

## **Lowcountry RTA Board Meeting Minutes**

Meeting Date: September 23, 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 2:09 pm.

The invocation was said by Chair Zellman she 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. Louise Pinkney, Allendale County

Absent:

Mr. Charles Mitchell, Jasper County

Others in attendance:

Ms. Mary Lou Franzoni, LRTA Executive Director  
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. Kerry Guzman, LRTA Human Resources and Payroll Administrator  
Ms. Laura Atkinson, LRTA Mobility Manager  
Mr. Henry Criss, LRTA Interim Finance Director and Grants and Compliance Administrator  
Ms. Stephanie Rossi, Lowcountry Council of Governments  
Mr. Scott Donahue, SCDOT

Ms. Zellman welcomed everyone and noted that all Board Members were remote via Zoom to respect safety measures put in place regarding the coronavirus. She thanked everyone for participating. The meeting was being broadcast live via the Palmetto Breeze Facebook page to allow the public the opportunity to listen to the meeting. The public is invited to make comments via Facebook and responses would be sent after the meeting. 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 July 22, 2020 was made by Mr. Bickley and seconded by Ms. Childs. Ms. Pinkney and Ms. Rossi abstained from voting due to being absent at the previous meeting. The motion carried unanimously.**

## **Action Items**

There were no action items.

## **Informational Items**

1. Ms. Franzoni provided the Executive Director's report. Highlights included:
  - Ridership counts for July 2020 were 20,225 trips – this is 75% of what we were carrying last year. In August we did 16,187 trips – this is 68% of what we did last year. The trolley did not run the whole month of August.
  - This is our first year with someone devoted to our marketing. Ms. Franzoni appreciates that this part of the transit system is being handled. The website is being updated regularly. Mr. Sullivan promoted the trolley for its limited season. He responds to all the comments on our social media pages.
  - We did a “Chalk the Walk, Day of Kindness” with the HHI-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce. Our logo was painted with chalk at our bus stops and we were well represented.
  - In November there will be the lantern parade. It will be a “parade in place” with the details still being worked out. This will be our second year participating as the Breeze.
  - We will participate in the ribbon cutting of Hilton Head's Celebration Park. We are moving our trolley stop from Coligny Circle to the park. Mr. Sullivan added that the ribbon cutting will be postponed to May 8.
  - Passenger Appreciation Day was September 18, 2020. There was an ice cream truck, free tickets and goodie bags. Passengers enjoyed the day. Bags were made for our riders in Beaufort and Walterboro.
  - On July 15<sup>th</sup>, Ms. Franzoni and Mr. Stanley went to the Jasper County High School Complex. This is now the official regional evacuation shelter. Jasper County installed generators so now they can accept passengers with oxygen concentrators. They can now open more rooms to socially distance due to the COVID pandemic if necessary. Jasper County will also allow pets to shelter there.
  - LRTA is now doing all the Daufuskie Island work. Previously, LRTA would just make ID cards. The county has now given us the tasks of looking people up, checking their paperwork to prove their residency, and we base that on how much they need to pay for tickets. The County increased the amount of money LRTA is given for these additional tasks. The new position of the Office Administrator will handle all of this.

Mr. Bickley asked Ms. Franzoni how everyone is doing post COVID. Ms. Franzoni stated that everyone is handling it differently but we are getting there. Mr. Bickley stated he was glad everyone was better. Ms. Zellman asked Mr. Stanley how his department handled the quarantine and with the catch up on the work. Mr. Stanley stated it wasn't as bad as they thought it would be. That is due to the fleet being in a better condition than it has been in the past. Mr. Williams, the weekend supervisor, helped out in the maintenance department. Ms. Zellman stated that it looks like everything went well with only 1 unavoidable accident. Ms. Franzoni stated that LRTA has a great team here and everything is kept rolling. When someone is out, everyone else pulls together to help out. Ms. Childs thanked Ms. Franzoni for helping the League of Women Voters to help pick up people that want to vote. Ms. Atkinson is assisting with that.

## 2. Mr. Criss reported on the financial statements.

- As with any transition, there are a few things to resolve. Mr. Criss and Ms. Franzoni have met to create a strategy that will ensure organizational stability within the department and with our finances and accounting.
- The financial report format looks different than previous formats in that it clearly communicates our financial position.
- Mr. Criss stated that this information is accurate but there may be changes to the percentages as allocations are revised.
- The 2020 audit for the fiscal year ending June 30 is approaching. Mr. Criss stated that we have hired a CPA firm and the consultants are helping us to prepare for the audit and ensure that we have everything ready for the audit on October 12.
- Mr. Criss stated that he is meeting with consultants for our indirect cost rate proposal.

Mr. Bickley stated there are a few things he typically looks at

- are we drawing down money (state and federal funds) on a timely basis?
- are we current on our bills?
- are we on track for a good year financially?
- where do you see us and what are your concerns?

Mr. Criss stated we are in an excellent financial position as far as being current on our bills. Our drawdowns are timely. We are in a really good space especially due to the CARES money. Mr. Bickley asked how much of the CARES money we have spent. Mr. Criss stated that on the urban side we are on track and this will help us operate for the rest of the fiscal year. On the rural side, SCDOT has started the contract in February and it was supposed to run through June 30 with a new contract starting for the new fiscal year. However, the original contract was extended until June 30, 2021 but funding is not available to us for the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of this fiscal year. We are waiting on the approval from the commission so we can access that money. Mr. Bickley asked that Mr. Criss report on this topic during the next meeting.

## 3. Chairperson's Report

- On the Beaufort County Council agenda, there is a second reading for Road Usage Fee. It stated that any increase for the fee would be voted on an annual basis. Ms. Zellman stated this pulls the rug out from us in terms of asking for dedicated funding. Ms. Childs asked if it was for second reading. Ms. Zellman stated that it was. Ms. Childs stated that there was still a need for a third and final reading before it is made law. Ms. Zellman will look into it.

## **Old Business**

### 1. Board Retreat

Ms. Franzoni reached out to Curtis Sims. Mr. Sims asked if the board would be able to do a Zoom meeting. Mr. Sims is currently on a vacation and she will follow up with him. Ms. Franzoni asked the board if a Zoom meeting would be ok for the Board Retreat.

### 2. Allendale County

Ms. Zellman asked Ms. Pinkney if she had been reappointed. Ms. Pinkney stated that she had not received any communication. Ms. Franzoni stated that she called Allendale County and they had a change of county leadership. Ms. Franzoni stated at the last meeting it was discussed that we had not received any response in regards to local match from Allendale County. Now, Allendale County is on board to send the amount they gave last year.

### 3. LATS Update

The Transportation Improvement Plan for both LATS was approved in August. The LCOG rural Plan goes for approval on Friday. The TIP includes 2021- 2027. The long-range transportation plan was due in December but an extension was granted until December 2021. RFPs were advertised to help with the long-range plan. The proposals are due today and LCOG has received four so far. The South Carolina legislature Joint Bond Review Committee approved financial assistance from the South Carolina Transportation Infrastructure Bank for both Exit 3 and the widening of highway 278.

Chair Zellman thanked and welcomed Ms. Rossi. Ms. Zellman asked Ms. Rossi to share her background. Ms. Rossi stated that she has worked for the MPO in Seattle for 16 years and then she moved here to be closer to family. She has been working for the MPO in Savannah for the past 5 years.

## **New Business**

### 1. 2020 Audit

Ms. Franzoni stated the date for the audit is October 12<sup>th</sup>. After speaking to the auditors, Ms. Franzoni asked for another extension. The firm will try to change it but they did recommend a CPA firm in Savannah that have helped clients in the past that have had personnel changes. Ms. Franzoni has hired the CPA firm to get us ready for the audit. Mr. Criss stated that by October 12<sup>th</sup> we will be able to provide the necessary information to the auditors. He feels very confident with the CPA firm. Ms. Zellman asked about funding for the CPA firm. Ms. Franzoni stated that between the rural and urban side, LRTA has the money. Mr. Hamilton asked if it will be necessary to revise the budget. Ms. Franzoni fully expects to do a revised budget by the end of December. Ms. Zellman asked if the consultants were in a position to give recommendations about software that we were exploring. Ms. Franzoni stated that we were not exploring it right now. What was lacking was the understanding of Blackbaud. We may replace it later but we are adjusting the priority of it. Ms. Zellman asked about staff training on Blackbaud. Ms. Franzoni stated that we purchased a training package.

### **Announcements**

Ms. Franzoni stated that the next meeting will be in November. In November, LRTA has a potluck for Thanksgiving that the board is always invited to. Ms. Zellman stated that there needs to be a discussion about the holidays for the board. Due to the date of the next board meeting being the day before Thanksgiving, there was a unanimous vote to change the date to Monday, November 23, 2020.

### **Next Steps**

1. Explore the board retreat. Ms. Franzoni will reach out to Mr. Sims.

### **Adjournment**

Ms. Childs motioned to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Russell seconded. There was a unanimous vote to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 3:04pm.