

THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT THE NEXT RVT MEETING

RIVER VALLEY TRANSIT
REGULAR MEETING
November 18, 2022
Middletown Offices and via ZOOM

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Leslie Strauss, Chairman at 9:04 a.m.

ROLL CALL

A quorum was established with the following board members present: Leslie Strauss, Tim Griswold, DG Fitton, Dave Lahm, Joan Gay, Karl Kilduff, Charlie Norz, Beverly Lawrence (left at 10:15 a.m.), and John Hall (arrived at 9:10 a.m.).

Also in attendance: Joe Comerford, Chris Denison, Ennab Mutez, Brendan Geraghty

Absent: Angus McDonald, Jim Irish, Bobbye Knoll Peterson

VISITOR COMMENTS – None.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Joan Gay made a motion to accept the minutes from the Personnel Committee meeting dated 8/1/22 as presented. Karl Kilduff seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Charlie Norz made a motion to accept the minutes from the Board meeting dated 10/14/22 as presented. Joan Gay seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Charlie Norz made a motion to accept the minutes from the Facilities Committee meeting dated 10/25/22 as presented. Karl Kilduff seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

DG Fitton made a motion to accept the minutes from the Board meeting dated 10/31/22 as amended. Charlie Norz seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Note: Karl Kilduff was in attendance at the 10/31/22 meeting.

COMMUNICATIONS – None.

TREASURER'S REPORT – None.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Finance Committee – None.

Facilities

Joan reported:

- The Committee met with DOT representatives to discuss a variety of projects including:

- The consultant is working with the Committee relative to the Master Plan. The Plan and the environmental review have been funded.
- Electrification – A consultant has been engaged to review state facilities for power upgrades. The Westbrook property will be included in the review.
- Shoreline Facility – the Old Saybrook site is no longer an option and an alternative site in Westbrook is being pursued (there has been difficulty in contacting the owner of the Westbrook Outlet). The pre-work the District did relative to the shoreline property is helpful to the DOT; however, they do still wish to “walk” the property.

Legislative Committee – The Committee will reach out to the recently elected Legislators to schedule a meeting (after they are sworn in in January) to provide an overview of the District.

Charlie Norz made a motion to accept the Legislative Committee report as presented. Joan Gay seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Marketing Committee

Copies of the new logo were included in the Board’s packet. The logo will be used in a variety of iterations (website, bus, letterhead, etc.).

The next phase in the Marketing Plan will include the release of the new logo and the re-branding of the District. Note that the District will legally remain the “Estuary Transit District”. “River Valley Transit” is a DBA (Doing Business As) only.

Joe reported that, at this time, MAT remains a legal entity and will remain so until open grants are “closed out”. MAT no longer receives grants, provides services or owns property. It is anticipated that MAT will be dissolved by the end of the current fiscal year.

The Fare Holiday will be marketed.

DG Fitton made a motion to accept the Legislative Committee report as presented. David Lahm seconded the motion the motion passed with Beverly Lawrence opposed to the motion.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Joe Comerford reported that it is anticipated that the Governor and Legislature will extend the free bus fares until the spring. The exact end date has not yet been determined. The District will continue to hold Public Hearings on potential new fares. The DOT has asked the District to facilitate our Fare Study throughout the State. They will provide funds to expand our current scope of work. The goal is to have one fare throughout the entire state.

DG Fitton made a motion to accept the Executive Director’s Report as presented. John Hall seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

TRANSIT PLANNER’S REPORT

Brendan reported that the Extra Mile program in Middletown will end on 12/18/22 as funding for the pilot program ends. December 18th is the last day of Wesleyan’s semester. The program was well utilized, especially on the weekends with Wesleyan students. CARES money funded the program and Wesleyan provided limited funds. We have applied for funding to continue the program but have not yet heard back from DOT. The Old Saybrook Extra Mile program will remain in place.

Over 70 surveys have been returned and have provided favorable feedback. Public Hearings relative to fares are being held throughout the District. Additional questions posed from the public as well as merger information is also being shared at the Public Hearings. Various locations are being visited by staff to discuss the District; i.e. senior centers, libraries and the Chamber of Commerce.

DG Fitton made a motion to accept the Transit Planner's Report as presented. Tim Griswold seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

Wage Increases –

The final TOD has not yet been received and is expected by the end of the month. The District's ability to hire and retain staff continues to be difficult. Joe recommended adjustments to wages for non-union front-line staff (total cost of approximately \$50,000). The Union contract expires in December and negotiations will begin thereafter.

DG Fitton made a motion to approve the wage increases as presented up to \$50,000 for the current fiscal year. Joan Gay seconded the motion. Discussion followed.

As negotiations are slated to begin in the near future, the Board discussed the possibility of discussing non-union wage increases in Executive Session.

DG Fitton withdrew the above motion.

OLD BUSINESS

Bus Purchase Resolution

Additional action is necessary as prices went up considerably since the Board voted on the original resolution.

Tim Griswold made a motion to add to the agenda rescinding the motion approving Resolution 23-002 (approved at the 10/31/22 meeting). Joan Gay seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Tim Griswold made a motion to rescind Resolution 23-002. Joan Gay seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

DG Fitton made the following motion:

The Executive Director, Joseph Comerford, hereby is authorized on behalf of the Estuary Transit District, to negotiate and execute all necessary contract documents required to purchase up to eight (8) body-on-chassis buses for the Estuary Transit District from Coach and Equipment in an amount not to exceed \$1,545,000.00. Joan Gay seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Joan Gay seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Fare Holiday

Joan Gay made a motion that in the event that the Legislature and/or Governor approve an extension of the Bus Fare Holiday, not to extend beyond 4/1/23, ETD will participate. Charlie Norz seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS – None.

CHAIR COMMENTS

DOT has seen significant staffing changes over the past several months. Joe provided an update on the staffing including various interim positions. We have requested a meeting with Garrett Eucalitto relative to payments and fare reimbursements.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS – None.

EXECUTIVE SESSION – None.

Wage Increases (re-visited)

DG Fitton made a motion to authorize the Executive Director, to implement wage increases for non-union staff in an amount not to exceed a total expenditure of \$50,000. Charlie Norz seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

ADJOURNMENT

Tim Griswold made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:18 a.m. seconded the motion. DG Fitton seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Next Meeting – December 9, 2022 – 10:00 a.m. with remote options.

Respectfully Submitted,

Suzanne Helchowski
Clerk