

## **Lowcountry Regional Transportation Authority Board Meeting**

January 25, 2012 – LRTA Board Minutes

Fred Harvey offered the Invocation, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chair Jenny Carter called the meeting to order at 2:04 pm.

Roll: Jenny Carter, Fred Harvey, Dick Stewart, Louise Pinkney, Barbara Childs, Chris Hutton and Ginnie Kozak.

Also in Attendance: Craig Forrest; SCDOT Commissioner, Bill Harned; First Transit Area Vice President, Rochelle Ferguson and Paula Porter, Palmetto Breeze

Chair Carter introduces Barbara Childs, the newest Board member representing Beaufort County. She introduces Bill Harned from First Transit. Bill is assuming Bill Williamson's duties. Chris Hutton congratulates Bill on his new position.

### **Approval of Minutes – Nov 30, 2011**

Motion to Accept Minutes was made by Dick Stewart; Second Chris Hutton. Motion Carried.

### **Action Items:**

1. All items will be approved as a group. Ms. Ferguson states she has the annual SCDOT 5311 grant application for operational funds. Chair Carter must sign it and it requires a witness. We also have contract MT-01312-91 which is for funding for one MCI motor coach which just came in Jan 11<sup>th</sup>. We have contract PT-11309-A1 which is for \$62,000 for two service vehicles.
2. The next item is the Force Account plan. SCDOT requires us to update this and submit it every year with the SCDOT 5311 grant application. It justifies in house maintenance on our vehicles instead of sending them out. Ms. Porter and Chris Rogers worked together on this together to get this year's numbers.
3. Ms. Ferguson states the next item is the Maintenance Policy. Sorry for the late submittal, but Chris Rogers submitted it to me this past Sunday. Chair Carter reads the summary of changes in the policy. Does everyone feel comfortable with these changes and we can include it with the vote. Members respond yes.
4. The next action item is the Board nominations. David Blauch sent us an email listing the nominations for consideration from the Nomination Committee. They are Dick Stewart as Board Chairman and David Blauch as the Vice Chair.

Motion to accept all items was made by: Chris Hutton; Second Fred Harvey. Motion Carried.

### **Informational Items:**

**Director's Report:**

Ms. Ferguson states that she will read the highlights of her report. The cell phone ban is in place for all commercial drivers. They have received training and a copy of the information and signed off on this. This includes the push to talk feature which we use in our system. We have come up with a system to work around this.

An update from the last meeting, Mr. Bob Connelly from Allendale County Office on Aging has resigned. Chair Carter asks if there is a replacement. There is no one as of yet. Tammy Redd is temporarily filling it. The new photo copier was installed and we received training. Hargray also installed a new fax line for this machine. The financial audit has been complete and you received a copy of the report at the last meeting. We did an RFQ for the trash service and the office renovation, of which the office renovation committee has received a copy of the report.

I met with Barbara Childs who brought us Christmas cookies. The toys and canned goods from the Christmas party were donated. The old phones were donated to Beaufort-Jasper Comprehensive Health. The annual report is complete and each Board member will be provided three copies today. It does not include the executive summary.

A copy of the autopsy for the pedestrian fatality in October has been received. We are receiving estimates for the repair work on that bus.

Dick Stewart asks what bids came in for the office renovation project. Ms. Ferguson states we received two bids from the 32 packages we sent out. One from JMD Construction in Myrtle Beach for \$16,120 and one from Mccdees Construction in Charleston for \$7,725. Several local people received the RFQ and no one locally responded. Dick Stewart asks if we thought the bidding process deters them from applying. Chair Carter states can we send out for rebid by calling them? The prices seem high as it's a pretty small job; it's just a door and a window. Chair Carter asks if we can rebid it and make some phone calls. Dick Stewart asks if there is an insurance threshold. Ms. Ferguson said we did not include that in the RFQ. Dick Stewart asks if Ms. Ferguson will send us a copy of the list of vendors who received the RFQ. Chair Carter says lets go over the list and make some phone calls. Please send Rochelle a list of people you may contact as she has to keep a listing. Please research what is required, in the mean time, let's circulate the list of the 34 bidders, let's get the folks who are likely to do it for the amount we talked about, if they are interested put them on the list and ask them to submit the bid by the due date. Chair Carter asks are we are going to re-bid. Dick Stewart says yes. Bill Harned asks if the Board would give the committee a threshold so they can move forward. Dick Stewart says yes, \$5,000 and under, let's move forward. Motion to accept was made by Dick Stewart; Second Chris Hutton. Motion Carried.

**Finance Director Report:**

Paula Porter presents the December statement of accounts and balance sheet. Dick Stewart asks why we are over target by 57.2% on the County allocations and grants. Ms. Porter states that as of December we should be at 50% of the yearly budget. We are 7.2% over target not 57.2% over. Ms.

Ferguson states that the County allocation is over because The Town of Hilton Head Island pays their allocation all at once at the beginning of the year. Dick Stewart asks if we know what we are going to receive when we prepare the budget and do we actually receive that amount. Chair Carter states yes, that is a budget, a plan.

### **Chairperson's Report:**

Chair Carter asks if Ms. Ferguson has already handed out the annual report. Ms. Ferguson states that she has three copies for each Board member, please see her to receive them. Dick Stewart states they are for the Board members to hand out and discuss with their County Council representatives. Ms. Ferguson states this is the third annual report we have completed and the goal is for the members to meet with their county representatives to discuss Palmetto Breeze's status and highlights of the organization. If you would like me to attend those meetings with you, I would be happy to. Beaufort County has three representatives, but in addition, The Town of Hilton Head Island is a good one to visit as they are one of our funding partners. If you would like additional copies, please let me know, I would be happy to make more copies. I would like to thank Mary Alice Springs for helping me print these all last night. I had some formatting issues, and she stayed until 8:00 PM to help me get this done. Ginnie Kozak asks if we go to our State Legislators to present this. Ms. Ferguson states that sometimes representatives from TASC go to the legislators. Ginnie Kozak says we should ask the State Legislators to come to us and have a reception or lunch for them and present them with the report and discuss future items. They could make a difference. Ms. Ferguson states we also go to Legislative Delegation meetings. Dick Stewart states he would be happy to work with you on this on what this presentation should be.

Chair Carter stated she has been involved with the finance review, which you will see in the committee reports. I have also told Fred Harvey that the TASC conference is being held the week of March 19<sup>th</sup> and they will have a session on Sunday March 18<sup>th</sup> for Board members. Two members can go. Louise Pinkney can go and there is RTAP scholarships available. Please let Rochelle know if you are interested.

Chair Carter states Dick Stewart is the Chair of the Finance Committee. As he will be the Chair of the Board, I appoint myself to be the Chair of the Finance Committee. I also need one other person to be on the committee with me. Ms. Ferguson states Hampton County has appointed Lynette Harley to be on the Board and maybe she can be on the Finance Committee. Chair Carter asks Barbara Childs if she wants to be on the Finance Committee. Ms. Childs says whatever your wish is. Chair Carter appoints both Ms. Childs and Ms. Harley to the Finance Committee.

### **Committee Reports**

Louise Pinkney states there is nothing new since her last report.

Chris Hutton states that David Blauch had the Policy and Planning Committee report in the package.

Chair Carter states the Finance Committee reviewed three months, September, October and November. Everything was in compliance. One thing to point out is that the Daufuskie Ferry money that Palmetto Breeze has received from SCDOT and paid to Beaufort County for the operations of the public ferry is no longer being passed through Palmetto Breeze. No one knew we weren't handling the funds until Ms. Porter submitted it for reimbursement to SCDOT and they told her that it is now being paid directly to Beaufort County. Dick Stewart asks if this affects us financially or is it just an administrative change. Ms. Ferguson states it is just an administrative change. However, it concerns me as we are the designated public transit authority for the area and we have been handling it for several years. We are the only transportation authority in this region and all funds should go through us and for them to make this change and not notify us of it concerns me. We were not informed of the change, nor was Beaufort County. Chris Hutton asks if we lose administrative funds because of this change. Ms. Ferguson replies we never received an administrative fee for processing these funds. Beaufort County has given us \$7,000 from the local side to administer the funds and the ferry ticketing and identification system. Dick Stewart asks Ms. Ferguson to ask SCDOT why we are no longer handling the funds.

Dick Stewart discussed the Marine Division Committee. He states that the committee drafted a report after visiting Daufuskie Island and meeting with the owners of Melrose and the general perception to date is that the economic future of the ferry is that Daufuskie Island is more aligned with Savannah than it was when it was first being developed. We submitted a recommendation to the County and asked for feedback. We are waiting on their response while they do some research and analysis on this. I recommend we do our own analysis if we have the man power to do so. One of the issues since we received in the letter from the County to investigate starting a Marine Division and subsequently a ferry service is the concern of the fluctuating funding. The conclusion is there are grants available, primarily for capital equipment. There is the potential for reliable ferry service between Daufuskie and Savannah, especially due to the development in the downtown area with shops and restaurants in Savannah. The recommendation was the fee to be determined would be charged to real estate owners on Daufuskie. The fee would be based on the number of parcels and how much we think it would cost to run the service. After submitting this, Morris informed us that a number of those parcels are time share and would not be subjected to the same amount as someone who owns property. It's been sitting for a few months waiting on the analysis to come back to us and find out how many are time shares and how many are property owners. I suggest we explore doing that analysis ourselves. The County Councilman who represents Daufuskie is Chairman Newton who just announced that he is running for State legislature. I believe we should get this on the table now. We are the transportation company and we are eligible for grants for equipment. The Haig Point general manager said their members are very satisfied with their ferry service and aren't interested in making any changes. As a private member myself of a club, I am sure the Haig Points general manager's opinion isn't the opinion of everyone at Haig Point. Because of this I suggest we analyze this ourselves and report back to the Board at the next meeting. Does that sound okay to everyone? Chair Carter says it sounds good to her. Dick Stewart asks Chris Hutton since he lives on Daufuskie what he thinks. Chris answers he thinks it's an appropriate path to take. I believe that the LRTA is anxious to provide some subsidized service but we all agree it is a procedure to get there. It's a private service that is actually functioning today. The bad news is that the

existing public service may cease to function by June. Dick Stewart said that as per our report homeowners pay a large amount for service people to come to the island and if we had good clean reliable ferry service that runs on a schedule to Savannah, their property values may increase 25%. This would be a pretty good return if they have to invest in this kind of service. Chris Hutton states let's get it out of the private and get it into the public venue. Dick Stewart says if this is the will of the Board, we will look into taking on the task of doing the analysis ourselves.

### **Old Business**

Ginnie Kozak states there has been a recommendation made by Bryan Hill, the Assistant County Administrator but they are waiting for Gary Kubic to make the final determination. It's not official but the Bus Livability grant does not include public transit only the rail trail. In the minds of most people the public transit part was just an add-on and they were more interested in the Rail Trail. Rochelle and I worked on an operations plan in short order and we both worked on our area of expertise and did a good job on it. I am not sure what to do, but someone needs to talk to someone in the Beaufort County Council. Chair Carter asks what is the recommendation of Beaufort County. Ginnie Kozak states it sounds negative. Dick Stewart asks do you think the Council knows what's going on. Ginnie Kozak replies I don't think they know what's going on. No one has been informed about it. Dick asks shall I make a few calls. Ginnie said they made a great presentation and it went very well. Everyone was impressed that it was a nationally recognized effort. But the head of the infrastructure department (the old engineering department) was very negative about it. Dick Stewart asks if he should make a few calls and set up a meeting and Ginnie Kozak states yes. This will be last time such money will be available. It will show that we aren't interested in the money. Chris Hutton states this is a legacy which we want to resurrect. If we let this grant go, the only one in S.C., is not a good idea. Dick Stewart said he will make phone calls to individual Council people and eventually Gary Kubic. I will discuss it with them, but then have them call Ginnie Kozak for more information. We need this money obligated by May or we will lose the money. A decision needs to be made by next Tuesday. Please send an email to Rochelle so we all know what's going on. Commissioner Forrest said that you better find out what the Department's position will be and the Commissioner's position will be because if you are going to do all this and you don't know what the Department's stance is, you will be in worse straights then you are right now. It has been a debacle since the beginning. Dick Stewart said let me tell you my approach, which is twofold. One, I think as the designated Transit Authority, to not inform the folks who asked the three of us to serve here, would be an oversight on our part and not fulfilling our responsibilities. The nature of my call would be to ask them if they heard of this and to let them know it looks like we would be losing this money if we don't get back on track. It will require the County, SCDOT and everyone else to be on the same page. I want them to know that if it does fall through the cracks and disappears it's not the fault of anyone at LRTA. I would encourage them to call Ginnie to get greater details on this. Commissioner Forrest says I am not saying you should not do your due diligence, I am just saying if a decision has been made before the Council is informed you better be sure the Department is at least in the same room. Dick Stewart asks why. Commissioner Forrest says because it has been blundered. The Department has been blamed, FTA has been blamed, LRTA has been blamed, and everyone has been blamed. We need

to move past the blame game and make a decision. Ginnie Kozak states I don't know who blamed SCDOT. Commissioner Forest states there was a discussion at one time about how did it go from the County and the Department and then forwarded to FTA with only so much as a cursory glance. To me, the Department made a mistake by not finding these omissions, errors, unknowns and sending it on. And then FTA awarding the grant with a major news splash and then coming back several months later, saying, oh by the way. If you want it to happen you will have to make it happen. If you don't, don't blame us. I will send you an email in a week or so reflecting this if I don't hear from you.

Chair Carter says the next item is the Strategic Plan. If you look at last month's minutes you will see we pretty much did away with the plan. We would like to resurrect it now. It's still very relevant and includes Daufuskie Island Ferry, Mobility Management and the Bus Livability grant. SCDOT recommended we do the plan in 2010, when they did the review in April of 2010. When they request you do it, you do it, so we did. Also I want you to take into consideration; we spent \$2,500.00 of tax payer money to produce the plan. It's important to adopt a plan now rather than wait a few months until Daufuskie happens, which is what we said. A plan provides direction for the organization, it is important for the Board and the management team to have a plan that's more current than the 2008 plan. In the meantime Rochelle has spoken to John Salazar, who is one of the people who produced the plan, who promises he will have a document by the next Board meeting. Can we decide if this is something you would all like to do? Ginnie Kozak asks did we give John some of those changes that we had made. Ms. Ferguson states I did, but if you can send me the document you were working on I will submit it. Also if the Board has any changes they would like to make, please send it to me. We will get it fixed and get it to the Board so it can be approved and sent on to SCDOT and so management on our level can have something to work with and move forward. Motion to accept was made by Chris Hutton; Second Louise Pinkney. Motion Carried.

### **New Business**

Ginnie Kozak states that the FTA and the SCDOT were really excited about the Veterans and Military Family Transportation Grant. The FTA has put the grant out there for public comment already and I was really amazed that they did it this quickly. It included a very lengthy news release. It is for technology to include tablets for buses and a user portal. It was for approximately \$135,000. It is to help transport Veterans and families. FTA said SCDOT has to be quite active in this. Hopefully by the next Board meeting the application will have been submitted and accepted by FTA and we will be able to get going.

Commissioner Craig Forrest announces that Commissioners Danny Isaac and Sara Knuckles have served their term limits and will be going off the Commission during the next several months. There is a bill in the legislature to abolish the Commission. I have been assured that the bill won't go anywhere. It's a concern not for our positions but for the Department. We will have three new Commissioners whenever this has been decided. The new 7<sup>th</sup> district will be named. I will serve out the rest of my two year term. However I live in the 1<sup>st</sup> district and if the districts are upheld in the court case, not sure what that will really mean. Representative Joe Wilson's district will be depressed. It's a long linear district, now it's more of a south west district. The new Chairman of the Commission is from the Seneca and

Clemson area, Eddie Adams. I have been elected Vice Chairman of the SCDOT Commission. It will be challenging. The theme for SCDOT is to be more relevant. SCDOT has taken some major hits over the last several months. We believe we corrected the course of the ship. The Secretary has taken a leadership role with the Legislature. We are in a better position to address our financial needs in the Department. We are preparing a report that will come out after the November elections that will talk about the needs of the Department, especially system preservation. We have not done a very good job with system preservation. It is, and should be our number one priority. We will pursue possibilities of increasing revenue streams. We are looking for a menu of possibilities. We are going to work on the reduction of the 41,000 mile state maintained highways. We have several draft proposals to reduce the system, to get it down to about 20,000 miles. Certainly a 11,000 mile reduction would be appropriate. All DOT's across the USA are struggling with revenue streams. This is something we are going to look at, the relevancy of the Department and building our credibility. Dick Stewart thanks Commissioner Forrest and asks how would you shrink the network. Commissioner answers with you question the true state roads in the state and negotiate with the local government to take over other roads. It would lead to more control of their own roadways. We would come up with a formula to decide how much money based on mileage or population or vehicle miles travelled or a combination of factors to assist with maintenance expenses.

### **Announcements**

Next meeting is March 28th at Palmetto Breeze at 2:00 PM. Motion to Adjourn: Dick Stewart. Chris Hutton seconds. Adjournment at 3:50 PM.