

Lowcountry Regional Transportation Authority Board Meeting

July 25, 2012 – LRTA Board Minutes

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

Roll: Jenny Carter, Fred Harvey, Dick Stewart, Chris Hutton, David Blauch, Ginnie Kozak and Barbara Childs

Absent: Louise Pinkney and Lynette Harley

Also in Attendance: Rochelle Ferguson and Paula Porter, Palmetto Breeze.

Approval of Minutes – May 23, 2012

Motion to Accept Minutes was made by David Blauch; Second Jenny Carter. Motion Carried.

Action Items:

1. Rochelle Ferguson states we have a Memorandum of Understanding from LSCOG for Allendale County Scooter call center services which cost \$1000 a month. Ginnie Kozak asks what the cost savings is. Ms. Ferguson states it used to cost us approximately \$35,000 a year for the salary plus benefits of one full time person, and we also had an additional part time employee and paid another \$12,000 a year approximately, so the savings is significant.
2. Ms. Ferguson states we have a revised substance abuse policy. There were changes made throughout the policy based on the FTA substance abuse program audit we just went through. Dick Stewart asked who initiated the changes. Ms. Ferguson states it was the consultant that SCDOT hired to guide us through the audit process. Ms. Ferguson reviews some major changes. Fred Harvey asks if you can dispute a positive result. Ms. Ferguson states yes, when they draw a urine test, they split it into two samples and they can retest if you dispute the first result, however there is a charge. Chair Stewart asks what the penalties are if we do not inform SC DMV of a positive test. Ms. Ferguson replies she didn't know that it was a law until recently that she was required to send a positive result to SC DMV. Barbara Childs asks if we have proof that we sent it to DMV. And she said no, she doesn't recall but we should send it certified with return receipt so we have proof we informed DMV in the future. Ms. Ferguson states the Operations Review Committee suggested we increase random alcohol testing from 10% to 25%. Chair Stewart asks how many more times a person is tested then. Ms. Ferguson says it is a random pool which is picked quarterly. One employee could get picked four times a year whereas another employee may not be randomly selected at all. Ten percent is the minimum required by law. Chair Stewart asks must it be random and Ms. Ferguson states yes, other than reasonable suspicion.
3. Chairman Stewart states we received an agreement from Beaufort County for the administration of parking fees for Daufuskie Island Ferry. Chris Hutton states he did not see anything in the contract that allows LRTA to cancel the agreement, only the County has the ability to cancel the services. Chair

Stewart agrees with Chris, stating we should both have the ability to cancel it with 90 days notice. The County will pay us a set fee to manage the parking for the ferry. Mr. Hutton asks if we provided them the figures and Chair Stewart states we did give them the figures.

4. Ginnie Kozak discusses the Marketing Plan of Palmetto Breeze. She states it's a joint effort. She did the strategy but the real thinking came from Ms. Ferguson and Mary Alice Springs, the Mobility Manager. They brainstormed it and I tweaked it. Ms. Kozak reviews the plan. She states marketing is usually done last when there is nothing else to do but it should be incorporated into LRTA's monthly business. We have a small budget, a little over \$7000 last year. With electronic media and electronic blogs, it will allow us to update information. Newspapers are very short staffed and it's hard to get anyone out to cover a story. Chair Stewart asks how we will measure success. Ms. Kozak replies the main objectives are promotional strategies, identifying new needs for transportation for the need and choice market segments, how to promote new services, presenting a consistent coordinated series of messages, conduct onboard satisfaction surveys and develop a database of what people need for transit. We can also use social media such as Facebook. Research shows it's used by people 30-50 years old. Fred Harvey states the biggest aspect of social media is there is no cost, just staff time. He feels however many people in Colleton County wouldn't have access to a computer to access social media. Ms. Kozak states you may be surprised how many people have smart phones if not a computer. Chair Stewart asks if we have the staff to update these medias. Ms. Ferguson states that Mary Alice Springs is very interested in this project. Ms. Kozak states that we must have all types of approaches in Marketing. Chair Stewart asks can we prioritize which ones we will do. Ms. Kozak replies yes, Ms. Springs and I prioritized the list together. Ms. Kozak explains how we can have Facebook contests on which driver gets the most friends. Chair Stewart asks how Facebook friends will help us promote LRTA. Ms. Kozak states it increases our exposure and their friends see our page. Chair Stewart asks how does that increase our ridership and we should prioritize based on our mission. Ms. Kozak responds that Marketing is based on awareness, interest, decision and afterwards. Chair Stewart says that if people hate the traffic on 278 and we have the jobs people need to get to, then we need to bring employees to employers. Are we going for customers or another group or employment centers? Ms. Kozak states we did not do enough work on this. I will go back and add this. Publix is a good possible employer as well as other ones. We need to reassure the current customer and then potential customers so they see a positive image of Palmetto Breeze because they still see us as a hotel worker shuttle. I will revise the plan and Dick can look at it again. Chair Stewart says we need to have employer engagement of the big companies in Hilton Head and Bluffton. Ms. Kozak states Mary Alice Springs is very good with one on one discussion such as these. Ms. Ferguson suggests we table the Marketing Plan for a vote at another time. Ms. Kozak states she wants a commitment that the Board will support the plan.

5. Ms. Ferguson states that we have a memorandum of agreement with Emergency Management Department of Beaufort County and LRTA. It is formalizing an existing verbal contract we have had for years in the event of a natural disaster for emergency evacuation procedures. Mr. Hutton asks is the driver reimbursed for lodging when there is an evacuation. Ms. Ferguson states no, they will either stay at their home or at a shelter.

Motion to Accept Items 1, 2, 3 (with additions) and 5 were made by Chris Hutton; Second Barbara Childs. Motion Carried.

Informational Items:

Director's Report:

Ms. Ferguson states that she will read the highlights of her report. She has worked on the revision of the Substance Abuse Policy, the MOU with Beaufort County EMD and has attended MPO meetings. The Board requested a Board Member only area on the website, which is set up. Board documents are in this area. I will email everyone instructions. Barbara Childs thanks Ms. Ferguson for sending the Board Meeting minutes to Beaufort County to put on their local website. Ms. Ferguson thanks Mr. Harvey, Ms. Pinkney and Mark McCain for the barbecue that was given to the staff for going more than 90 days without an accident.

Ms. Carter asks about the last page of the report which states someone fell getting off the bus, can you tell me about that incident. Ms. Ferguson states the driver left the van to deliver a document to the COA and instructed the passengers to remain seated. A passenger got up and tried to exit the vehicle and fell and broke her hip. Ms. Carter states a good idea, which we do at the DSN, is that a staff person remains with the vehicle. Or they should not leave the vehicle unattended. Ms. Ferguson states that all drivers have completed the PASS training and it's been reinforced that they are not to leave the vehicle unattended.

This Sunday Ms. Ferguson is attending a conference on commuter transportation given by CTAA.

She hands out the proposed schedule for next year's Board meetings.

Barbara Childs asks if we would be interested in televising our Board meetings. Beaufort County is looking to open to the public various county meetings. The County would come to us and film it. Chris Hutton states transparency is a good idea. Chair Stewart suggests not every meeting but twice a year would be fine. David Blauch agrees with this.

Ms. Ferguson states that the Financial Audit is currently being conducted and a summary will be presented at the next Board meeting.

Finance Director Report:

Paula Porter reads the new statement of accounts narrative which lists what is over budget and why. She compared the budget to the actual spent and anything over budget was listed on the Actual Expenses to Budget Variance Report and then she wrote a narrative explaining why these items were over budget. These only include items that were more than 10% over budget. She explains she did complete last year's budget; however she had only worked here for one month when the budget was made. She basically followed the previous year's budget. Chair Stewart asks if we have a budget line item, why we are spending more money than is allocated to that line item. Ms. Porter states we have

the funds but it was not properly allocated into the correct line item. Chair Stewart states that we should not be spending more than what has been allocated to a certain line item. He asks when an item needs to be purchased and it will put us over the budget, when is this brought in front of the Board. Ms. Ferguson states that has not been done in the past. Ms. Porter replies the Finance Manual states if a line item is more than 10% over budget it must be brought to the Board's attention. Chair Stewart says yes, but I mean before we spend it, not after. Ms. Porter states that as far as she knows no one ever analyzed how much has been spent compared to the budget throughout the year. SCDOT recommends that is analyzed once a year. She felt that it needed to be analyzed more throughout the year and took it upon herself to compare actual to budget every quarter. When things were either over budget or getting close, she has brought those items to the attention of that department's supervisor. Ms. Carter asks if depreciation would be added to the budget. Ms. Porter replies no, it doesn't fall under administration. It's not a true operating expense; it falls into a category called unallocated expenses. It is a non cash expense and doesn't affect the budget.

Ms. Porter reads the rest of the narrative and states that overtime was a major problem in operations and that the company has been working on hiring new people. Chair Stewart asked how do we relieve this problem and who does the scheduling and who analyzes if it's better to hire someone or to have a little overtime. Ms. Ferguson states she doesn't do the schedule; the Operations Manager makes those decisions and analyzes all payroll. He looks at the payroll and sees how many hours a driver had in two weeks and he then looks at the schedule, so he knows how many hours a driver has worked. We do try and keep the overtime in check because it's not good for the drivers to over utilize them. Chair Stewart asks if there is some mechanism or formula to come up with the best way to handle it. Ms. Ferguson states no, she doesn't have a formula. Ms. Carter asks if you we have part time positions or an on call position. Ms. Ferguson states no on-call positions, but we have a floater position. Ms. Carter states you could hire some part time floater positions to save money in benefits. Ms. Kozak asks what is the hour limit that triggers benefits for an employee. Ms. Ferguson states 35 hours to receive benefits. Chair Stewart asks Ms. Ferguson if there is some formula she looks at to figure out which is better to hire, part time persons or a full time person or to give overtime. I assume you make that decision. Ms. Ferguson replies no, she doesn't make those decisions, the Operations Supervisor or the Supervisor who creates the schedule makes those decisions. Ms. Carter asks Ms. Ferguson to ask the Operations Manager to look into the formula he uses. Make sure the floaters are being utilized 100% before we are using an overtime situations. Chair Stewart says Ms. Ferguson should find out how he makes that decision. I understand you don't make that decision but that person does report to you. If you could look into that and let us know how we can manage that issue.

Ms. Porter states that we are ready to sign up for Merchant Services to accept credit cards. We need to be able to do this for the Daufuskie Island Ferry Parking which we are going to administrate. She has compared three different vendors and Blackbaud, our financial software has the best rate. It will cost us \$33 for every \$1000 in charges. There are no minimums. We will also be able to accept credit cards for the sale of bus tickets. I used this fee when calculating the fee we proposed to Beaufort County to administer the parking for the ferry service. Mr. Harvey asked if they supply to equipment. Ms. Porter

states it is all handled online, we would manually enter all charges, we are not swiping. Ms. Kozak states we could even put it on the website to accept credit cards. Ms. Childs said we could put it on a smart phone. Ms. Porter agrees and says we will take baby steps first.

Mr. Blauch makes a motion to approve the Finance Director's recommendation and Ms. Carter seconds. Motion carried.

Ms. Carter asks what we do when there is money left on a grant that we haven't used such as Allendale. Ms. Porter replies it goes back to SCDOT. Ms. Ferguson states we are working on increasing ridership with Allendale County Council on Aging now there is a new person leading the organization.

Ms. Carter asks if delegates are chosen for the Board based on passengers by county. Ms. Ferguson states no, it is based on population, not by passengers.

Chairman's Report:

Chairman Stewart states he gave a presentation to the Finance Committee of Beaufort County Council on the Daufuskie Island Ferry situation saying it will require a reliable source of funding that will be available every year and they can depend upon to finance the ferry service. The result of that was some encouragement that there might be an election on Daufuskie Island to set up a special tax district. That's under discussion right now. Chris Hutton states it does have substantial benefit from tax dollar versus return. Chair Stewart states you will possibly have a referendum regarding this and Mr. Hutton replies correct. The constituency on Daufuskie Island is working hard to create a special tax district referendum on the November election. Ms. Childs asks didn't the deadline pass for this? Mr. Hutton said the Beaufort County attorney suggested it was August 2nd, but the County has to approve it first before it goes to the Election Committee. Chair Stewart states that he and Mr. Kubic met and he said it might not get on the November ballot. There could be a special election but he has some concern if there is bad weather and not enough people show up. He said the Beaufort County Council came to us with a request to study the possibility of a Maritime division and we replied a Ferry Service will only be reasonable if there is a sustainable means of financing it and the suggested means of that might be a special tax district. That issue is moving along and I think we fulfilled our responsibility in responding to Beaufort County. Mr. Hutton agrees we are now on standby.

Committee Reports

Fred Harvey of the Organization Committee states they gave a barbecue to the employees for going 105 days without an accident. It was a good motivation for them and they asked what if we went a whole year without an accident. We would save a lot of money and could afford to have another safety appreciation event.

David Blauch said the Policy and Planning committee met with the Maintenance Department and it was in excellent shape. No major equipment failures. Most repairs were completed on time and the ones

that weren't were still within the required time frame. They are doing a lot of work inside the shop instead of sending it out, including windshields. Chris Rogers is doing a good job.

Ms. Carter states the Finance Committee review was done in two pieces. She did it through May and today Ms. Childs did it through June. Everything is in place and looks great. Ms. Porter is doing a great job.

Old Business

None

New Business

Ginnie Kozak present a map of what the new MPO (Metropolitan Planning Organization) area covers. The City of Beaufort approved this map last night. It is required for us to set up a MPO in this area because we are now considered urban based on the Census of 2010. It includes Hilton Head Island, Bluffton and Hardeeville/Sun City. Chair Stewart states it would be 50,000 people needed to make a MPO and it requires the largest Municipality and the County, which is Hilton Head Island and Beaufort County. The invitation to Bluffton and Hardeeville/Sun City doesn't mean they are an operating party to the formation; they would just be a part of the governed area formed by the MPO. Ms. Kozak states Bluffton will be a partner but the minimum Federal guidelines require just the largest Municipality and the County to agree. There have been some problems among the various parties. Some people thought the less people in the MPO the less we had to divvy up the money and there were some secret meetings with SCDOT and Federal Highway. They came down thinking it was all parties interested but they came to find out it was invitation only. SCDOT wants a lead agency. They want to know one person to deal with. SCDOT advised that since this is planning we need to look to the future. That is why they decided to look at North of the Broad River. Bluffton and Hilton Head Island brought in Hardeeville and Jasper County. Looking at future development, not just residential but potential industrial. The area outlined in red has been agreed upon except for Beaufort County. Everyone has agreed that no one jurisdiction who will be receiving funds should be the lead agency. All the other organizations, except Beaufort County has strongly suggested it should be LCOG. Gary Kubic wouldn't agree to it. No decision has been made. Beaufort County wants to decide which projects will get funded. Everyone wanted a non-government entity but Beaufort County wouldn't agree. In years past SCDOT had leftover funds of 5307 but they will not reallocate it to 5311. Chair Stewart asks how much money. Ms. Ferguson states in years past, hundreds of thousands. Chair Stewart states being in the MPO allows us to tap into those funds. Ms. Kozak replies yes. Chair Stewart states so if we had a need for that type of transit we could draw from that pool. Ms. Ferguson states yes it's possible. I had a conversation with Doug Frate because the Town of Hilton Head Island had some concerns with the impact of what their decision would have on our funding. The decision on the size of the MPO doesn't matter, whatever the allocation for transit is, it will stay the same. Chair Stewart asks what happens to the rural funding. According to Doug Frate Ms. Ferguson replies it may stay the same, go up, or go down. We might see a slight increase in overall funding or a slight decrease or it may just be a wash. Chairman Stewart states

we don't want Colleton, Hampton or Allendale, though Jasper may already be in the MPO, Counties coming into this MPO. We should project how this will impact the people who we serve. So we are not surprised. Is there some mechanism that we can use to get a better grasp on this? Ms. Kozak says that it would be a good idea to sit down with people from SCDOT and have a meeting with us. Chris Hutton states at the Savannah MPO meeting they stated you have to do an analysis on what you lose and what you gain. Chairman Stewart says as a Board maybe we can come up with some questions that we can ask SCDOT and the FTA folks and maybe have a conference call. Then we could talk through some of these issues and come to a position. Chairman Stewart said as they pass these resolutions endorsing the space the follow up to that would be for us to say something reporting what this organization does and the impact of the borders of the MPO so those folks understand it's all related. Because we know Steve Riley and those on Hilton Head Island are not looking to diminish the services they receive from the folks at the LRTA. The good news is that we think we will be able to tap into these unused funds if we position ourselves to be in the front of that funding. What that will require and how we will go about doing this we should spend a little time discussing. Can we send an email to everyone and ask for a series of questions to send off to SCDOT and FTA and then maybe have a phone call with them and report that back to the Board. I would be happy to have an ad hoc committee on this important issue. I would like to participate, is there anyone else? Ginnie Kozak states she would, especially as there is a good chance LCOG will be the lead agency. Ms. Ferguson states it is proposed LRTA would have a seat on the MPO, though not a voting seat and it is proposed to be the Executive Director. Chair Stewart states that we should have a voting seat. Chair Stewart says we may want to talk to someone who has created an MPO in the last 10 years. Ms. Kozak states she will ask someone. The Federal Government should be able to tell us where that was. Chair Stewart states let's make a ex-officio informal subcommittee so we can make a list of questions and raise some concerns with SCDOT that we are not going to damage our services in our rural area because of the benefits coming from the MPO. Ginnie Kozak, Dick Stewart, and Rochelle Ferguson will contribute to it. Let's get it done in the next 10-15 days and start articulating our position.

Announcements

Rochelle Ferguson presents the GFOA award for Financial Excellence in Reporting. It will hang in the foyer of the offices. We did make a press release and it is on the website.

Ginnie Kozak states the second Veteran's grant has been received for marketing and promotions.

Next meeting is September 26th at LCOG in Point South at 2:00 PM. Motion to Adjourn: Chris Hutton. David Blauch seconds. Adjournment at 4:07 PM.