

ESTUARY TRANSIT DISTRICT
REGULAR MEETING

THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT THE NEXT ESTUARY
TRANSIT DISTRICT MEETING

June 17, 2010

CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of the Estuary Transit District was called to order by Richard Cabral 9:08 a.m. at the Estuary Transit Offices, Centerbrook, Connecticut.

ROLL CALL

A Quorum was established. Those in attendance included: Mike Pace, Virginia Zawoy, Richard Cabral, John Forbis, Ralph Eno, Jack Spangler (left at 9:50 a.m.), Leslie Strauss, and Noel Bishop.

Absent: Paul Tyrrell, Dick Smith

Staff: Joe Comerford, Halyna Famiglietti

PLEDGE

Richard Cabral led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Richard Cabral congratulated Mike Pace on his upcoming wedding.

VISITOR'S COMMENTS

None.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Minutes

Ralph Eno made a motion to approve the minutes from the April 16, 2010 meeting. Mike Pace seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

COMMUNICATIONS

Virginia Zawoy reported on a letter received from Mike Sanders informing the District that the DOT has approved their request to receive funding under the 2010 CT Clean Fuel Program. The DOT approved the request for the Ford Escape Hybrid Electric Vehicle at \$8,200 per vehicle and two Ford Star Trans Senator Hybrid Electric Vehicles at \$55,780 per vehicle.

Joe Comerford reported that the District will be the first in the state, and one of the few in the country, to use these environmentally friendly hybrid vehicles.

Joe Comerford reported that for the current fiscal year, the DOT has determined subsidies that will be provided to the ETD. The DOT has indicated that the District will receive 3.5% for Shoreline Shuttle, 1.856% for the Rural Shuttle and 3.5% for the Niantic Route. To determine the funding amount, the state used the “actual” figures; thus decreasing the funding. Unfortunately, the DOT does not reward Districts when they have a good year. Joe continued that it is discouraging to be penalized for having a good year.

The EMOT funding was discussed briefly. Joe Comerford reported that the DOT has changed the calculation for determining this grant. The new calculation makes the District short on our match. Each town’s contribution to EMOT is necessary to receive full funding.

TREASURER’S REPORT

None.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Finance Committee – No report.

Marketing Committee

The Marketing Reported was included in the Board’s packet along with several Press Releases regarding the award of hybrid vehicles, new larger, redesigned buses, bus reservation process (software) and sale of bus passes at Adam’s Supermarket.

Joe Comerford commented that the District has been receiving good coverage in the local media and the local Events Magazines.

Leslie Strauss and Joe Comerford have suggested a variation on the paint for the hybrid bus. To distinguish this “greener” bus, they propose having the bottom portion of the bus painted green instead of the current blue. The Board felt this was a good idea.

Leslie Strauss suggested the District use the free Comcast public access channel to market the District and the services available. The Board felt this was a good idea.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S REPORT

The Executive Director's Report was included in the packet.

Joe Comerford reported that at a recent Senior Resources meeting the District was complimented for the increased ridership of seniors. Joe and Richard Cabral presented the District's request for \$30,000 in funding. They are hopeful for full funding next year. Joe continued that the District has exhausted the \$15,000 grant for the current year. The grant runs on a federal fiscal year of October through September. Funding for the remainder of the year will be discussed later in the meeting.

The second round of stimulus money was received in early June enabling the District to go forward with additional stimulus projects including furniture, hybrid vehicles, and software.

The New London bus service is scheduled to begin July 5, 2010. The District received no input at the Public Hearing.

Adams Supermarket began selling bus passes in May.

Joe has requested that the District be added to the Wireless Priority Service (WPS) for priority communications in emergency situations.

A Safety Awards luncheon is being scheduled to honor employees with no preventable accidents this fiscal year.

Scheduling Software – Ecolane conducted training seminars the week of June 1. The software went live on June 7. So far, the software is performing well. The software provides valuable data which allows for better control of the District's operations.

There have been some issues with the mobile data terminal units (MDT) in the buses. There was an outage with AT&T along with additional and possibly user error issues. Ecolane is working to correct the issues and Joe has solicited aid from the IT Department at First Transit.

Joe invited Board members to view the monitor located in the dispatch area which has a map showing the location of the buses.

Mike Pace questioned if the software can provide information on days during the week that are "slow". Joe responded that Monday is generally a slow day. Mike then suggested that the District market with area "destinations" (Water's Edge, Saybrook Point Inn, Essex Train etc.) for possible package deals on the slow days. Joe will pursue.

Joe Comerford reported that funding for the Mid Shore Express was approved by a locally coordinated transportation planning group. This group must approve funding before the DOT will consider a proposal. This agency has approved 2 years of funding

for the Mid Shore Express and expanded hours on the Riverside route. The DOT is very receptive to these programs.

John Forbis commented that the new software is compatible with many electronic devices (I phones etc.) used by the younger generation allowing the district access to additional markets. There was brief discussion regarding Google Transit.

Bus shelter installation work is on-going. Deep River has erected their shelter and Chester expects to place their shelter in the near future.

Virginia Zawoy commented that the plaque dedicated to Stan Griemann will be placed in the Old Saybrook shelter. Mike Pace reported that there are various locations on Rte. 1 in Old Saybrook that are being considered for shelters and Old Saybrook's Town Planner along with a Committee is working on the placements.

Joe Comerford added that the bowling alley has requested a shelter at their facility. Joe also reported that the plaque for Stan has not yet arrived. Virginia Zawoy will follow up.

Leslie Strauss made a motion to accept the Executive Director's Report. Virginia Zawoy seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

FINANCE MANAGER'S REPORT

The Finance Manager's Report, Budget vs. Actual Report, Bank Statements and Cash Flow Report were included in the Board's packet.

Halyna Famiglietti reported that she is expecting payment from the DOT.

John Forbis requested a copy of the May Budget vs. Actual report. Halyna will provide same.

As the routes are funded through various grants, it is difficult to determine an accurate cost per ride. As the District grows, a clear picture of the costs is essential.

John Forbis made a motion to accept the Finance Managers Report. Virginia Zawoy seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

OPERATIONS MANAGER'S REPORT

Joe Comerford distributed a copy of the Operations Manager's Report. Joe reported that the huge ridership bump in April was due to the addition of Saturday service. Also contributing to this increase was the addition of early morning and evening routes. Joe added that the busiest time of day for the District begins at 2:00 p.m.

Richard Cabral commented that from 2008 to 2009, ridership figures dropped from January through August. Joe Comerford responded that during that timeframe, the senior fare went into effect; which negatively affected the ridership figures.

Noel Bishop made a motion to accept the Operations Manager's Report. John Forbis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Auditor Selection

Joe Comerford reported on the results of the RFP for Audit Services. After a review of proposals by the Finance Committee, it was recommended that the Board appoint the firm of Henry, Raymond & Thompson, LLC as the auditor for the District. This is a small firm which offered a fixed price. Joe Comerford added that the District would be one of the firms' biggest clients.

Virginia Zawoy made a motion whereas the ETD solicited firms through a request for proposals to provide audit services for 3 years with two one year options and, whereas the Audit Selection Committee has recommended the firm of Henry, Raymond & Thompson, LLC as the highest ranked responsible bidder; therefore be it resolved that the Executive Director, Joseph Comerford, is authorized on behalf of the ETD to negotiate and execute all necessary contract documents required to purchase audit services for the ETD from Henry, Raymond & Thompson, LLC. Mike Pace seconded the motion. Discussion followed:

It was noted that the principle office of the firm is located in Hamden CT and South Windsor CT.

The motion passed unanimously.

John Forbis commended Joe Comerford for his work on this RFP.

Senior Fares

As previously reported, the money which funds the senior fares as been exhausted with four months of the program remaining. An additional subsidy of approximately \$10,000 is necessary to maintain the program. Halyna reported that she has discussed the situation with the Grant Administrator and was directed to continue sending invoices.

Joe Comerford reported that the Dial a Ride budget has expended 21% of its budget as of the end of April. If not used, it will go into the Unrestricted Net Asset account. He suggested using some of these funds to supplement the senior fare program.

Mike Pace stressed the importance of a permanent policy on senior fares. Joe Comerford responded that at the recent meeting with Senior Resources, he made it clear that we cannot continue to subsidize senior fares when the program is not fully funded.

Mike Pace made a motion to give the Chairman and the Treasurer the authority to review the program and make the necessary transfers. Leslie Strauss seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Lead Dispatcher Job Description

A copy of the lead dispatcher job description was included in the Board's packet. This is an existing position but there is no current job description on file.

Mike Pace made a motion to accept the recommendation of the Executive Director and approve the job description as presented. John Forbis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Bus Purchase Approval

Virginia Zawoy made a motion to resolve that the Executive Director, Joseph Comerford, hereby is authorized on behalf of the ETD to negotiate and execute all necessary contract documents required to purchase two hybrid buses for the ETD from the Greater New Haven Transit District vehicle contract with Matthews Buses, Inc. in an amount not to exceed \$260,000. Leslie Strauss seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Old Bus Disposal

Virginia Zawoy made a motion whereas the ETD has received two replacement buses; and whereas the ETD wishes to dispose of buses 5222 and 4555 which are beyond their useful life as established by the CT DOT; therefore be it resolved that the Executive Director, Joseph Comerford, hereby is authorized on behalf of the ETD to dispose of said vehicles in accordance with CT DOT guidelines, which includes auction and/or donation to a municipality. Ralph Eno seconded the motion. Discussion followed.

Mike Pace expressed an interest in receiving a donation of the buses for the Town of Saybrook's Youth and Family Services Dept. Joe Comerford is awaiting approval from the DOT to accommodate this donation.

The motion passed unanimously.

Full Time Employees

Joe Comerford reported on the difficulty in attaining reliable part time drivers. He added that the drivers want to choose their hours and continually leave the District at a loss. He continued that he has instituted disciplinary actions to no avail.

Several suggestions were made to recruit part time drivers including VFW and American Legion members. Joe Comerford will follow up with these organizations.

Ralph Eno commented that these suggested organization members may have difficulty with certifications as well as physical examinations.

Richard Cabral reported that using part time employees helps to keep labor costs down. Additional information is needed in order for the Board to make a decision on full time vs. part time employees. This information includes the number of hours, required certifications etc. Joe Comerford will provide a proposal with this information for the Board to review at their next meeting.

Richard Cabral made a motion to table the item and direct Joe Comerford to provide the pertinent information required. Virginia Zawoy seconded the motion. Discussion followed:

Ralph Eno commented that in order to grow the service, a reliable pool of employees is necessary. If we stay with part time employees, it will always be difficult as many of these employees leave when full time positions become available elsewhere. As Selectmen, the Board is interested in keeping the costs down but as a Board Member, he understands the need for full time employees. Ralph continued that he was proud of the success of the district; however, money aside, the most effective way to grow the service is to have full time employees.

Joe Comerford reported that the ETD is being shorted by the state as no other district in the state is expected to run with part time employees.

The motion passed unanimously.

CHAIR COMMENTS

Richard Cabral reported that Sue Traskos, ETD's lead dispatcher, will receive an Excellence in Transportation Award from CACT for her contributions to the ETD. Also, Ralph Eno is receiving a Friend of Public Transit Award for his work on the Municipal Grant and preventing large fare increases. A luncheon in their honor is scheduled for Wednesday, June 23, 2010 in Newington.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Leslie Strauss reported that Joe Comerford will be featured in the August issue of Metro Magazine in their Top 40 Under 40 issue. This award recognizes the top 40 Executive Directors in the country.

Leslie Strauss reported that the new schedule including the New London route will be ready for distribution July 5, 2010.

VISITOR COMMENTS

None.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None.

ADJOURNMENT

Leslie Strauss made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:01 a.m. Virginia Zawoy seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Next meeting – August 20, 2010

Respectfully Submitted,

Suzanne Helchowski
Recording Clerk

Virginia Zawoy
Secretary