasmin Rivas	abstained
Robin Grimm	yes
Winifred Octave	yes
Marcelino Guerra	yes

All in Favor (10 in favor 1 abstained 0 opposed) vote passed.

COMMITTEE’S REVIEW – out of order

Chairperson Belanger gave a brief summary of the sub committees for the WRTA Advisory Board. Audit and Finance Committee meets semi-annually for the budget(s). Personnel Committee meets yearly for the Administrator’s evaluation and when needed. Chairperson Belanger asked board members to send an email of interest to Elizabeth. Committee appointments will be reviewed for the fiscal year change in July. Elections for officers will be done at the June 2024 meeting.

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



Chairperson Belanger introduced Josh Rickman for the Administrator’s report. Joshua Rickman thanked the board. Joshua Rickman stated it has been a pleasure over the past 6 months to meet with the City and communities of the WRTA.

COMMUNICATIONS UPDATES

Route & community profiles have been sent to all board members via Drop Box. These profiles will be updated as needed and done on an annual basis. The profiles will be on the WRTA website by mid-march. Joshua Rickman explained how this is a first step in a larger process which includes the RFP for planning services. The information obtained would include service standards, identifying goals, bus stops etc.

This week’s winter storm went without any incidents. The WRTA continues to use the text feature to update riders (who subscribe) as well as the website.

In the month of April, the town of Paxton will be joining up with SCM Elderbus for services.

AMENDED FY’24 BUDGET

Thomas Coyne gave a brief presentation on the FY’24 amended budget and answered questions from the board members. The amended budget also considers the board’s discussion at the January meeting to move forward on the Administration’s directive to expand part-time drivers to full-time. The FY’24 amended total budget figure for approval by the advisory board was stated as \$34,435,512.

The amended budget totals compared to the prior approved budget figures:

Expenses \$34,435,512 from \$34,440,125 a decrease of \$4,613.

Revenue \$2,427,300 from \$359,028 with an increase of \$2,068,272 due to the MassDOT discretionary grant figures. There also were sales from surplus vehicles and an increase in ad revenue.

Federal Operating Assistance \$6,089,577 from \$19,987,365 with a decrease of \$8,004,155. CARES Act decreases to cover Free Fare, American Rescue Plan monies are also spent down for expanded and night services. Preventive Maintenance monies were allocated for use in paying for security services at the Hub. Net Cost of Service \$25,918,635 from \$19,987,365 an increase of \$5,931,270.

Motion: The WRTA Advisory Board votes to accept the amended FY’24 budget for \$34,435,512 as presented on February 15, 2023. By: Robert Spain, 2nd: Steve Rolle. Roll Call Vote:

- Steve Rolle yes
- Doug Belanger yes
- Robert Spain yes
- Mark Binnall yes
- Robert Blair yes
- Michael Ward yes
- Austin Cyganiewicz yes
- Jasmin Rivas yes
- Robin Grimm yes
- Winifred Octave yes
- Marcelino Guerra yes

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

50 RTA ANNIVERSARY

Jamie Winters gave a brief presentation on the marketing for the RTA 50th Anniversary. A bus has been wrapped and will be participating in the St. Patrick’s Day parade on March 10th 2024. The retro design incorporates the original red and yellow coloring with a stylized flair. Board members suggested 50th handouts such as pens, pencils and stickers. Jamie Winters listed several general marketing activities. The WRTA will be recognized at the Chamber of Commerce “Breakfast Club” Salute on March 7th. The WRTA will have a branded story feature in Livability Magazine. A re-branding procurement is scheduled for Spring of 2024. The WRTA will partner with WCAC to look into an internship (Youthworks Program) for travel training in Spring 2024. Administration is seeking ideas for the re-use of the former bike rack space at the Hub. Jamie Winters commented

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Worcester Regional Transit Authority

Moving Our Region Forward

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on the possibly of the mobile farmers market and WPL mobile library. The administration is open to suggestions from the board members on use of the space.

MEMBERS COMMENTS

Heather-Lyn Haley commented on the need for social service activities and information at the WRTA Hub. Heather-Lyn Haley commented on working with medical students to better understand and communicate bus services. Heather-Lyn Haley mentioned working with travel trainer Karen Andersen-Walsh from CMTM. Robin Grimm inquired as to opioid services or resources references at the Hub. Robin Grimm commented on possible sharing of available funding. Joshua Rickman stated that health and human services is a positive support. The lobby is presently being reviewed for refurbishment and more details will follow as this process continues. Mark Binnall suggested that van purchases include vehicles with 4-wheel drive. Joshua Rickman responded that the suggestion will be looked into when future purchases are made.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion: To Adjourn at 9:03 a.m.

By: Robert Spain, 2nd: Mark Binnall

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

NEXT MEETING DATE

The next WRTA Advisory Board Meeting will be on March 21, 2024 at 8:00 a.m., via hybrid teleconference due to the Governor’s State of Emergency provisions for public meetings extended.

Minutes prepared by: Elizabeth R Pokoly

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