

Lowcountry RTA Board Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: March 25, 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 2:03 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

Ms. Barbara Childs, Vice Chair, Beaufort County

Mr. Rick Hamilton, 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:

Ms. Mary Lou Franzoni, LRTA Executive Director

Ms. LaToya Wiley, LRTA Director of Finance and Administration

Mr. Mark Stanley, LRTA Director of Maintenance

Mr. Ronald McElhose, LRTA Director of Operations

Ms. Yazmin Winston Black, LRTA Director of Safety and Training

Mr. Brian Sullivan, LRTA Director of Marketing and Communications (via telephone)

Ms. Laura Atkinson, LRTA Mobility Manager

Ms. Kerry Guzman, LRTA Human Resources and Payroll Administrator

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.

Guests and Public Forum

There were no guests or members of the public.

Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes from January 22, 2020 was made by Ms. Childs and seconded by Mr. Bickley. The motion carried.

Action Items

Ms. Franzoni reviewed the proclamation about how LRTA is committed to the cleanliness of our fleet and the ability to get the public to work. She stated that other systems are doing this and wanted to show the steps LRTA is taking to help combat Coronavirus. Mr. Bickley said the proclamation was very well drafted and in order. He asked that this be sent to local media. Ms. Franzoni will send it to Mr. Sullivan for distribution. Ms. Kozak asked that it be sent to all five counties and Mr. Sullivan replied that it would be. Ms. Zellman also said that it should be sent to all five county councils. **Mr. Bickley made a motion to approve the proclamation and Mr. Hamilton seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.**

Informational Items

1. Ms. Franzoni provided the Executive Director's report. Highlights included:
 - Mobility Management: Daufuskie Island ID Cards in January and February totaled to be 50. That is quite a bit and Daufuskie does pay LRTA an administrative fee to do that.
 - Ms. Atkinson is implementing Transit Check as part of the Syncromatics software package. This module allows for the drivers to check the vehicles and report any defects by way of the tablets directly to the Maintenance Department. This allows the Maintenance Department to know what a vehicle needs before the vehicle arrives at the annex. This has greatly improved communication between the drivers and the Maintenance Department.
 - ADA applications are coming in but very slowly. One has been submitted from Hilton Head and another from Walterboro.
 - Ms. Franzoni stated that LRTA is getting ready to send out an RFP for a new phone system. It will save LRTA \$500 in internet fees a month and LRTA will own the phone system. Mr. Bickley asked if LRTA was bidding out the RFP. Ms. Franzoni stated yes, the project is about \$10,000. Mr. Bickley said that Ms. Franzoni should check state purchasing. Ms. Franzoni said that LRTA will investigate that. Mr. Bickley said that the COG has done a new phone system in the past and it was done through state purchasing.
 - Ms. Franzoni stated that the Intent to Award for the Administration Building Renovation has gone out.
 - Marketing: The new website is online and up to date. Mr. Sullivan continues to add new content. He is also updating all of LRTA's brochures. Ms. Franzoni stated that the brochures are out of date and missing information. All the marketing for the trolley service and potential new service in Bluffton is on hold due to Coronavirus.
 - The online town hall meetings scheduled for April 6-7 need to be revisited. Ms. Kozak stated she will be working for the LCOG on contract longer than March 31, 2020. She will be part-time and still available to assist LRTA. Dates for the town hall will be revisited with Ms. Kozak.

- Ms. Franzoni met with the United Way Director, Dale Douthat to discuss public transit in the area.
- John Milligan Associates were supposed to come in April to help with the indirect cost plan. Ms. Franzoni believes given the state of things that the date will need to be changed.
- January and February had no accidents, preventable or non-preventable. She thanked the safety department and all the drivers.
- Maintenance Department: The maintenance clerk, Maggie, has barcoded all the parts in the parts room. The entire barcode system is not completely implemented but we are well on the way. It has made a huge difference.

2. Ms. Wiley reported on the financial statements.

- Ms. Wiley asked if anyone had any questions on January and February statements.
- Ms. Zellman stated that there hadn't been time for a full review. She asked that if people do have questions, there could be another call that focused on the financials. This would allow board members more time to review the financials.
- Ms. Franzoni stated there were still items that needed to be fixed. There were items that were coded incorrectly that Ms. Wiley is having to go back and change from earlier in the year. Ms. Franzoni believes it is about 90% of the way there. This has been a transitional time.
- Ms. Zellman asked Ms. Franzoni, in one week, to send out an email to the board members asking if anyone had questions on the financials. This would allow all questions to come in at one time. Ms. Franzoni stated she would and if the financials changed again, she would send them out to everyone.
- Mr. Bickley asked Ms. Franzoni and Ms. Wiley if, from their standpoint, are there any surprises in the finances, how would they characterize the state of the finances, and what do they project that LRTA will end the fiscal year. Ms. Franzoni stated that in her opinion, we continue the struggle but LRTA is within the 30 day to pay all vendors. There are two capital bills that need to be paid, HomeTown Trolley and Palmetto Bus Sales. She anticipates that when local match money comes in April, that will pay for both of those vendors. She states LRTA doesn't have a lot of money. It is rough because the ridership has decreased and contract routes are cancelling. Mr. Bickley asked what LRTA was seeing as a result of business cutbacks from Coronavirus. He asked how Coronavirus was affecting operations and finances. Ms. Franzoni stated that the Daufuskie Island, Montage/Palmetto Bluff, USCB and Marriott Resort routes were putting money into the coffers. However, now all these routes have been cancelled. Mr. Bickley suggested that the new stimulus package coming out may be able to help local governments. He said LRTA needs to go after some of that for the lost revenue. He suggested reaching out to DOT. Ms. Franzoni stated that DOT and FTA said LRTA can use 50/50 operating money at 80/20. She stated that she will look at the stimulus.
- Ms. Kozak stated that she wants to sit with Ms. Franzoni and Ms. Wiley to go through a ratio analysis.

3.) Chairpersons Report

Chair Zellman wanted to thank Rick Hamilton for his two years of service as chairperson. She wanted to thank Ms. Kozak for her contributions before her retirement. However, Ms. Kozak has extended her contract.

Chair Zellman, Ms. Childs and Ms. Kozak attended the TASC conference on March 6. Chair Zellman and Ms. Childs attended the Bus Roadeo at May River High School on March 7.

Chair Zellman and Ms. Franzoni had a meeting with Joe Passiment, who is the new County Council Chair and represents the Sun City district to discuss the dedicated funding that LRTA is seeking. He expressed support and interest in moving forward with sustainable funding. Chair Zellman felt very positive about the meeting. She asked if anyone knows county council members and could reach out to them. Ms. Kozak stated that we should reach out to other counties. Chair Zellman stated that Beaufort County would be the first county that was suggested by the dedicated funding committee to pursue the user fee contribution to LRTA because the contribution would line up with our annual ask amount. Mr. Bickley initially wanted to do it system wide but after the last meeting, it was decided by the committee to approach one county at a time and that is how they did it in Myrtle Beach/Horry County. He does not want an unintended consequence of coming up short on revenue.

Ms. Kozak stated that SoLoco would not be as helpful as LRTA already goes to LATS and that is the transportation group.

Ashley Jacobs talked about Palmetto Breeze as an item of importance on a Hilton Head Chamber of Commerce conference call. It was regarding what routes were affected due to Coronavirus.

Chair Zellman said that staff and ridership health is paramount. She wanted to thank the staff as they deal with all the challenges they are facing and the board appreciates all that the staff is doing.

Old Business

1. By-Laws

Chair Zellman asked that this be pushed to the next agenda. Chair Zellman asked Ms. Childs if she would review the by-laws with her so they could make a recommendation at the next meeting. Ms. Childs agreed. If anyone has comments, please email to Ms. Franzoni and she will distribute them to Chair Zellman and Ms. Childs. She will distribute updated by-laws a week before the next meeting.

2. Urban Study, Phase 2

Ms. Kozak stated that the consultants are working with Ms. Franzoni for new routes. There was supposed to be a meeting for Palmetto Bluff but that is also on hold due to the current situation. Ms. Franzoni said the Marc Orlando has requested a budget letter. Ms. Franzoni is going to look at a service route that does not include Palmetto Bluff. There are 3 options: 1) Without any new service 2) Service that included Palmetto Bluff and 3) New service in Bluffton that doesn't have Palmetto Bluff.

3. LATS Update

Ms. Kozak said that there was supposed to be a meeting on April 3. TCL has cancelled all community use of their buildings. Ms. Kozak said there is money to spend from the last project. The policy committee will be making decisions in the next year in how to spend \$3million-\$4 million in transportation projects. Ms. Franzoni asked if the MPO would consider contributing to the local match for LRTA and Ms. Kozak asked what were the other MPOs contributing to the local transit systems. Ms. Franzoni said she will investigate it.

4. Dedicated Funding Committee

Mr. Bickley said that we need to focus on Beaufort County. We can check off on the Dedicated Funding committee. Chair Zellman said that the committee was very helpful.

5. Board Vacancies

Ms. Franzoni sent an email to Andrew Fulghum that there was an interest from someone but there has been no response. Mr. Bickley ran into members from Jasper County Council and had a meeting with Kevin Gifford of Colleton County. They are not opposed to making appointment to the LRTA board, but no one has come forward. We have to go out and recruit someone. Mr. Bickley is working on finding someone in Colleton County. Mr. Russell is reaching out to someone he knows in Colleton County to see if he would be interested. He ran for council two years ago and asked Mr. Bickley if they knew each other. Mr. Russell is reaching out to people in two counties.

New Business

1. Possible Board Retreat

Ms. Franzoni stated that this item will go on the next agenda so hopefully board vacancies will be filled.

2. Ferry Grant Application

Ms. Franzoni received a call from the assistant county administrator from Beaufort County and he stated that Beaufort County is planning to move the ferry terminal to Pinkney Island. With the help of Beaufort County, LRTA submitted a ferry grant application last week. Mr. Bickley asked if it was a grant for operations or for construction of a new terminal. Ms. Franzoni stated that it was for a new terminal. All the money is capital money. The \$2 million includes an access road to get to the other side of 278. Mr. Bickley asked if we were making operational obligations. Ms. Franzoni stated there were none.

Announcements

Mr. Bickley emphasized that the world has changed and is changing. We cannot rely on any assumptions. We must stay on top of what comes down in regard to funding and our ability to deliver services. Please stay focused on that as far as LRTA goes. Chair Zellman reminded Ms. Franzoni that the board is here to help. Mr. Bickley thanked Ms. Franzoni for all the work she has done so far.

Mr. Russell stated that the town of Yemassee may go into Beaufort County and Mr. Russell lives in Yemassee. He asked that the board look into how Mr. Russell can continue to be on the board.

Mr. Sullivan said that the Town of Hilton Head is asking for a mandatory stay at home order. He also thanked Chair Zellman and Ms. Childs for coming to the Bus Roadeo.

Mr. Stanley stated that the Maintenance Department placed third in the state competition at the Roadeo.

Ms. Franzoni stated that employees who don't have routes open any more can use sick and vacation leave and then can go on unemployment.

Ms. Franzoni stated that Ms. Atkinson received an award for Support Staff Member of the Year and Ms. Franzoni received an award for Community Outreach at the TASC conference.

Next Steps

Mr. Sullivan will send out the proclamation to all five counties media, municipalities, SCDOT and posted on the LRTA website.

Ms. Wiley will email the board in one week to ask if there are any questions on the financials.

Ms. Franzoni will review the stimulus package to see if there is any money for LRTA.

Ms. Kozak will meet with Ms. Franzoni and Ms. Wiley.

Chair Zellman will set up a meeting with Alice Howard and Ms. Franzoni.

Chair Zellman and Ms. Childs will meet to go through the By-laws.

Ms. Franzoni will find out about the MPOs and how much of a percentage they are contributing from the rideshare funds.

Ms. Franzoni will follow up with Jasper County about a potential board member.

Mr. Bickley will recruit for a Colleton County board member.

Ms. Franzoni will put the board retreat on the next agenda.

The board will look into Yemassee going into Beaufort County and Mr. Russell position.

Adjournment

Mr. Bickley motioned for the meeting to be adjourned. Mr. Russell second the motion. Chair Zellman declared the meeting adjourned at 3:20pm.