

Lowcountry Regional Transportation Authority Board Meeting

January 30, 2013 – LRTA Board Minutes

Vice Chairman Blauch called the meeting to order at 2:00 PM.

Barbara Childs offers the invocation followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll: Barbara Childs, David Blauch, Ginnie Kozak, Chris Hutton, Lynette Harley, Jenny Carter. Louise Pinkney arrives at 2:30 PM.

Absent: Fred Harvey, Chairman Dick Stewart

Also in Attendance: Rochelle Ferguson, Paula Porter, Kyle Hamilton and John Gentry.

Approval of Minutes – November 28, 2012

Motion to approve; Chris Hutton, second; Jenny Carter.

Action Items:

Vice Chairman Blauch asks Rochelle Ferguson to present the action items.

Ms. Ferguson presents a contract for Beaufort County annual appropriation for local match to our Federal and State funds. This is the same as other Counties they just do it on a different time line than others. This requires a signature and a report we send in with it. The amount is for \$230,000.00. This is a decrease from last years. She also presents a Purchase of Service Contract cancellation from Hampton County COA. There was a change in management at the time the grant application was due that may have factored in to the application not being received by SCDOT. Despite attempts by the new COA Executive Director, and the County Administrator, Hampton County grants funds have not been received to date. Ginnie Kozak and I tried to help the COA find other funds, but as of right now they do not have any additional funding and cannot pay Palmetto Breeze for any additional transportation. The County Administrator sent the letter asking Palmetto Breeze to cancel the contract. Ms. Ferguson presents three other Purchase of Service Contracts for signature. They are from Beaufort County Senior Services, Jasper County COA and Jasper County DSN. These are similar to contracts we have had in years past, with a slight increase to cover wage increases, etc. Ginnie Kozak requests we delay the review of the Palmetto Breeze Marketing Plan until Chairman Stewart can be here. He was very interested in the plan and he wanted to discuss a budget for it.

Motion to approve was made by Chris Hutton; Second by Barbara Childs. Motion carried.

Informational Items

Director's Report:

Ms. Ferguson states that passengers are up 12.4% (one way trips) over last year's figures. Because there is not a lot of other information to present within the Director's Report, Ms. Ferguson wishes to utilize this time to discuss overtime. The question of overtime was raised at one of the previous Board meetings. Ms.

Ferguson distributes a narrative explaining the reasons for overtime wages. John Gentry, Palmetto Breeze Team Leader discusses the overtime issue. Mr. Gentry explains there are various reasons for OT. Some of them are training of drivers, holidays, substituting for other drivers, etc. With Kyle's help and moving employees around, we eliminated a lot of the fixed route drivers doing exorbitant amounts of overtime by not working the weekends. He said there is training to consider as we have been training for the new possible Beaufort County DSN routes we may receive. If we get that contract we will have to add 1-2 new drivers in Beaufort and that will not add to the OT, unless we have to use a floater and he has to drive in from outlying areas. Finding a Beaufort substitute is very difficult. However OT is less now than it has been a few months ago. Beaufort will have overtime because we lost one driver, so we rerouted between 3 drivers and we cannot find another way to do this, unless we put another route on and I don't see how that will help. If we get a float driver that lives in another County, we have to pay them to dead head into work. The unemployment is low in Beaufort and it's hard to find drivers who will be a floater. Kyle, Rochelle and I came up with this sheet that explains what makes up OT, but it's not as easy as this, it's much more complicated. We are doing a much better job with overtime in the last few months. I have looked at January and beyond and I projected that the only OT we will have is in Beaufort. Ms. Carter asks how much OT are we talking about. Ms. Porter responds right now we are 49% over budget for the year. We budgeted \$ 4,939 for the year for Demand Response II and we have spent \$7,300, we are over budget \$2,400 for six months of the year. Mr. Hutton asks if this is temporary because of the training in Beaufort. Mr. Gentry responds yes, but it will continue in Beaufort. I did some reroutes in Beaufort but then I found out about the possible new routes. Mr. Hutton states what I hear you saying is in general the system is in a flux and we are addressing overtime which hasn't been focused on before and you are addressing that problem but also starting a pilot program and you are not sure how that will effect things you are working on and you don't know where the program will go. Mr. Gentry agrees, saying yes, we have tried to adjust it by getting a weekend driver. I can't cut it anymore to get it under 5 hours of OT per driver per week. Ms. Carter asks how long is this pilot going to last? Ms. Ferguson states we haven't started it yet. Ms. Carter asks if we haven't started it yet, how OT could be from that route. Mr. Gentry said we haven't started it yet. We had four routes in Beaufort prior to October, but we terminated someone and everyone else absorbed their route which created overtime. Ms. Carter says that route that got absorbed would justify a part time driver but not a full time driver. Mr. Gentry says yes, but we haven't found anyone to work part time to help cover the routes. They all drive school buses. Ms. Carter asks what about a floater. Mr. Gentry states the only one we have lives in Varnville and we would have to pay for them to dead head down here. Ms. Carter said she finds it hard to believe we can't find anyone in Beaufort to drive. She asks how many drivers do we have. Mr. Hamilton states 22 drivers, 12 of which are full time. The rest is more than 20 hours a week as a part time driver. Ms. Carter states if you count the 6 sick days, 2 weeks of vacation and 4 miscellaneous days each full time driver gets, we would need 300 days for someone to cover them. That is a full time driver you would need to hire. You don't have enough floaters. You should have the equivalent of 1.5 full time floaters as 260 days is a full time. It is more cost effective to hire someone full time then pay overtime. The \$7,800 in overtime could have gone toward a full time employee Ms. Ferguson states it is more complicated than that because of other factors. We have a geographic issue and the training issue. If you have 3 drivers in training you cannot have just one or two floaters. Then we also have employees out on workers compensation. Ms. Carter states because of the geographical issue we should have at least one 20 hour person in each county. One in Hampton, one in Colleton, one in Jasper, two in Beaufort so you

don't have this dead head time. There are people who are still looking for part time jobs. We have similar situation at my facility. We have 5 facilities which require 24 hour a day care so we have to have shifts in there to cover it. Whether they are sick or hurt, there has to be someone to cover that. We have 3 positions to cover that and they are used every single pay day. We have about 22 employees, about the same as you have in drivers. Because of this we have very little overtime. I think there needs to be more personnel. Ms. Kozak asks if there has been a cost analysis done on what it costs to have a full time employee compared to an employee doing overtime. Ms. Carter says we do not have to hire a full time person, just have the equivalent of 1.5 employees. Ms. Porter states Mr. Gentry and I discussed this last week and she will be working on it. Ms. Carter states there is no benefit to paying overtime. Mr. Gentry states this is very complicated and he was mad at himself for not being able to fix this in 5 months. In this day, if you have a commercial driver's license, you can get a job. We cannot find CDL drivers. Mr. Hutton states not at the rate we want to pay them. Ms. Ferguson states that we do have the hours to offer them. We might not have the pay rate but we have the hours. Mr. Gentry states we have the hours since the rate is so low. Ms. Ferguson states Kyle is working on a wage analysis so we can look at each position. Vice Chairman Blanch asks if part time is less than 30 hours and are we working the part time people up to the 29 hours. Mr. Gentry states yes they are less than 30 and we have been utilizing one long time part time (weekend) employee and I can't replace him as he is to valuable. However he takes off 3 months a year to work somewhere else and I have to cover him. Chris Hutton asks Mr. Gentry as Ms. Carter said, if we had a larger pool of drivers wouldn't that help and how many people would you have to hire to eliminate overtime? Mr. Gentry states but here is where it gets complicated. Unless they live in Estill or Allendale, you are asking them to get up at 2:30 in the morning and drive to the vehicle wherever it might be on the weekend. Mr. Hutton asks if they get paid to drive to it. Mr. Gentry states yes, but that's a tough thing. You drive here and then you have to hang out for the afternoon and don't get paid for 4 hours and then drive all the way back. Mr. Hutton said yes that's tough as they are gone for 12 hours a day but only paying them for 8. Ms. Ferguson states it's always been a split shift and sometimes we also put them on a contracted route during the day which creates the overtime. Mr. Hutton states there has to be a happy medium where we aren't paying people a ton of overtime but they are not hanging around on the payrolls that aren't doing something. Ginnie Kozak states it is a very complex issue. Chris Hutton states well it's up to these guys to find the answer since they know what they need. Otherwise they need to teach us everything they know.

Finance Director's Report:

Paula Porter states there is a proposed budget amendment to move funds from certain accounts to others. We have extra funds in Tires and Tubes-Buses and will move that to Tires and Tubes-Vans. Also, a mechanic has left to pursue another opportunity creating extra funds in Wages for Maintenance that we can use in other areas, such as small tools, outside vehicle repairs and towing. Mr. Hutton asks Ms. Ferguson if we will stay at one mechanic. Ms. Ferguson says no, Chris Rogers is waiting for a possible candidate for the mechanic position to get back to him. With the shutdown of the Hampton County COA route, the driver, Herbert Brown will be coming in to help the maintenance department and be a float driver. We won't spend all the money just a portion of it as we are over budget.

Motion to approve by Jenny Carter; second Chris Hutton.

Ms. Porter reviews the budget variance narrative reporting anything that is 10% or more over budget.

Chairperson’s Report:

Vice Chairman Blauch asks Ginnie Kozak to discuss the new MPO By laws. Ms. Kozak states our first meeting is February 11th for the Policy Board of the MPO. We will be officially designated as the MPO on this date; the Secretary of Transportation is coming. The MPO consists of representatives from Beaufort and Jasper Counties, the Towns of Bluffton, Beaufort, Hilton Head, and Port Royal and the City of Hardeeville. The key issue that involves the Board of Directors of LRTA and Palmetto Breeze and will require a change to each Counties resolution and a change to the by-laws of the MPO is that the Executive Director was named in the resolutions as a member of the Policy Committee. It should have been the Chairman of the Board because the Executive Director is on the Technical Committee. Some people thought the transit provider should be a voting member and others felt it shouldn’t be. Chairman Stewart felt we shouldn’t have voting rights but be an ex-officio on the policy Board and have it be the Chairman of the LRTA since the Executive Director is on the Technical Committee, since all others are DOT and Government heads. Vice Chairman Blauch states we don’t want to be in a position to choose one County over another. To change from the Executive Director to the Chairman of the Board I think we need a motion and a letter sent to the MPO stating this. Ms. Ferguson states there is one more thing, which was a problem we had at VTAG. If you look at the By-Laws they all say, like the Mayor of Bluffton, it says “The Mayor of Bluffton, or Designee”. It would be beneficial to do this for the LRTA, in the event that the Board Chairman cannot attend. Ms. Kozak states we can list the Designee, such as the Vice Chairman. Ms. Kozak and Ms. Ferguson will work on this letter.

Motion to approve by Chris Hutton; Second Barbara Childs.

Committee/Project Reports

The Organizational Development Committee did not meet. However Fred Harvey did meet in December and the report is attached.

Chris Hutton presents the Policy and Planning committee report. PMI’s are 100% on time for the last two months. There was one major failure which was a transmission. With the recent trainings we are OSHA compliant. We saw a report from the new maintenance software which was pretty impressive. Chris Rogers is still working out a few glitches, such as the software states we are 500,000 miles overdue for maintenance, when the vehicle doesn’t even have that many miles. He is working those bugs out. Everything else looks good.

Jenny Carter gave the Finance Committee report and stated she and Lynette Harley performed the review for November and December. We would like to move \$100,000 from the Reserve Account to the Investment account so we can earn more interest than the reserve fund. Ms. Porter states that when things are tight and we are waiting for DOT funds to arrive we never need more than \$200,000, so moving \$100,000 is still very conservative. There were some items in the 60 days overdue on the Accounts Receivable report which is Beaufort County Local match. It is the way they pay their bills but the money is coming in. The Westin owes us \$5,800 because of bankruptcy. Motion to approve transfer of funds is made by Jenny Carter; second Chris Hutton.

Chris Hutton stated that at the last meeting Chairman Stewart voted to disband the Marine Division. Mr. Hutton thinks that we should keep it alive. Chairman Stewart was supposed to write a letter and he feels we should email him and ask him not to send the letter. We don't want to make it so it looks like we aren't interested. We should amend that and say it is temporarily inactive awaiting funding. There are new people in the County Council and new perspectives and I don't think we should make it seem like we aren't interested. Motion to amend letter to Beaufort County made by Chris Hutton; second Jenny Carter.

Barbara Childs asks Ms. Porter if she responded to Fred Harvey's questions from the last Board Meeting about the over budget item. Ms. Porter and Ms. Ferguson said yes, they believe she did. She also asks if Chairman Stewart spoke to Beaufort County to make our funds a fixed part of their budget so we wouldn't be cut short of our funds. Ms. Ferguson will follow up with him.

Old Business

No old business.

New Business

Ms. Ferguson states everyone needs to fill out the Conflict of Interest statement for 2013. She has the Palmetto Breeze Annual Report ready and everyone will receive 3 copies, along with a copy of the Executive Summary. Ms. Kozak states it would be helpful if this report was online, it would be useful. Ms. Ferguson states the Board member's homework is to meet with your County and Town officials and present this report to them to help facilitate funding and establish a good relationship with Palmetto Breeze. Chris Hutton asks if we could have a day here at LRTA offices as an open house to County Councils to see the facility and what we do. Ms. Carter said that is a great idea. We have new County Council members in Jasper County who have no idea what we do. It would be good idea for them to see that. We could have a barbecue. Ms. Kozak, Ms. Carter, Mr. Hutton and Ms. Ferguson will help with it. Ms. Kozak suggests we do it at lunch time on the day of the MPO meeting of March 8th as people will be close by at TCL.

Announcements

Rochelle Ferguson states we are going to be at a job fair on March 7th. You must have at least one job opening and it benefits all of The Lowcountry. It is at TCL in Beaufort. Ms. Ferguson is on the Committee. She also took part in the Beaufort County Homeless event and talked to 50 people about the job fair and Palmetto Breeze transit services.

Adjournment

Motion to Adjourn made by Chris Hutton; Second Jenny Carter. Adjournment at 3:20 PM.