

THESE MINTUES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT THE NEXT ETD MEETING

ESTUARY TRANSIT DISTRICT
RIVER VALLEY TRANSIT
REGULAR MEETING
Friday, June 14, 2024
91 N. Main Street, Middletown, CT and via ZOOM

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Strauss called the meeting to order at 9:00 p.m. In attendance included: Leslie Strauss, Tim Griswold, Charlie Norz (ZOOM, exited at 10:15 a.m.), Steve Zissou (ZOOM), John Hall (ZOOM), Katherine Russell, Joan Gay (ZOOM), Christine Marques, Brendan Rea (ZOOM) DG Fitton (ZOOM), Michelle Benivegna (ZOOM) and Beverly Lawrence (ZOOM, exited at 10:04 a.m.).

Staff: Haylna Famiglietti, Brendan Geraghty, Chris Dennison, Joe Comerford (ZOOM) (exited the meeting at 10 a.m.)

New Board members Katherine Russell, Brendan Rea, and Michelle Benivegna were welcomed to the Board. Each member provided a brief overview of their background and interest in serving the District.

PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED FY 24/25 BUDGET

The Public Hearing on the proposed 24/25 Budget was opened at 9:04 a.m.

No comments from the Public were received.

Katherine Russell made a motion to close the Public Hearing at 9:12 a.m. Tim Griswold seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

VISITORS' COMMENTS – None.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Charlie Norz made a motion to accept the minutes from the 4/19/24 Regular Board meeting as presented. Joan Gay seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

*Note – acceptance of the 4/19/24 “Regular” meeting minutes was incorrectly listed as “Special” meeting minutes on the agenda.

Tim Griswold made a motion to accept the minutes from the 4/19/24 Expansion Committee meeting as presented. Charlie Norz seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Joan Gay made a motion to accept the minutes from the 5/14/24 Finance Committee meeting as presented. DG Fitton seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Tim Griswold made a motion to accept the minutes from the 5/20/24 Special Board meeting as presented. Beverly Lawrence seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Tim Griswold made a motion to accept the minutes from the 6/11/24 Transit Advisory Board meeting as presented. Beverly Lawrence seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Christine Marques made a motion to accept the minutes from the 6/11/24 Facilities Committee meeting as presented. Charlie Norz seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Joan Gay made a motion to accept the minutes from the 6/12/24 Finance Committee meeting as presented. Charlie Norz seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

COMMUNICATIONS – None.

TREASURER’S REPORT – None.

Christine Marques made a motion to amend the order of the agenda to discuss “New Business”. DG Fitton seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

Approval of FY24-25 Budget

A copy of the proposed FY 24/25 Budget was included in the Board’s packet. No comments were received from the Public relative to the Budget. The Budget has been reviewed by the Finance Committee.

Christine Marques made a motion to approve the FY 24/25 Budget as presented. John Hall seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Insurance Anti-Trust Resolution

Tim Griswold read the resolution as follows:

WHEREAS ETD is a self-insured employer through its participation in the State of Connecticut’s Partnership Plan 2.0;

WHEREAS, Based on discussions with counsel, ETD believes that it has valid claims against Hartford Healthcare Corporation for various anti-trust and anti-competition violations;

WHEREAS, such claims may be best raised as a class action lawsuit, and ETD desires to bring such claims on behalf of similarly situated employers who may be impacted by Hartford Healthcare Corporation’s practices;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Board hereby authorizes Aeton Law Partners, LLP and Freed Kanner London & Millen, LLC, to initiate such litigation on behalf of ETD and a class of similarly situated employers against Hartford Healthcare Corporation and such other entities as they determine necessary;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Aeton Law Partners, LLP and Freed Kanner London & Millen, LLC are authorized to take such actions in the conduct of such litigation as they deem appropriate and necessary to advance the interests of ETD and the class and seek appropriate relief in connection with such claims;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Joseph Comerford is authorized to sign all appropriate documents and engagement letters with Aeton Law Partners, LLP and Freed Kanner London & Millen, LLC and any other paperwork necessary in the conduct of the action on behalf of ETD so that they may undertake such representation.

DG Fitton made a motion to approve the Insurance Anti-Trust Resolution as presented. Christine Marques seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Site Improvement Resolution

Tim Griswold read the resolution as follows:

WHEREAS, on May 2, 2024, an Invitation for Bids for site improvements to 110 N. Main Street, Middletown to include milling and paving, and the installation of fencing and gate hardware, was released; and

WHEREAS no bids were received in response to this solicitation; and

WHEREAS, on June 5, 2024, CTDOT approved waiving ETD's purchasing policy for a formal procurement for purchase equal to or greater than fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000); and

WHEREAS, Holzner Construction was named the lowest, responsive and responsible Bidder; for the aforementioned tasks;

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Directors waives the requirement for a formal procurement for the site improvements at 110 N. Main Street; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Executive Director, Joseph Comerford, hereby is authorized on behalf of the ETD to award the winning bid and sign a contract with Holzner Construction for the aforementioned tasks for the ETD in an amount not to exceed seventy-four thousand five hundred dollars (\$74,500).

Charlie Norz made a motion to approve the Site Improvement Resolution as presented. Brendan Rea seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Joe reported:

* The electric buses (35') are due for delivery to Hartford in August. These are state vehicles and part of the DOT's fleet. The State is no longer permitted to purchase diesel buses. They are expected at the District in September. Photos of the vehicles were screenshared.

- * The new HR system has allowed the District to streamline protocols in managing employees and the system enhances communication through District sites.
- * HCare.com will start in July and offers employees benefits for back-up day care.
- * Fare Pilot workshops were held for employees and the public. Their program allows a rider's credit card to become their bus ticket. The District, along with Meriden, is piloting this program.
- * The launch of new and expanded District services (Park Connect, Clinton Trolley, XMile, route 645 and expansions on fixed routes) went well. Joe thanked the staff for their efforts on this project.

Joan Gay made a motion to accept the Executive Director's Report as presented. Charlie Norz seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Facilities Committee

Joan Gay reported on initiatives of the Facilities Committee including bus electrification, the Facilities Master Plan, Middletown Right of Way Acquisition, an update on the status of the Shoreline Facility, the Middletown Terminal renovation project and bus shelter program.

The minutes of the 6/11/24 Facilities meeting provide details of these initiatives and were included in the Board's packet.

Tim Griswold made a motion to accept the Facilities Committee report as presented. Joan Gay seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Finance Committee

Charlie Norz reported that the Finance Committee has reviewed the Finance Director's report, and it is in order. Operating expenses are on budget and the cash position is healthy.

The Board discussed the appropriate level of surplus funding. Joe Comerford reported that in the past, the State encouraged District's to build a strong fund balance. In addition, the use of CARES funds has enabled the fund balance to grow.

Katherine Russell made a motion to accept the Finance Committee report as presented. Joan Gay seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Marketing Committee

Graphics of the two electric buses were screen shared. The District's logo is included on the buses and the color scheme of the vehicles matches the District's colors.

Town newsletters, emails, etc. were used to publicize the new routes, Xtra Mile, etc.

A Press Conference for the XMile program in Madison/Guilford is scheduled on June 25 @ 1:30 p.m. location TBD. All are welcome to attend.

The District has seen a large increase in website usage.

The District participated in Middletown's Art Fest.

Joan Gay made a motion to accept the Marketing Report as presented. Katherine Russell seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Legislative Committee – No report.

Transit Advisory Committee

Tim Griswold reported on initiatives of the Transit Advisory Committee including the Passio system, Smart Grant, Service Expansion review, Xtra Mile launch, bus shelter project and Park Connect program.

The minutes of the 6/11/24 Transit Advisory Committee meeting provide details of these initiatives and were included in the Board's packet.

The Board briefly discussed the advantages of a "dashboard" to facilitate the apps that may be used for services.

Charlie Norz made a motion to accept the Transit Advisory Committee report as presented. Joan Gay seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Personnel Committee – No report. This committee currently has one member. New board members were encouraged to let Chris Dennison know what committees they have an interest in serving on.

COG Update

Brendan Geraghty reported that the COG is working on the Thrive Grant (transit-oriented grant) for technical assistance. Areas of concentration include Shoreline train stations and the bus terminal in Middletown. In addition, the use of propane for fuel options on smaller vehicles is being explored.

Katherine Russell made a motion to accept the COG Update as presented. Christine Marques seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Tim Griswold made a motion to add to the agenda the update from the Expansion Committee. Leslie Strauss seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Expansion Committee

Tim Griswold reported that E. Hampton and Portland are considering the possibility of joining the District.

The need for clarity vis a vis the calculation of fees to be charged to towns was briefly discussed.

Joan Gay made a motion to accept the Expansion Committee report as presented. Charlie Norz seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

TRANSIT PLANNER'S REPORT

Brendan provided an update as follows:

Passio Update

- All Hardware Installed at the Middletown Terminal, Old Saybrook Train Station, and Scranton Gazebo in Madison,
- Arrival times have been largely incorrect for many months and we have been working with the vendors to improve the estimated time arrivals.

Smart Grant

- CTITP pilot for fare payment validation.
- Pilot project with DOT for fare payment machines that will allow for debit or credit cards as payment for fare on the buses
- Enables the ability for **Fare Capping**
- Bus operator focus group conducted and a rider focus group on Wednesday to discuss how to best promote and use these new devices

Service Span Expansion

- May 28th we launched our service span expansion across the system
- Service increases were primarily in Middletown with Weeknight, Saturday night and most importantly Sunday service
- We also launched Sunday service for the 641 Bus Route in the Shoreline
- Some people starting to use Sunday Service 111 on Sunday in Middletown
- Riders I have interactive with have been appreciative
- Hard to find the drivers but we eventually got there

XtraMile Expansion

- Statewide Microtransit Grant
- Applied and got funding for three zones Middletown, Madison & Guilford, and East Hampton
- Middletown is seasonal with the College semester schedule and will launch in the Fall semester in August/September
- On the 28th we launched both East Hampton & Madison and Guilford zones
- Ridership has been modest which is to be expected but especially in Madison we are seeing considerable growth and new riders using it every day which is exciting.
- On-demand zone

Bus Shelter Project

- Statewide bus stop amenity program
- Main focus right now is on bus shelters
- Later rounds can include other amenities for smaller use stops such as trash cans, solar lighting, etc
- We are targeting Middletown for our initial round of bus shelters at our highest ridership stops
- *Show Map*
- Fedex, Sagamore Hills, Newfield towers, Stonycrest Towers, High & William, Westlake Drive etc

- We did a bus tour with DOT and City of Middletown to Staff to review potential locations, and it went very well
- Have not heard much from them lately however, we need to follow up

Park Connect

- Park Connect Program also started on May 28th
- Free seasonal service to Hammonasset beach from Memorial Day to Labor Day
- Route 645 from Middletown to Hammonasset free on Sunday and pulls right into Hammonasset beach
- Clinton Trolley Free service Thursday – Sunday that serves Clinton and Madison
- XtraMile Madison & Guilford also has free rides to Hammonasset Beach

Tim Griswold made a motion to accept the Transit Planner’s Report as presented. Katherine Russell seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

FINANCE DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Copies of the Cash Flow and Budget vs. Actual documents were included in the Board’s packet and screenshared. The Finance Committee has reviewed these documents and has found them to be in order. Halyna was available to address questions/comments posed by Board members.

Tim Griswold made a motion to accept the Finance Director’s Report as presented. DG Fitton seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

OPERATIONS DIRECTOR’S REPORT

Brendan reported that ridership is increasing. Numbers were low in January in Middletown but have rebounded. Shoreline ridership has remained healthy and last month, had more riders than Middletown.

DG Fitton made a motion to accept the Operations Director’s Report as presented. Tim Griswold seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

MAINTENANCE DIRECTOR’S REPORT – No report.

OLD BUSINESS

Dissolution of MTD

Middlefield has withdrawn from Middletown Transit. Before dissolving MTD, the Town of Durham must officially withdraw from MTD.

CHAIR COMMENTS

Leslie encouraged Board members to participate in the meetings in person.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS – None.

ADJOURNMENT

DG Fitton made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 11:47 a.m. Brendan Rea seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Next Meeting - August 7, 2024, 9 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Suzanne Helchowski
Clerk