



**LOWCOUNTRY REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY
BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S MEETING**

**Wednesday, January 31, 2024
2:00 P.M.**

**Lowcountry Regional Transportation Authority
25 Benton Field Road
Bluffton, S.C. 29910**

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER

Board Chair, Charles Mitchell called the meeting to order at 2:02 p.m.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND INVOCATION

Board member Barbara Childs gave the invocation and Chris Dreisbach led the pledge of allegiance.

III. FOIA

Public notification of this meeting has been published, posted, and distributed in compliance with the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act.

IV. ROLL CALL OF BOARD MEMBERS AND RECOGNITION OF STAFF PRESENT

Board Members Present: Representing Beaufort County: Vice Chair Barbara Childs, Henry Criss, and Tomas Reitz; representing Hampton County: Laura Atkinson; representing Allendale County: William Robinson; representing Colleton County Latosia Simmons and representing Lowcountry Council of Governments: Stephanie Rossi.

Board Chair: Representing Jasper County: Board Chair Charles Mitchell

Staff Members Present: Mary Lou Franzoni, Executive Director; Kristine Hepburn, Director of Finance & Administration; Tori Mitchell, Director of Operations; Chris Dreisbach, Director of Maintenance; Charles Cattell, Safety and Training Manager; Karen Morales, Mobility Manager; Brian Sullivan, Director of Marketing; Linda Norton, Lead Dispatcher. Diane Lackey, SCDOT Regional Representative, was present.

V. WELCOME

Chairman Charles Mitchell welcomed all Board members.

VI. PUBLIC FORUM

No members of the public request to speak.

VII. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

November 29, 2023 Board Meeting

Motion: Board member Laura Atkinson moved that the minutes from the November 29, 2023, Board meeting be approved. The motion was seconded by Beaufort County representative Henry Criss.

Vote: The motion was carried unanimously.

VIII. RECOGNITION OF DRIVER OF THE MONTH

Executive Director Mary Lou Franzoni recognized **Leroy Haynes** as Employee of the Month for November, and **Charles Shiver** as the Employee of the Month for December.

IX. ACTION ITEMS

1. Report from the Nominating Committee — Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Motion: Beaufort County Representative, Henry Criss nominated Jasper County Representative, Charles Mitchell for a second term as Board Chair and Allendale County Representative, William Robinson as Vice Chair. The motion was seconded by Board Member Laura Atkinson.

Vote: The motion was carried unanimously.

2. Approval of the 2024 Personnel Policy

The revised Personnel Policy was approval and signed by the Board Chair.

X. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

a. Executive Director's Report – Highlights for November and December included:

Executive Director, Mary Lou Franzoni recognized the efforts of the Marketing Director, Brian Sullivan, for his campaign to promote the Bluffton Breeze to the Sun City community. She further advised that while ridership remains low, she is hopeful that ridership will increase with the inception of a third fixed route connecting Bluffton to Hilton Head. She recommended to the board a survey of community members to determine the needs of the public.

The director reported that several staff members and herself attended the RTAP conference in Myrtle Beach and found the conference to be educational and informative.

b. Finance Director's Report – Highlights for November and December included:

Finance Director, Kristine Hepburn provided a summary of financial reports for the most recent period. The finance team is currently preparing the budget proposal for the 2025 fiscal year.

Ms. Hepburn reported the loss of the staff accountant, Lily Crosman, who has recently been employed by BJWSA. The director wished her well in her future ventures.

c. Board Chair's Report – Nothing to report.

d. Committee/Project Reports

i. Operations Committee – William Robinson, Laura Atkinson

Allendale County Representative, William Robinson, reported no accidents or injuries for the most recent period. He reported 3 resolved complaints and 3 pre-employment drug screens for the most recent period.

ii. Maintenance Committee – Charles Mitchell, Henry Criss

Maintenance Director, Chris Dreisbach gave a summary of the maintenance report.

iii. Finance Committee- Barbara Childs

Board member Barbara Childs reported no errors or discrepancies for the most recent period. She congratulated the finance staff on their efforts.

XI. OLD BUSINESS

- a. **LATS Update** – Stephanie Rossi from the Lowcountry Council of Governments provided an update and announced that the next LATS meeting will be held Friday, February 2, 2024 at 9:30 a.m. She stated that they are expected to adopt the transportation improvement program and reported that public comments are expected at the next meeting.
- b. **Argent Road Property** — Mary Lou Franzoni announced the sale of the Argent Road Property for \$375,000. She reported that \$351,000 has been earmarked for the local match for the purchase of new vehicles.
- c. **Northern Beaufort Transit Study** — Stephanie Rossie from the Lowcountry Council of Governments reported that RFPs were sent out on January 2, 2024 and that she has received eight proposals from organizations to conduct the study. Ms. Rossie further reported that she has received commitments of match from both the town and the city of Beaufort.

XII. NEW BUSINESS

- a. **Daufuskie Ferry Changes** — Executive Director Mary Lou Franzoni reported that Haig Point lost the contract to operate the Daufuskie Island Ferry. The last day was December 31, 2023. The new contract has been awarded to Lowcountry Ferry.

Ms. Franzoni reported that the authority will be issuing new cards to residents once they have completed the vetting process and paid any past due balances on their previous Daufuskie Island Ferry accounts to Beaufort County. The authority will no longer take payments for the ferry.

Lead Dispatcher, Linda Norton, in charge of vetting and issuing cards to residents advised that the county has received a complete list of balances from Tom Barth and has furnished the authority with a copy to assist in the vetting process.

Board member Criss inquired as to the status of the Daufuskie Island shuttle. Ms. Franzoni reported that the authority has terminated shuttle operations at this time.

- b. **TASC Legislative Event** – Ms. Franzoni advised that the event will be held March 5, 2024. She advised that the purpose of the event is to increase state local match money through networking and visibility. She invited members of the board to attend.
- c. **Executive Director Recruitment**- Ms. Franzoni announced her plans to retire on November 1, 2024 and suggested the board investigate using a search firm to assist in hiring the next Executive Director. Ms. Franzoni will provide further information on this option at the next meeting. Beaufort County liaison to the Board, Tom Reitz advised

that Beaufort County is in the process of hiring a search firm and offered to send a list of firms to Ms. Franzoni to vet. Ms. Franzoni expressed her gratitude to the authority for the years of her employment.

XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Beaufort County Representative, Henry Criss motioned to adjourn for executive session to conduct a Grievance Hearing in the case of Carolyn Rollins, Operations Manager and Earl Drayton, Operations Supervisor. The motion was seconded by Board Member William Robinson. The board adjourned at 2:40 p.m.

XIV. ACTION RESULTING FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion: Beaufort County Representative, Henry Criss, motioned to reinstate Carolyn Rollins and Earl Drayton effective February 1, 2024, and issue a retroactive suspension without pay beginning November 22, 2023 on the condition the employee is reinstated in a position and pay grade based on the needs of the authority and discretion of the Executive Director. The motion was seconded by Board Member Childs.

The Executive Director announced that Carolyn Rollins and Earl Drayton may return to full time employment on February 1, 2024 as drivers and at a pay rate equal to their previous adjusted driver rate.

Vote: The motion was carried unanimously.

XIV. ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

XV. ADJOURNMENT

Board Chair Charles Mitchell made a motion to adjourn which was seconded by Board Member Childs. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 3:24 p.m.

NEXT LRTA Board Meeting: Wednesday, March 27, 2024, at 2:00 p.m. via Zoom. Deadline for Agenda Items: March 15, 2024.