



**Worcester Regional Transit Authority Advisory Board  
Audit & Finance Committee Meeting Minutes April 7, 2025  
Zoom Webinar**

1. **Chairperson Brian Bullock called the meeting to order at 8:02 a.m.**

2. **Clerk Robin Grimm called roll**

Stephen Rolle – Worcester, Douglas Belanger – Leicester, Brian Pigeon, Alt – Worcester, Brian Bullock – Holden, Robin Grimm – Sturbridge, Hollie Lucht – Shrewsbury. In attendance after call to order: Adam Menard – Auburn, Board member Nelly Medina. Left attendance after call to order Hollie Lucht - Shrewsbury. WRTA Administration in attendance: Thomas Coyne, Deputy Administrator/CFO, Joshua Rickman, Administrator.

3. **Approval of Minutes from April 4, 2024**

**Motion: To accept the minutes for April 4, 2024 By: Doug Belanger. 2<sup>nd</sup>: Robin Grimm. Vote by Roll Call: (4 in favor 1 abstained 0 opposed) vote passed.**

Stephen Rolle	yes
Doug Belanger	yes
Brian Bullock	yes
Robin Grimm	abstained
Adam Menard	yes

4. **Business from the Advisory Board Audit & Finance Committee Members**

Chairperson Brian Bullock called for any business from the committee members. There was no business from the committee members

5. **FY'26 Budget Presentation by Thomas Coyne Deputy Administrator & CFO**

Thomas Coyne, Deputy Administrator & CFO gave an overview for the FY'26 Consolidated Budget. There are five third party contractors: CMTM, PBSTM, South Central Mass Elderbus, Councils on Aging, Micro-Transit (Premium level shared-ride service) and Administration. Each budget was reviewed with highlights for increases and decreases. Thomas Coyne informed the board that this FY'26 Consolidated budget does not include the Union Contract.

Fringe benefits mainly due to projected health insurance costs rose across the board for CMTM, PBSTM & Administration. While SCMEB hourly wage increase by one dollar. Committee members discussed the importance of ongoing negotiations with health providers. Tom Coyne informed the committee members that health insurance falls within the Union's scope. Administration wages were up due taking on the travel training division as well as the new travel training position. That new position is partially covered by a grant for one year. CMTM has increases due to their new referral program and a mentorship program which are all aimed at job retention.

Security and maintenance costs have risen across the board with CMTM, PBSTM & Administration to cover Worcester Police Details. Building Maintenance costs for both buildings increased due to aging. Bus shelters cost increased to allow for the WRTA to place needed padding on the city sidewalks. The WRTA is expecting about six new shelters. Administration's information technology increased \$67,300 from last year's \$4,320. This reflects the needed IT for the new system that will replace Clever. The WRTA has contracted Bryley Systems for this project. Another large increase was in transportation planning with the use of Nelson Nygaard which is up 35.2%. The WRTA has a grant that covers 80% of those costs.

PBSTM contracted service with Yellow Cab is trending higher. Yellow Cab takes up the overflow from the ADA trips scheduled through PBSTM. Increase in ridership means an increase in ADA trips within the boundaries of their service coverage. Committee member Doug Belanger agreed that expanded services

**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	



correlates to expanded costs not just on fixed route. Tom Coyne spoke about the Town of Westborough possibly joining the WRTA's mobility management program. The WRTA pays for the insurance on all the van's but is working to encourage the towns to self-insure. Micro transit service through VIA is exempt from fare free and costs \$2.00 per ride. It is not an at your door service and has one wheelchair accessible vehicle. The WRTA will have an RFP out for this service and is asking for all 4 vehicles to be wheelchair accessible. Transit advertising is down 20% while surplus vehicles (especially in the van division) are expect to be up as the current trend is better pricing for vans then buses.

The balance of monies remaining in the CARES ACT funding is \$20,352,401. Should the committee recommend fare free for FY'26 the line items would be adjusted and the WRTA will be applying for federal grants with such a vote. American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) with \$902,356 budgeted for FY'26 balances at \$1,909,729. Concerns for holding monies in challenging and unknown political climate were discussed.

Total expenses are \$38,754,911 and increase of 6.2% from last year while total Revenues are \$5,933,736 a decrease of -1.0%. Total Federal Operating Assistance was listed as \$4,788,057 an increase of \$2,180,554 from last year. Net Cost of Service \$28,033,118 up 0.6% from last year. State Contract Assistant remains at \$21,721,844 and Local Assessments are capped at 2.5% per year. The WRTA use capital money to make up differences. The FY'26 consolidated budget up 6.2% from FY'25 at 38,754,911 and this does not reflect the Union contract negotiations.

The Audit and Finance Committee members agreed to offset passenger revenue line item for \$5,517,286 with CARES ACT money in FY'26.

Chairperson Brian Bullock asked for a motion to recommend the amended budget as presented to the Advisory Board with direction that the Administration will look into using more CARES ACT money whenever possible.

**Motion: The WRTA Advisory Board Audit & Finance Committee votes to recommend the amended budget as presented to the Advisory Board with direction that the Administration will look into using more CARES ACT money whenever possible. By: Doug Belanger. 2<sup>nd</sup>: Robin Grimm.** In discussion before a roll call. Some committee members cautioned against keeping a large amount of unspent CARES ACT monies on the books. Questions about the RAN interest lead to a discussion about using CARES ACT money to offset the need for a note. Further discussions prompted asking the administration for compatible uses for spending down that pool of money. Thomas Coyne recommended offsetting the Operating Assistance Special Rule line item in the amount of \$2,445,528 with CARES ACT monies. It was explained that operating monies were a compatible usage.

Given this further amendment Committee Member Doug Belanger withdrew the first motion and this was 2<sup>nd</sup> by Committee Member Robin Grimm.

The committee members agreed to offsetting the Operating Assistance Special Rule line item in the amount of \$2,445,528 with CARES ACT monies.

Chairperson Brian Bullock asked for a motion to recommend as amended with offsets to the advisory board with direction that the Administration will look into using more CARES ACT money whenever possible as presented.

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**Motion: The WRTA Advisory Board Audit & Finance Committee votes to recommend as amended with an offset of passenger revenue with CARES ACT money and offset of the Operating Assistance Special Rule line item with CARES ACT monies as presented to the Advisory Board with direction that the Administration will look into using more CARES ACT money whenever possible.**

**Vote by Roll Call: (5 in favor 0 opposed) vote passed unanimously.**

Stephen Rolle	yes
Doug Belanger	yes
Brian Bullock	yes
Robin Grimm	yes
Adam Menard	yes

**6. Advisory Board Audit & Finance Committee members and Other(s) as directed by the Chairperson**  
Chairperson Brian Bullock asked if there were any members who wished to speak. Committee Member Doug Belanger and Brian Bullock asked the administration for a future meeting to go over the limitations and possibilities of drawing down CARES ACT monies.

**7. Adjourn**

**Motion: To Adjourn at 9:37 a.m. By: Doug Belanger, 2<sup>nd</sup>: Stephen Rolle Vote by Roll Call: All in Favor (5 in favor 0 opposed) vote passed unanimously.**

Stephen Rolle	yes
Doug Belanger	yes
Brian Bullock	yes
Robin Grimm	yes
Adam Menard	yes

NEXT MEETING DATE

There was no WRTA Advisory Board Audit & Finance Committee Meeting scheduled.

Minutes prepared by: Elizabeth R Pokoly

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