

These minutes are subject to approval at the next Estuary Transit District Meeting

ESTUARY TRANSIT DISTRICT
REGULAR MEETING
VIA ZOOM

Friday, September 17, 2021

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Leslie Strauss, Chairman at 9:34 a.m.

ROLL CALL

A quorum was established with the following board members present: Noel Bishop, Charlie Norz, Leslie Strauss, Susan Tyler, Peter Bierrie, Angus MacDonald, Karl Kilduff, Tim Griswold, and Joan Gay (arrived at 9:40 a.m.)

Also in attendance: Joe Comerford, Christina Denison and Lisa Gibson.

VISITORS' COMMENTS – None.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Peter Bierrie made a motion to accept the minutes of 8/16/2021, 8/30/2021 and 9/10/2021 ETC Committee meetings. Noel Bishop seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Susan Tyler made a motion to accept the minutes of 8/20/21 Regular Board meeting. Angus McDonald seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Angus McDonald made a motion to accept the minutes of 9/14/21 Personnel Committee meeting. Joan Gay seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

CORRESPONDENCE – None.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

ETC

Susan Tyler discussed the following:

- Legal review of the proposed Board policies where questions arose regarding the roll of an Executive Committee. These questions will be taken back to the Joint Committee and then reported back on later.
- Workload plan for the next several months to address issues going forward.
- The Middletown Economic Development Committee of the city council met and Joe Somalis, MAT Chairman, presented the merger to the committee which voted unanimously to support it.
- Middlefield and Durham will not be calling a town meeting for the purposes of discussing the merger and /or voting to join Estuary until a letter from DOT has been received and accepted by both Boards.
- Intra-district Memorandum stated the intention to get votes by the Middletown members in October. That is unlikely to occur as Middlefield and Durham have yet to call a town meeting.

- The Committee passed a recommendation to the ETD Board, as Estuary will be the expanded district, to authorize the Joint Committee to sign any contract related to the merger that has been funded fully that is \$150k or less. Current by-laws for both Boards require anything over \$50k be approved by the full board. This recommendation would ask for the ability of that committee to approve anything up to \$150k.
- Total of 16 studies with a cost of around \$1.6 million regarding the merger of which 12 have been funded, must be competitively bid
- 7 less than \$50k, 4 between \$50k and \$150k, 1 over \$150k
- This reason for this suggestion is that it will provide some increased flexibility to not have to wait for a full board meeting and all to be conducted under the auspices of Estuary because Estuary will be the expanded district and the money for the studies was provided to Estuary. This all came about prior to our decision to move to a monthly meeting cycle.

Board discussion of the ETC recommendation did not reach a unanimous decision. Susan Tyler suggested a list of studies and procurements be sent out to the Board again and that the ETC bring the recommendation back for a formal vote at the October 15, 2021 meeting.

Following Executive Session, it has been agreed that each member of the 9Town Transit Board will brief their local elected officials on the status of negotiations regarding the future expansion of Estuary and that they will receive authorization from those local elected officials to accept a letter from DOT as submitted with the intention of having a motion to give Leslie Strauss authorization to sign at the October 15, 2021 Board Meeting. Susan Tyler will prepare a uniform statement and summary for the Board members to present to their local elected officials.

Personnel Committee

Noel Bishop reported:

- A motion was made in the Personnel Committee by Joe Comerford to recommend to the ETD Board of Directors to not implement a covid vaccine requirement yet but to develop a policy to incentivize for covid vaccine participation.
- The Personnel Committee will develop possible incentive policy recommendation with the attorney and health director and bring to the Board at the October Board meeting.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Joe Comerford reported:

- The District has been awarded \$1.8 million in Capital Grant however waiting on the addition of Procurement Specialist to prepare the necessary RFP's to get procurements out.
- Received the Fiscal Year 21-22 Transit Operating Documents from the DOT which provides ETD operating funds, and it had a 3% overall increase across board which will result in a small increase this year.
- Completed Park Connect Service that had an overall rough summer due to weather however weekend ridership was strong. Ridership results showed the need for Sunday service route 641 and Holiday service on those routes which will help get them funded on a permanent basis.
- Trolley service did well on the weekends.
- Met with DOT and will meet with DEEP/DOT to plan for next year's services based on the results from this year.

Peter Bierrie made a motion to accept the Executive Director's Report as presented. Angus McDonald seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Peter Bierrie made a motion to go into Executive Session at 10:10 a.m. for the purpose of discussing contract negotiations with DOT and attorney client privileged communications. Joan Gay seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Joe Comerford, Christina Denison and Lisa Gibson were invited into the Executive Session

Regular session resumed at: 10:45 a.m.

No action taken.

NEW BUSINESS

Authorize Acceptance of DOT Letter – item tabled

Advertising Contract

Joe Comerford stated that the original term for the current advertising contract for advertising on the back of the buses is over, and ETD is due to exercise an option year from 9/2021 through 8/2022. They pay ETD 52% of net revenue from the advertising sales which results in about \$30k per year in revenue. As a long-term strategy, it makes sense to have sources of income from other places as the towns like to hear that ETD is creative in finding other sources of income. ETD has a policy that restricts some advertising content.

Leslie Strauss made a motion to allow Joe Comerford to accept a one-year option to renew the advertising contract. Noel Bishop seconded the motion. The motion passed with Leslie Strauss opposing.

OLD BUSINESS - None.

CHAIR COMMENTS

Leslie Strauss announced the receipt of a letter of resignation from Lyme Representative, Susan Tyler effective October 29, 2021. The letter stated that "she has tremendously enjoyed participating in this organization and she knows it will continue to provide valuable service to the residents of the Lower Connecticut River Valley." Leslie Strauss accepted the letter with tremendous regret on behalf of 9Town Transit. Susan Tyler will leave vacant the following rolls: ETD Board Member, Treasurer, Finance Committee Chair, ETC Chair and Personnel Committee member.

Leslie Strauss stated that she was very sad regarding the resignation of Susan Tyler from ETD Board of Directors.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS - None.

ADJOURNMENT

Angus McDonald made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:02 a.m. Tim Griswold seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Next Meeting – October 15, 2021 – 9:30

Respectfully Submitted,

Lisa Gibson
Clerk