

THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT THE NEXT MEETING

ESTUARY TRANSIT DISTRICT
REGULAR BOARD MEETING
May 13, 2022
91 North Main Street, Middletown, CT and
via ZOOM

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Strauss called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m. A quorum was established and in attendance included: Leslie, Strauss, Charlie Norz, David Lahm, Joan Gay, Tim Griswold, James Irish, John Hall, Bobbye Knoll Peterson, and Beverly Lawrence.

Absent: Angus McDonald, Karl Kilduff, Laura Francis

Also in attendance: Sheri Cote, Christina Denison, Joe Comerford, Halyna Famiglietti, Nick Pomponas

Leslie Strauss reported that the District received resignation letters from Peter Bierrie and Joe Smolis.

VISITOR COMMENTS – None.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

John Hall made a motion to accept the minutes from the 4/8/22 Board meeting. Charlie Norz seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Charlie Norz made a motion to accept the ETC Committee Minutes of 4/26/22. David Lahm seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

COMMUNICATIONS – None.

TREASURER'S REPORT – None.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

ETD/MAT Expansion Committee

Joan reported that 3 DOT representatives attended the last meeting. A copy of their meeting minutes was included in the Board packet.

Joe Comerford reported that all of the “studies” contracts have been awarded. The “kick off” for the HR study begins on Tuesday, May 17th, followed by “kick offs” of the Marketing study and the Fare study. All Board members were invited to attend any Study Committee meetings.

The AVL RFP has been issued and the District is currently responding to questions. It is anticipated that the contract will be awarded at the next meeting.

The contract for vehicle maintenance is now a combined contract with one vendor for both districts.

Motorola is experiencing supply chain issues and the radios are now scheduled to be installed in the Fall and to be completed by December.

Banking – one written proposal has been received and we are awaiting one additional proposal. Middletown will have a separate account until their debts are paid. Essex Savings Bank will no longer be used as they do not have a branch in Middletown. It is anticipated that a new bank will be identified in time for the start of the fiscal year.

Audit – Middletown has received one more extension. A non-formal, one year solicitation will be issued for ETD. It is anticipated that for the next year (when the merger is finalized) an RFP will be developed for auditing for the combined MAT/ETD Districts.

Facilities – Work with FTA is on-going to transfer assets

Tim Griswold made a motion to accept the ETD/MAT Expansion Committee Report as presented. John Hall seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Legislative Committee

As previously reported, the District provided testimony on the original language opposing the bill as consolidation may not be the “right fit” in every circumstance. Joan reported that the new language in the Bill relative to the Consolidation of Transit Districts will have little to no impact on the District.

A combined First Selectman/Legislative Breakfast has been scheduled on June 21st @ 8:30 am. at the Middletown offices. All Board members were invited to attend.

Charlie Norz made a motion to accept the Legislative Committee Report as presented. David Lahm seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Finance Committee

Charlie Norz reported that the Finance Committee met to review the proposed budget of the merged Districts. Halyna was commended for the extensive work required to develop the budget packages. It is expected that the finalized budget will be presented to the Board at the June meeting.

James Irish made a motion to accept the Finance Committee Report as presented. David Lahm seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Joe reported:

- Park Connect – The program is on track to start Memorial Day weekend; Trolley will run Thursday through Sunday, Middletown will run Saturdays and the Madison Shuttle will run weekends and holidays. The program will include the camping area at Hammonasset Beach. Brochures/signage is going to print now and will be available for the programs. The State has asked us to coordinate the Marketing for the entire state and we will be reimbursed for same.
- Covid-19 – the District has again experienced staffing issues due to Covid; however, services have not been cut.

- The mask mandate was ended by TSA and CT Transit did not extend it. It has been difficult for us to have a different policy than CT Transit as many of the riders utilize both services. We do encourage all to wear a mask when riding and driving the buses.
 - Drivers/staff are utilizing their sick/PTO time as appropriate. There is no longer “Covid” pay available
- Electrification – A consultant has been engaged for the statewide Electrification Study; the Middletown facility is a top priority.

Joan Gay made a motion to accept the Executive Director’s Report. Tim Griswold seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

Extension of Free Fares

Joe Comerford reported that the State has extended free fares until the end of November. The State has agreed to compensate the District for lost fare revenue. Data collected since the free fare was initiated indicates increased ridership on the fixed routes. It is anticipated that the Fare Study will be completed before December 1st and any potential new fare can be implemented when the free fare expires.

David Lahm made a motion to extend the free fare until November 30, 2022. John Hall seconded the motion.

After discussion the motion was withdrawn.

David Lahm made a motion to extend the free fare until November 30, 2022 contingent upon DOT reimbursement. John Hall seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Proposed 22/23 Budget

The Proposed 22/23 Budget was included in the Board’s packet. Halyna reviewed the documents and was available to respond to questions posed by Board members. The Board commended Halyna for her work on the Budget. Note that there may be budget adjustments necessary, at the request of the State, as a result of the merger.

Note that Town Dues for Middletown were increased by 3% (they were flat last year) and Town Dues for ETD were increased by 2% (ETD did have an increase last year).

Joe outlined the protocol for the budget including the Board’s approval of the budget for publication purposes. The budget is published and citizens are able to offer comments on same; the Board may then adjust the budget accordingly. It is anticipated that the budget will be voted on at the June meeting.

John Hall made a motion to approve the proposed budget for publication as presented. Joan Gay seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

Leslie reported that the contract with First Transit is being finalized. The Board will discuss further at the next meeting.

CHAIR COMMENTS

As previously reported, Peter Bierrie, Essex's representative to the District, has offered his letter of resignation.

Tim Griswold made the following motion:

WHEREAS, E. Peter Bierrie has served on the Estuary Transit District Board of Directors as the representative for the Town of Essex since November 2012; and

WHEREAS, he has served as the Board Vice-Chair for the Estuary Transit District; and

WHEREAS, he has served on the Finance Committee, the Service Study Committee and as Chair of the Site Selection Committee; and

WHEREAS, he has been an invaluable leader and contributor to the Boards of Middletown Transit District and Estuary Transit District in the merger process of the two Districts; and

WHEREAS, he has been an invaluable contributor to the Board in all areas of transit concern offering invaluable insights with humor and wisdom,

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Estuary Transit District acknowledges and accepts his resignation as a Board Member and Officer, and further, wholeheartedly thanks him for his many years of outstanding contributions and service.

Joan Gay seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS – None.

EXECUTIVE SESSION – None.

Next Meeting – June 10, 2022 – 9:00 a.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Joan Gay made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:01 a.m. Charlie Norz seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,

Suzanne Helchowski, Clerk