

Lowcountry RTA Special Board Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: April 15, 2020

Location: Teleconference Call with LRTA Board Members and Palmetto Breeze staff at 25 Benton Field Rd, Bluffton, SC 29910

Call to Order

Chair Susan Zellman called the meeting to order at 3:05 pm.

The invocation was said by Ms. Childs and Mr. Russell led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call

Present:

Ms. Susan Zellman, Chair, Beaufort County

Mr. Rick Hamilton, Beaufort County

Ms. Barbara Childs, Vice Chair, Beaufort County

Mr. Chris Bickley, Colleton County

Mr. Darrell Russell, Hampton County

Ms. Ginnie Kozak, Lowcountry Council of Governments and LATS (ex-officio)

Absent:

Ms. Louise Pinkney, Allendale County

Others in attendance:

Scott Donahue, SCOT

Ms. Mary Lou Franzoni, LRTA Executive Director

Ms. LaToya Wiley, LRTA Director of Finance and Administration

Mr. Detimex Stanley, LRTA Director of Maintenance

Mr. Ronald McElhose, LRTA Director of Operations

Ms. Zellman welcomed everyone and noted that all Board Members were remote to respect safety measures put in place regarding the coronavirus. She thanked everyone for participating. She asked that all who responded with a comment, motion or second motion to please state their name before responding. The purpose of this meeting will be limited to the agenda items, COVID-19 discussion, and the action item of the fare waiver due to the current pandemic.

Ms. Franzoni stated that LRTA had stopped running routes that had cancelled, Palmetto Bluff and the Daufuskie Island Ferry shuttle. LRTA also stopped the USCB route since the university had cancelled classes. LRTA did not start the Hilton Head Trolley service and the Marriott Resorts route. Those were both due to start on April 1. Drivers and staff are having to take time off due to personal health concerns related to COVID-19 or to care for young children who are home from school. In addition, the maintenance team came up with the idea to put up plexiglass partitions in the buses to protect the drivers. A press release will be sent out regarding that step. Ridership is down but with that, passengers can social distance onboard.

Mr. Bickley asked if LRTA was disinfecting the buses or was taking any extraordinary precautions with that. Ms. Franzoni stated that the Utility Worker, Mr. Major, was coming in every Sunday to deep clean the entire building. He is also disinfecting buses every single day and going to Beaufort to get the buses that do not come in every day. Ms. Franzoni also stated that the drivers have supplies to disinfect their buses as well. Ms. Zellman asked what the response had been. Ms. Franzoni stated that while there are a few trips, Demand Response routes have fewer requests. Ms. Zellman asked if there were any further questions. There were not. Ms. Zellman proceeded to the action item of the fare waiver. Ms. Zellman asked Ms. Franzoni to speak on that.

Ms. Franzoni stated she was on a conference call with SCDOT and that forgoing the fares seems to be more popular for several reasons. One reason is that the passenger must stop right in front of the driver to insert their money. People are more comfortable if they can keep more of a distance from one another. Another reason is the people that count the money. There is a concern as to whether the money has the virus on it. And lastly, LRTA feels that while their passengers are doing their best by coming to work, this could be some relief to some passengers. Ms. Franzoni stated that with the CARES Act, LRTA will be able to recoup 100% of its operations cost. This will help meet with our expenses. Ms. Franzoni stated she would be comfortable with an end date for the fare waiver. She stated that it could always be extended, if needed. Ms. Zellman opened the conversation for discussion.

Mr. Russell asked if there was a resolution drafted that he could read through and Ms. Franzoni stated that none had been written.

Mr. Hamilton proposed a simple resolution. He stated that “LRTA/Palmetto Breeze waive any and all fares from present date to June 30, 2020.” Ms. Franzoni agreed with that. Ms. Zellman asked if there should be a reason with it. Mr. Hamilton stated that the reason could be added; “To accommodate the safety of passengers and employees through the period of the Coronavirus pandemic and in recognition of the fact that the fares lost will be recouped through the governments CARES Act.” Ms. Zellman wanted to reiterate the resolution: “Be it resolved that LRTA waives any and all fares through June 30, 2020 to accommodate the safety of passengers and staff; fares will be recouped due to the passage of the CARES Act.”

Mr. Hamilton motioned to pass the resolution. Mr. Bickley second the motion. Discussion ensued. Mr. Bickley asked Ms. Franzoni if there were other transit systems that were getting assistance from the CARES Act. Ms. Franzoni stated that we were not alone and that most of the systems in South Carolina were doing this. Ms. Franzoni did want to state LRTA was not going to be recouping the money from fares. How the grants work versus the legislation that was passed, LRTA will be receiving 100% of operating cost. Ms. Zellman said in going back to the original motion, if we went back and stated, “In light of the fact that the operating cost will be recouped”. Ms. Kozak suggested the word “recovered”. Mr. Russell suggested “funded through the CARES Act”. Ms. Zellman asked Ms. Franzoni what should be used. Ms. Franzoni stated that ‘funded’ would be fine. Ms. Zellman asked Mr. Hamilton if he consented to the revision. Mr. Hamilton did. Mr. Bickley agreed with it as well.

Ms. Zellman asked if the dates were okay at June 30,2020 or if it should be 60 days. Mr. Bickley asked if the CARES Act would cover LRTA until June 30. Ms. Franzoni stated that it would. Mr. Bickley stated that June 30 would be a good end date. Ms. Childs agreed with the end date and

thanked Mr. Hamilton for coming up with the resolution. Mr. Bickley also stated that there would be another board meeting before the expiration date of June 30. If this topic needed to be revisited, it could be done so at that meeting. Ms. Zellman asked if there was any further discussion. There was not.

Ms. Zellman read the resolution. She asked that Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Bickley that if anything she states is incorrect, to let her know. "Be it resolved that LRTA will waive any and all fares through June 30, 2020 to accommodate the safety of passengers and staff and in light of the fact that the operating cost will be funded due to the passage of the CARES Act." Ms. Zellman asked if that was correct. Mr. Hamilton stated that it was. Mr. Bickley agreed. Ms. Zellman asked if there was any further discussion.

Ms. Kozak asked if there was press coverage regarding this. Ms. Franzoni stated that she does have concerns on that because we do not want to attract new riders because we are able to social distance the current riders. Mr. Bickley agreed it would be a good idea to send the information to the local municipalities. Ms. Kozak stated that this would be good community relations. Ms. Franzoni stated that something would be put together and sent out.

The motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

Ms. Franzoni stated that Ms. Pinkney emailed her at 3:11p.m. stating there were not enough lines to access the call. Mr. Hamilton asked when Ms. Pinkney's term ended. Ms. Franzoni stated it was April 20.

Adjournment

Ms. Zellman asked for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Bickley motioned for the meeting to be adjourned. Ms. Childs second the motion. All voted to adjourn. Chair Zellman declared the meeting adjourned at 3:50 pm.