

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

March 27, 2013 – LRTA Board Minutes

Chairman Dick Stewart called the meeting to order at 2:00 PM.

Roll: Chairman Dick Stewart, Vice Chairman David Blauch, Ginnie Kozak, Chris Hutton, Jenny Carter, Fred Harvey, Louise Pinkney arrives at 2:25 PM.

Absent: Lynette Harley, Barbara Childs.

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

### **Approval of Minutes – January 30, 2013**

Motion to approve; Chris Hutton, second; Vice Chairman David Blauch

### **Executive Session**

Members of the public who attended the meeting were asked to leave the room. The Executive Session began at 2:05 PM and was attended by Chairman Stewart, Vice Chairman Blauch, Chris Hutton, Jenny Carter, Fred Harvey, Ginnie Kozak and Rochelle Ferguson for purposes of discussing a personnel issue. The Executive Session was adjourned at 2:15 PM and the public has been invited to return to the meeting room and returned back in open session.

Following the Executive Session, a motion was made to provide employees Sweat and Jackson a 6 months and 12 months, respectfully, extension of leave of absence. Motion to approve; Vice Chairman Blauch, second; Fred Harvey. Motion carried unanimously.

### **Action Items:**

Ms. Ferguson states we have received a letter from Jasper County DSN regarding the contract that was entered into on October 1, 2012. The route has been cancelled because we failed to give a level of service that was required to provide transportation services to their customers. It's critically important they arrive on time and leave on time and we provided less than 100% of the best service. We are making some changes as a result of issues we had. I will go to the Jasper County DSN office to meet with the staff to continue to resolve those issues. Chairman Stewart asks what prevented us from giving the level of service they expected. Ms. Ferguson replies it was a series of events including mismanagement of personnel by the supervisor, vehicle breakdowns and drivers calling in sick. We can't control when drivers call in sick, but when it's a repeated issue it is unacceptable. Chairman Stewart asks are we short on drivers? Ms. Ferguson states no, not at that time. Are we short on managers Chairman Stewart asks? Ms. Ferguson states no, not at that time, but we are now.

Ms. Ferguson states we have reinstated Hampton County COA contract. They have received their funding from SCDOT, thanks in part to SCDOT staff, SCDOT Commissioner Forest and Ginnie Kozak for assisting with this.

Ginnie Kozak hands out copies of the Marketing Strategy plan and discusses it. The biggest issue she has with it is implementing it. This will take money and the staff to achieve it. Chairman Stewart asks how we will measure success with this. Ms. Kozak states if we get an employer on board, we would have a contract for it. If we can get the Military on board, many of the enlisted are entitled to the TIP Program. If we get the Veterans to come aboard, they will pay us, which will be part of the VTCLI, Veterans Transportation Community Living Initiative. Also it will require some more transit planning if we have more sales calls. Ms. Kozak asks if the Board will assign someone to this project. Chairman Stewart replies that he spoke to the Marine Corps people about this and the bus mobility matter. Discussion followed. Chairman Stewart says we need to devise a plan stating this is what we will provide; this is what we need in upfront capital and revenue. If you agree this is what we need, how do we go about getting that? Ms. Kozak suggests Bill Harned from First Transit can help with the planning and logistics of the route. Vice Chairman Blauch asks is there a military bus

route already established within the Air Station? Ginnie Kozak states no, not even within the housing. Parris Island doesn't have it either. We could use the same vehicle, because Parris Island starts earlier than the Air Station. We do have quite a bit of information already. Chairman Stewart states since Ms. Kozak seems to have the most information would you work with Bill Harned on this? Yes, Ms. Kozak states. We can get this segment up and running and then trying some of the other stuff we talked about. We have to work with the Veterans anyway. Chairman Stewart asks if there are any employers besides the military we can work with. Ms. Kozak replies yes, Beaufort Memorial Hospital. Ms. Ferguson states they have sought us out in the past for transportation for their employees. Chairman Stewart asks what happened? Ms. Ferguson states lack of information and lack of funding. Their employees are coded by zip code but couldn't get us the information on where they live and what times they need to be transported. Chairman Stewart says what he thinks might work is that we have half a dozen apartment complexes that if you had a point to meet at, and if there are enough employees there and if the apartment complex thinks it's useful to have transportation as a competitive advantage from their residence to a significant employer, we might find some subsidies occurring in that regard. It could save a person \$1000 a month not needing a second vehicle if there was transportation to work. We should ask the hospital for funding, and it would be a good model. He volunteers to be on the committee to help with this. He can put Ms. Kozak in touch with folks who are in the developer community.

Ms. Kozak hands out commuter information from counties in GA to SC counties and SC Counties to SC Counties.

Ms. Porter presents the budget for fiscal year 2013-2014. It is a zero net income budget. Chairman Stewart asks how long it took to complete. Ms. Porter states 6 or 7 weeks. He asked if that is more than previous years. Ms. Porter states yes, this year she got into every department and analyzed it. She spoke to the Maintenance Department at length about every line item.

Ms. Kozak presents the Memorandum of Understanding between Lowcountry Council of Governments and LRTA for the items of planning, etc. that they provide to us for the 5316 and 5317 projects.

Motion to approve all five action items; Vice Chairman Blauch, second; Fred Harvey. Motion was carried unanimously.

### **Informational Items**

#### **Director's Report:**

Rochelle Ferguson states we have an update on personnel. We have hired a new mechanic, Leroy Pepin. He is an Army veteran. We now have three Army veterans in the shop.

We hired Danielle Casey for the Mobility Manager position. Ms. Casey worked for the Human Service Alliance for Beaufort County and has a degree in Psychology. She has a good understanding of all the Human Service Agencies, which is an asset to our agency. Ms. Kozak states that she is a very efficient person.

Ms. Ferguson states that we have an opening for the Team Leader position. I am trying to fill that position and I have a possible candidate and the position may be filled by April 11<sup>th</sup>. Chairman Stewart asks how long has it been vacant. Ms. Ferguson states 2-3 weeks. Chairman Stewart asks what the responsibilities are. Ms. Ferguson states scheduling the drivers, routes, overseeing the leave requests, counting fare boxes, responding to emergencies, driving if necessary. Some of the aspects are shared with the Assistant General Manager.

Kyle Hamilton is resigning. His wife is going to Law School in Georgia and he is moving to Atlanta to be with her.

#### **Finance Director's Report:**

Paula Porter states that the budget variance narrative is similar to the last one, we are over budget in the same areas as the last report, and nothing has changed. Chairman Stewart asked is there are any concerns we will run out of money in the categories. Ms. Porter states no, and we moved some money around last time in the

line items. Some line items we are under budget and some over budget, but for the most part, we are on track. Chairman Stewart asks if we run out of money, we will use our reserves? Ms. Porter answers yes. Chairman Stewart asks how much do we have in reserves. Ms. Porter states \$300,000-\$400,000. Will we return to that after this year, Ms. Porter states yes. Last fiscal year, we had a small “profit” and did not use any reserves.

#### **Chairman’s Report:**

Chairman Stewart has nothing to report.

#### **Committee Reports:**

The Organizational Development Committee will meet after this meeting.

Chris Hutton presents the Policy and Planning committee report. PMI’s are 100% on time, there are no exceptions to report, no major equipment failures. Vice Chairman Blauch states we met the new mechanic who seems professional and happy to be here. Ms. Ferguson states we took over the Beaufort Jasper Head Start program’s maintenance and she heard from Ron McNair and he said great things about the maintenance department.

Jenny Carter gave the Finance Committee report and stated all was in order and there were no problems. Chairman Stewart asked if we are looking at new auditors and Ms. Carter stated we have three more years in the contract with this auditor.

Chairman Stewart stated that there is no activity for the Marine Division. He met with Chairman Paul Sommerville of Beaufort County Council and discussed that it is a very complex issue and nothing will change unless there is funding. They are asking new Councilman Vaux to work on this project. I know that at the last meeting the question was raised if we should keep the committee in place or disband it since there are no items to work on. It was started in response to former County Council Chairman Weston Newton and we have responded to his request. Vice Chairman Blauch stated we wanted to maintain the committee to show we believe that we want to be a part of this ferry. Chris Hutton agrees with this. Chairman Stewart says he is not opposed to being part of it, especially if the tax referendum was passed. I believe we shouldn’t have rushed the tax referendum vote just because a general election was coming up. Should we take the lead on this to be known as the lead operator of the ferry, in the event that it occurs? Chris Hutton states the LRTA is the chartered transportation agency for this area. We need to take the minor lead to be the major player. Chairman Stewart concurs but states that there has been frustration with the ferry service which has been focused on the operator and the County Council and we don’t want LRTA to be associated with that frustration if the County isn’t going to take a role in this ferry project. We don’t want to take on the role of having to explain to residents why they can’t have better service for free, even if the County would be happy for us to take on the role. We requested from the County \$50,000 to do a study and that hasn’t been forthcoming. Ms. Kozak states they called Chris Bickley, LCOG and asked if there is some planning money. Ms. Ferguson asks if that was recent and Ms. Kozak states yes. Ms. Ferguson states they had a County Council retreat recently and I thought that was one of the topics they were going to discuss. Chris Hutton asks if there is any money for planning through LCOG. Ms. Kozak states yes but it’s being used by the MPO for the LATS. Chairman Stewart says a feasibility study is a good approach on here’s what we have, here is a better solution and this is what it will cost. Where does the money come from? The County, by law, has to provide some ferry service as does the school district. Then we can say this is what we can give you, based on the funds we have. By taking money from both those entities and some money from Daufuskie Island we can say this is what we can give you. We don’t need a study plan as much as a business plan. This is what you get for the dollars we have, similar to how we run our lines now. Who can come up with a plan such as this and what would it cost? Ms. Kozak states someone who is familiar with Marine service, but there aren’t that many of them. Ms. Carter states ask someone who already works in marine. What does it cost to provide that trip, regardless of the amount of people? It will still cost the same amount to run the boat whether it’s full or whether its empty. If we can use

that as a starting point, which is where I wanted to be three years ago, that we need to know what it will cost to provide that trip, not how many people will ride. It may be 10 one day and 1 the next, that we never know. Ms. Kozak states we still need to know how many people so we know what size boat we need etc. for it to be successful. Ms. Carter states we don't need to reinvent the wheel over and over again. Go to a ferry service in Virginia or North Carolina and look at their ferry service. There are some common denominators within a ferry service. Chairman Stewart states the key word is successful and we haven't defined what successful would mean. The people on Daufuskie Island think the current ferry system is not successful. Because of the way they define success, if we were to look at that, we would be providing a successful level of service. You may have meant financially successful or well loved, which is probably beyond the scope of what we will be looking at. My view is Beaufort County has politely ignored us and decided to spend their planning dollars on something else. As the Chairman of this committee and if it's the will of the Board, I will work on finding a level of acceptable service which if provided successfully we will feel comfortable doing and get that priced by people who do that for a living. This will put pressure on our partners to provide us with some funding dollars. All we do know is the current situation is not working and anything beyond what they have now will be an improvement. I don't want to have a \$40 million plan that won't happen just to provide service that LRTA will be responsible for. Our job is not to fund it but to operate it. Is this what the Board wants from me? Vice Chairman Blauch says yes, this sounds good and Chris Hutton agrees.

### **Old Business**

SCDOT Commissioner Forrest hands out the Transportation Infrastructure Task Force document and maps. Commissioner Forrest states this was adopted by the Commission. It's an easy read, please read it. Do not take things out of context. It states what our needs are, what are our options to get those needs accomplished and what happens if we don't do it. I would like to get your support on getting more funding. Rochelle Ferguson and I talked about the MPO; their Policy Board is identified and will have a second meeting. The question is should the LRTA Board have a voting member on the Policy Committee, which isn't nearly as important as the Technical Committee. Your needs will not be heard if you take it lightly. We must have an MPO to receive the funds since we have more than 50,000 people in the area. Chairman Stewart and Ms. Ferguson will draft a letter asking if the LRTA can be a voting member of the Policy Committee in the MPO as requested by the Board.

Ginnie Kozak states we are required to have a Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) to access the funds. SCDOT is paying for 80% of the plan and 20% is paid by local government. Request for Proposals have been issued for consultants and we received five proposals. The Technical Committee of the MPO is evaluating them. Six out of the eight voting members have turned in their evaluations. Don't worry about transit in the plan, it is already in it and is required. All are good firms. Chris Hutton states that they told us if we received a MPO we could join the South East region as a Bi-State MPO. Ms. Kozak states they were hoping for that but it didn't happen.

Ms. Ferguson states Palmetto Breeze is having the Open House on Friday April 5<sup>th</sup>. The food is on order; we have had 20 people RSVP so far. We are making a one page handout for the event, one side is complete, and the other side is still being worked on. Elected officials and local leaders have been invited to learn more about Palmetto Breeze services.

### **New Business**

None.

### **Announcements**

Chairman Stewart states that The Port Royal Sounds Foundation will be erecting signs that state you are entering the Port Royal Sound Watershed.

Paula Porter states that the Daufuskie Island Ferry Parking lot is full and we have sold all spots.

**Adjournment**

Adjournment at 4:13 PM.

Minutes prepared by: Paula Porter