

Lowcountry Regional Transportation Authority Board Meeting

May 23, 2012 – LRTA Board Minutes

Chair Dick Stewart offered the Invocation, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Stewart called the meeting to order at 2:10 PM.

Roll: Dick Stewart, Lynette Harley, Barbara Childs, David Blauch, Louise Pinkney, Fred Harvey, Ginnie Kozak, Jenny Carter.

Absent: Chris Hutton.

Also in Attendance: Scott Donahue, SCDOT Program Manager, Chastity Robinson, Allendale E-911, Rochelle Ferguson and Steve Richard.

Approval of Minutes – March 28, 2012

Jenny Carter proposed two changes to the minutes as follows:

1. Under Strategic Plan, change eighth sentence to read “Ms. Carter wanted to confirm that we would be looking for Board action on the document written in January 2011.”
2. Under Finance Director Report, add the word “year” after “every” on the next to last sentence.

Motion to accept revised Minutes was made by Jenny Carter; Second Fred Harvey. Motion carried.

Action Items:

Chair Stewart asked Rochelle Ferguson to present the action items.

Ms. Ferguson presented SCDOT Contract #: PT-21311-88 for additional \$50,000 in funds from SCDOT. She stated that this should help reduce the deficit for the current fiscal year. Motion to approve was made by Chair Stewart; Second by David Blauch. Motion carried.

Ms. Ferguson requested approval of the Strategic Plan as was discussed at the 3/28/12 Board Meeting. She stated that there had been no further comments or discussion regarding the plan. Motion to Approve by Chair Stewart; Second by David Blauch. Motion carried.

Ms. Ferguson requested approval of the Hurricane Pre/Post Landfall Plan also discussed at the 3/28/12 Board Meeting. She presented the following major changes:

1. Motorcoach plan to provide transportation for people in shelters in Hampton and Allendale counties to shelters further inland if needed.
2. Air rescue operation to facilitate Beaufort County emergency evacuation plan to airlift people to Jasper County.
3. Hurricane Evacuation Policy and the Recovery Policy have been combined.

Motion to Approve by David Blauch; Second by Louise Pinkney. Motion carried.

Ms. Ferguson presented the Fiscal Year 12-13 Budget in the absence of Paula Porter. She listed salary increases up to 3% and fuel price increases as assumptions on which the budget was based. Ms. Carter requested more time to have the opportunity to meet with Ms. Porter to review the narrative. Chair Stewart said he would like to be involved in this also.

Motion to Approve by Jenny Carter; Second by Fred Harvey. Motion carried.

Mr. Blauch stated that he had difficulty understanding the narrative and that he would like to see the points of the narrative explained more clearly. Ms. Carter said that is the kind of thing on which she wants to work.

Ms. Ferguson said that the Financial Plan has been sent to SCDOT for approval but has not been received back yet so it was taken off of the most recent agenda.

Chair Stewart stated that the SCDOT assessment of the Fiscal Year 2009 had been received and most areas had positive comments. He said that he can supply a copy of the full report to any interested board member and asked if there was a way to post this to the internet where it would only be available to Board members. Ms. Ferguson said that she would look into this. Chair Stewart said that he was not part of the Board in 2009 but congratulated those who were.

Mr. Blauch asked if this was unusual to be receiving feedback from SCDOT this far after the fact. Chair Stewart stated that the cover letter that came with the response from SCDOT stated this was the first year for which the Financial Review has been done. Scott Donahue confirmed this and explained that this was due to consolidation within SCDOT.

Informational Items

Director's Report:

Ms. Ferguson said in the Director's Report that the GFOA Comprehensive Annual Financial Report was awarded a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the second year in a row.

Ms. Ferguson stated that Palmetto Breeze had just experienced a Federal Transportation Administration Substance Abuse Program Audit on May 9, 2012. Terecia Wilson of SCDOT informed the transit systems that the auditors indicated this was the most pleasurable audit because of the advance preparation that was done by the transit systems and SCDOT. South Carolina had the lowest number of findings of any state since 1998. Palmetto Breeze had four (4) findings and Ms. Ferguson said that the substance abuse policy would be revised with the recommended revisions and presented at the next Board Meeting.

Ms. Ferguson reported the percentage of preventive maintenance inspections completed required correction as follows:

March: Fixed – 80% Demand – 62%
April: Fixed – 80% Demand – 100%

Ms. Ferguson stated there were no accidents during the months of March and April.

Finance Director's Report:

Ms. Porter was not present to provide the Finance Director's Report.

Chairperson's Report:

Chair Stewart reported that Beaufort County has indicated that they want to put on the ballot a special tax district for the folks on Daufuskie Island. The special tax district would be a new entity that would have its own elected Board to establish a millage rate to collect funds based on the real estate values on the island. Those funds could then be used according to the referendum documents. Chair Stewart said he told Beaufort County that the Board is happy to provide a service that fits within the mission of this organization provided there is a reliable financial stream which would support the provision of that service. We are not in the position to be cast as being responsible for filling some need without having the necessary resources and authority.

Chair Stewart said Beaufort County would like Palmetto Breeze to handle the administration of reserve parking spaces for ferry riders. The administration of this process is cumbersome and expensive. The county would like us to invoice and collect for this but is unable to give a definitive number of riders. Chair Stewart would like to discuss merchant services further and intended to meet with Rochelle and Paula to further discuss and draft a response for Beaufort County.

Chair Stewart started a discussion of grant application approval and processing. He said that he had no policy or recommendation to bring forward but he was reluctant on the part of this entity to undertake a commitment of any matching funds in any jurisdiction unless the Board has an opportunity to say that this is a grant that fits into the mission that we are engaged in. He is happy to sign any application to which he is directed by the Board. He requested that there be some direction and guidance at the next Board meeting.

David Blauch stated that now that the strategic plan is in place, any grant should adhere to the plan in order to be pursued.

Ginnie Kozak said there are a lot of things not covered in the strategic plan about planning. There are grants such as the Corridor Alternative Analysis grant which would allow for real strategic planning. We need a real strategic plan for the future of transit services as opposed to future relationships with people and so on. That is the kind of grant that is very essential to going forward to look at what Palmetto Breeze is going to be doing in terms of services but it would not fit in with the current strategic plan. We were discouraged by SCDOT from applying for the Corridor Alternative Analysis Grant this year because they wanted region-wide community support and this would probably not go forward.

David Blauch said that funding strategy in the strategic plan calls for continued funding in partnership with LCOG in applying for grants and other financial opportunities.

Jenny Carter stated that before applying for grants, the Board needs to make sure that SCDOT is in agreement. Anytime the Board can get grant dollars, they should but not just because they are available. An addendum to the strategic plan should be added that states that any grant opportunity should first be discussed by the Board.

Chair Stewart said that his concern was that these opportunities sometimes come up quickly between Board meetings and there is no time for Board discussion. Ginnie Kozak responded that this should probably not happen in the future because the Board should know in advance about upcoming grant opportunities that come up every year. She said she would like to talk at the next Board meeting about future grants and what the Board can do to garner community support.

Fred Harvey stated that the Board members need to go back to county or city councils and tell them about grant opportunities to gather support.

Ms. Kozak added that the councils should pass resolutions to show their support. A regional travel demand model is being worked on at this time and all four counties are participating financially plus four of the municipalities in Beaufort County. Individual calls to these entities are what brought about their involvement.

Chair Stewart said that he signed the last grant application because it needed to get done quickly. Ms. Kozak called this the VTCLI grant and said that it has already been received. LCOG applied for this almost a year ago and was awarded it on 11/11/11. It was the only one in South Carolina and we are now going through the bureaucratic fine tuning of details. This grant will provide for technology on Palmetto Breeze buses that will help veterans and active duty military. Palmetto Breeze will bill LCOG who will be reimbursed by SCDOT who will be reimbursed by FTA. Jenny Carter asked how quickly Palmetto Breeze can be paid and Ms. Kozak responded well under 30 days although both acknowledged that it would likely be more than 30 days between initial expenditure by Palmetto Breeze and reimbursement.

Chair Stewart then enumerated the following steps to be followed regarding grant applications:

1. Guidance from Board for signing prospective grant applications that come between meeting cycles
2. Compliance of grant applications with the strategic plan and LRTA's mission
3. Communication to the public regarding federal grant money that is being received

Fred Harvey stated that not much is allocated in the budget for advertising. Chair Stewart responded that he was thinking of direct communication with reporters and via news releases.

Committee/Project Reports

Louise Pinkney said that she and Fred Harvey had not met regarding Organizational Development Committee but would be in the future.

David Blauch said he had conducted the Maintenance Audit earlier that day. He stated that the PMI numbers had already been covered by Rochelle under the Director's report. The maintenance on cutaways improved from 62% in March to 100% in April. There were only two major equipment failures in the last two months. One was fixed in-house while the other (Bus #929) was sent to W.W. Williams. The shop is in excellent condition. The Fire Department was brought in to go over building safety in March and April training was standard maintenance training via webinars. No responses or exceptions had to be reported to FTA/SCDOT. Building inspections in March and April were both conducted satisfactorily.

David Blauch then reported that Chris Rogers had requested if the rule requiring safety vests could be amended so that vests would not need to be worn in a 12' zone outside the back of the shop when working on the front of a bus. Mr. Blauch said that it would be safer for a maintenance worker to not be wearing a vest around moving parts so he suggested that the Board would allow this exception. Motion to Approve was made by David Blauch; Second by Dick Stewart. Motion carried.

Fred Harvey asked if the warranty of a bus would be jeopardized if maintenance is not done within a certain number of miles. David Blauch responded that this was correct and that maintenance has to be done within 1000 miles. Generally it is done between 500 and 800 miles of recommended intervals.

Jenny Carter reported that the Finance Committee review of this period did not get done so it will be completed with the next period in time for the next Board meeting. Ms. Carter then asked for the Board to ratify the check signing policy which is as follows:

Checks for \$10,000 or less - signature of Executive Director only

Checks for \$10,000+ - \$50,000 - signature of Executive Director and Finance Director

Checks for \$50,000+ - \$500,000 - signature of Executive Director plus one signature of either the Board Chair or Vice Chair

Checks greater than \$500,000 – signature of the Executive Director plus two additional signatures from either the Board Chair, the Board Vice Chair or the Chair of the Finance Committee.

Motion to Approve was made by David Blauch; Second Fred Harvey. Motion carried.

David Blauch then added that the back of the Maintenance Report that he passed out earlier, has descriptions of the major equipment failures that occurred in March and April on the back.

Chair Stewart gave the report for the Marine Division Study Committee and said that Beaufort County is considering options regarding ferry service to Daufuskie Island. Chair Stewart maintains that the long term solution is to put in place a funding stream that will be generated by the people of Daufuskie. He stated that no activity is required on the part of the Board at this time but asked the Board to consider making a request to LCOG to advise the Board regarding grants for capital equipment that could be used for a ferry service and suggested that Paula Porter could do some financial analysis of these grants.

Old Business

Lynette Harley and Louise Pinkney need to submit Conflict of Interest forms.

New Business

Ginnie Kozak asked for an item to be put on the agenda for the next Board meeting that would allow her to talk about upcoming grants and what the Board can do to help pursue them. Chair Stewart asked that Ms. Kozak also do a review of LCOG for the Board at that time.

Barbara Childs asked if anyone brought up that Beaufort County has received an MPO designation. Ginnie Kozak said that has not yet happened but there is a new urban area that consists of Hilton Head Island, Bluffton and Sun City.

Announcements

Rochelle Ferguson announced that Board member training will be held in the Beaufort area on 10/2/12 and customer service training on 10/3/12. More details to follow at a later date.

Adjournment

Next meeting is July 25th at Palmetto Breeze at 2:00 PM. Motion to Adjourn made by David Blauch; Second Jenny Carter. Adjournment at 3:30 PM.