

Lowcountry RTA Board Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date: July 22, 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 2:01 pm.

The invocation was said by Chair Zellman and Ms. Childs 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
Mr. Charles Mitchell, Jasper County

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. Detimex 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 Grants and Compliance Administrator
Ms. Sabrina Graham, Lowcountry Council of Governments
Mr. Christin Dammel, 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.

Ms. Zellman welcomed Ms. Graham and appreciated her taking the time to attend the meeting. Ms. Zellman asked Ms. Graham to talk about the new employee at the LCOG, Stephanie Rossi. Ms. Graham stated that she starts on Monday and was previously the principal planner in Savannah. She has over 20 years of experience in transportation planning. She is a senior planner in Savannah and before that in Seattle. She lives in Bluffton.

Ms. Zellman also welcomed the new board member for Jasper County, Mr. Charles Mitchell. Mr. Mitchell is originally from Hilton Head Island. He and his family have been in the charter bus and transportation business for his entire life. He is currently a detective for the city of Hardeeville Police Department and has been there for 16 years.

Guests and Public Forum

There were no guests or members of the public.

Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes from May 27, 2020 was made by Ms. Childs and seconded by Mr. Hamilton. The motion carried unanimously. A motion to approve the minutes for the special meeting on June 10, 2020 was made by Mr. Russell and seconded by Mr. Hamilton. The motion carried unanimously.

Action Items

There were no action items.

Informational Items

1. Ms. Franzoni stated that the entire team is working together to keep everyone safe. In spite of that, an employee did contract COVID-19 last week. Three employees had direct exposure to them. The employee that did contract it is home sick. The three employees with exposure are not sick but are quarantined at home. Two employees are home because they felt more comfortable being at home until the quarantine period is over. The fourteen-day period will end on Monday July 27, 2020. We are hoping this is the extent of our employees having to deal with this virus. Ms. Zellman asked if this was the first employee to contract the virus. Ms. Franzoni stated that yes that employee is the first. We are hopeful she recovers quickly.

Ms. Franzoni provided the Executive Director's report. Highlights included:

- Ms. Atkinson is working on a video download access point from the camera system to enable us to download video on request when the bus is in the lot.
- The phone system will be upgraded. State contract vendors will not work for the system we are needing so we will be issuing an RFP.
- Mr. Sullivan and Ms. Franzoni participated in a Zoom teleconference with the Hilton Head/Bluffton Chamber of Commerce. We did a presentation of the master plan and the Urban Study Phase 2 for Bluffton. The feedback was positive.
- Mr. Sullivan met with SERG Group Marketing. Cooperative marketing and strategies were discussed. More information will be provided as it develops.

- We are having biweekly conference calls with SCDOT to discuss the CARES Act and various resources relating to COVID-19. This is also to help us understand how to budget the CARES money on the rural side.
- On June 22, 2020 the trolley service started for the season.
- In June, Halsey King, a maintenance consultant, reviewed our maintenance department. SCDOT arranged for that review. Our facility and the COMET facility were the systems that SCDOT chose. We are in good shape and Mr. King brought up “looking forward” scenarios which were very helpful.
- We made it almost six months without any preventable accidents.

2. Ms. Wiley reported on the financial statements.

- Ms. Wiley is on maternity leave.
- We are finishing out the year pretty well. We are repositioning to be in a better position.
- We are waiting to receive our local matches.
- We are preparing for our audit
- *At this point, Ms. Wiley lost telephone connection and Ms. Franzoni had to step in on the Finance Director report.*
- We have been challenged in years past for receiving local match. We had to resubmit our letter to Allendale County. We are drawing down 100% on both urban and rural which will get us in a better position. Our cash flow is always challenging, and the CARES money will help us.
- Typically, our audit is the first week of August but it has been pushed back to the third week of August.
- We are going to get 2 additional new MCIs by the end of the year. Ours are from 2006 and they are running a million miles plus.
- Mr. Bickley asked with the June 30 closeout are there any surprises? Do we anticipate being in the black? Ms. Wiley stated that yes, we anticipate being in the black. Ms. Franzoni stated there have been no surprises or catastrophes.

Ms. Zellman stated that the order of the agenda will change and the Chairperson’s report will be after the Committee Reports.

3. Committee Reports

- Finance Committee Report

Mr. Hamilton stated that there was a financial call the previous day. He thanked Ms. Childs, Ms. Wiley and Ms. Guzman for attending. Statements are current and no modifications. It was a great job to have it out but the statements do not have the Month to Date / Year to Date comparisons. This will be done moving forward. The one-page report is much easier than the four or five pages that were previously produced. The reserve and local match are not a pressing issue because of the CARES Act funding. The committee meeting discussion was largely reviewing grants and funds available from the CARES Act. Mr. Hamilton stated that the board can take comfort in the financial position of the company. Ms. Zellman asked a question about local match. She stated that in an earlier conversation, Ms. Franzoni stated that the

SDOT guidance was to apply for local match as in any other year. Ms. Franzoni stated that the message conveyed is that the local match need is still there. There is some fear that if we don't ask for it this year, we may be out of the budget stream next year. Ms. Zellman asked what the status was for this year. Ms. Franzoni stated that everything has come in as expected. The town of Bluffton gave slightly more (\$77,000). Mr. Criss has sent a second request to Allendale County. Ms. Zellman asked about Beaufort and Colleton Counties. Ms. Franzoni stated that both counties gave the full request. Ms. Zellman asked about the town of Hilton Head. Ms. Franzoni stated that she requested around \$237,000. The town only budgeted \$200,000.

- **Operations Committee Report**

Mr. Bickley and Mr. Hamilton met with the staff this morning and reviewed the January to June period. Mr. Bickley stated that we went six months without a preventable accident. There were no positive drug test results from the random employee screenings. In June there was a drug incident involving passengers. That incident was reviewed. Arrests were made in that incident. Mr. Bickley stated that our passengers don't like other passengers with drugs on our buses. The passengers have been very supportive of the drug screening that has been taking place. Our ridership was down by 50% initially with the COVID closings but is back up to 75% of the usual ridership for this time of year. Mr. Bickley feels good with the staff report. Mr. Bickley has stated that because of the CARES Act funding we have had no employee go without a paycheck and expect that to continue.

- **Maintenance Committee Report**

Mr. Russell and Mr. Mitchell met with Mr. Stanley this morning (July 22, 2020). Mr. Stanley stated that the maintenance department has worked hand in hand with other departments to make sure everyone has PPE (Personal Protective Equipment). The buses are being cleaned daily or within 72 hours. Palmetto Breeze has turned into a resource for the Plexiglass screen plans that the maintenance department fabricated. Mr. Stanley has been receiving phone calls about that. Mr. Russell stated that Mr. Stanley has done a great job making sure it looks authentic with the interior. There is a cooling unit under warranty that is being taken care of. They discussed the Halsey King visit. All items were immediately addressed. The parts inventory is at 100%. The bus wash is waiting to be finished. Mr. Russell said he thinks Mr. Stanley does a great job. Mr. Russell is able to see exactly what he is doing. He is completing work. Mr. Russell appreciates all the work Mr. Stanley is doing. He is an exemplary employee and safety with him and his employees is number one. They are taking the steps to keep everyone safe. Mr. Mitchell added that the bus for the Daufuskie Island is being cleaned four times a day. Ms. Franzoni stated that the bus is at capacity almost every trip. Mr. Mitchell said kudos to Mr. Stanley and his team for keeping the driver and passengers safe. Ms. Zellman thanked Mr. Stanley as well.

- **Executive Committee Report**

Ms. Zellman stated that she and Ms. Childs looked at the performance review format and feel that it is not appropriate for the Executive Director. They

decided to reformat the review. They went through the job description, the by-laws and incorporated that into the new format. They asked Ms. Franzoni to list her accomplishments in each category. Ms. Zellman would like to share the review with the board and discuss it before it is given to Ms. Franzoni. This would call for an executive session. Dates and times were discussed among the board members. Friday, July 24, 2020 at 2:30pm was decided as the most convenient date. An agenda needs to be posted. Ms. Childs will take minutes once the board comes out of executive session.

Old Business

1. Meeting with Bluffton and Palmetto Bluff

Ms. Franzoni stated there is a Zoom meeting next Thursday with Montage and the Town of Bluffton that is a rescheduled meeting from March. Ms. Franzoni spoke to her contact at Palmetto Bluff and they do not have any H2B visa employees this year. Palmetto Breeze is not providing any transportation to Montage Palmetto Bluff right now. Palmetto Bluff likes what has been put together. Ms. Zellman and Ms. Childs are participating in that call as well.

2. Trolley Service Update

Ms. Franzoni stated that the launch is lukewarm, but it is building. There was a Tour A Trolley event on Monday after 6pm as this is when business picks up. There will be another event this Sunday as the event was well received. We are not up to last year's level of passenger trips but we are at 75% compared to last year. The trolley will run until September 15, 2020. Ms. Zellman asked if everyone was wearing their masks. Ms. Franzoni stated that everyone is wearing masks. Mr. Bickley asked if we were running two trolley routes this year. Ms. Franzoni stated that we are running two buses but one route.

3. LATS Update

Ms. Graham stated that they are still out for bid for consultants to assist with the long-range transportation plan. The plan has gone from a four-year plan to a seven-year plan. Within the rural area, there will be dollars starting in 2025 for road improvement projects. LATS policy meeting will be on August 7, 2020 and it will be virtual. Ms. Zellman asked if there were any updates for Exit 3. Ms. Graham stated that funding was approved for Exit 3.

New Business

1. Possible Board Retreat

There was discussion if it should be ZOOM or wait for in person. Ms. Franzoni said she will talk to Curtis Sims at SCDOT to see if he was still offering Board training. Ms. Zellman asked about the status for the Allendale County board member. Ms. Franzoni said she spoke to Ms. Pinkney in the last month. Ms. Pinkney stated that she received a letter from Allendale County stating she was on the board until 2021. Ms. Zellman asked if we could get a copy of the letter. Ms. Franzoni will reach out to Ms. Pinkney again.

Next Steps

1. Ms. Franzoni will work on the RFP for the phone system.
2. Month to Date and Year to Date comparisons will be on the statements.
3. Mr. Criss will follow up with Allendale County.
4. Ms. Childs will set up the conference call for July 24, 2020 at 2:30pm.
5. Ms. Franzoni will post the agenda for that meeting.
6. Ms. Zellman will send out the performance appraisal to the board members the day before.
7. Ms. Zellman will meet with Ms. Franzoni in person and Ms. Childs on the phone to review the performance appraisal.
8. Ms. Franzoni will follow up with Allendale County in regard to the board member position.
9. Ms. Franzoni will call Curtis Sims for the Board Retreat.

Announcements

There were no announcements.

Executive Session

Mr. Bickley made a motion to move to executive session and Mr. Russell seconded. There was a unanimous approval. Mr. Mitchell stated he needed to leave. Executive session started at 3:13pm. Mr. Bickley motioned, and Ms. Childs seconded to end the executive session and return to the regular meeting. All board members were in favor.

Adjournment

Ms. Childs motioned to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Bickley seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 3:25pm.