

Approved 9/17/2020

Pursuant to written notice sent to Board Members and pursuant to notice posted at least forty-eight hours prior to the meeting, copies of said notice having been sent to the Secretary of the Commonwealth, William F. Galvin and the Secretary of the Executive Office of Administration and Finance, Michael Heffernan, the meeting of the Advisory Board of the Franklin Regional Transit Authority was held on June 18, 2020 virtually on the GoToMeeting.com platform by computer and by phone.

1. INTRODUCTIONS:

Present were the following Advisory Board Members and/or Member Designees:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.74
William Bembury	Erving	3.17
Roxann Wedegartner	Greenfield	28.64
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	0.00
Lance Fritz	Leyden	1.00
Jeff Singleton	Montague	11.80
Tracy Rogers	Northfield	1.71
Paul McLatchy	Rowe	1.36
Edward Gibson	Southampton	1.88
Paula LeBlanc	Southwick	2.62
Richard Tillberg	Whately	<u>2.32</u>
	Total	56.24

Also present were:

Tina M. Cote; FRTA Administrator, Michael Perreault; FRTA Assistant Administrator, Edward Sanborn, FRTA Bookkeeper, Molly Morin; FTM General Manager, Wayne Waldron, FTM Assistant General Manager, and Elizabeth Quirk, FRTA Transit Advisory Committee Vice-Chair.

Chairman Lance Fritz called the meeting to order at 10:30am and it was noted that a quorum **was** present to hold a meeting.

2. REVIEW AND VOTE TO ACCEPT MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 21, 2019 MEETING:

Peter Otten made a **motion** to accept the meeting minutes from November 21, 2019. Tracy Rogers seconded, and the vote was as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.74	Yes

William Bembury	Erving	3.17	Yes
Roxann Wedegartner	Greenfield	28.64	Yes
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	0.00	
Lance Fritz	Leyden	1.00	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	11.80	Yes
Tracy Rogers	Northfield	1.71	Abstain
Paul McLatchy	Rowe	1.36	Yes
Edward Gibson	Southampton	1.88	Yes
Paula LeBlanc	Southwick	2.62	Yes
Richard Tillberg	Whately	<u>2.32</u>	Abstain
	Total	56.24	

Yes – 52.21
No – 0.00
Abstain – 4.03

The vote passed and the **motion** carried.

OLD BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS:

3. UPDATE FROM FINANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE:

Peter Otten stated that the Finance and Audit Committee met virtually on June 1st to discuss the draft budget proposal for FY21. The budget was put together and presented using realistic figures based upon current information. The Finance and Audit Committee voted to recommend the budget as presented to the full Advisory Board for approval.

Jeff Singleton stated that there is no narrative along with the budget and asked if there was an anticipated impact of state revenue loss. Ed Sanborn explained that there is a line item in the budget, account 413045 titled CARES Funding, with approximately \$250,000. This account is for revenue losses and increased expenses due to COVID-19 for things such as increased supplies, personal protective equipment, etc. Jeff Singleton asked if, in the future, FRTA could provide a shared narrative along with the budget to help board members more easily digest the budget. Ed Sanborn stated that FRTA does provide a narrative to the budget for internal discussion but in the future can make it into a more formal presentation along with the budget. Ed Sanborn also clarified that while the budget was put together using the best information FRTA has at hand, there are still a lot of unknown factors with how FRTA, and the rest of the state, will recover from the impacts of COVID-19.

4. REVIEW AND APPROVE FY21 BUDGET:

Peter Otten made a **motion** to approve the FY21 budget as presented. Paul McLatchy seconded, and the vote was as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.74	Yes
William Bembury	Erving	3.17	Yes
Roxann Wedegartner	Greenfield	28.64	Yes
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	0.00	
Lance Fritz	Leyden	1.00	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	11.80	Yes
Tracy Rogers	Northfield	1.71	Yes
Paul McLatchy	Rowe	1.36	Yes
Edward Gibson	Southampton	1.88	Yes
Paula LeBlanc	Southwick	2.62	Yes
Richard Tillberg	Whately	<u>2.32</u>	Yes
	Total	56.24	

Yes – 56.24

No – 0.00

Abstain – 0.00

The vote passed unanimously, and the **motion** carried.

5. REVIEW AND APPROVE FY21 RESOLUTION:

Peter Otten made a **motion** to approve the FY21 Resolution as presented. Paul McLatchy seconded, and discussion followed. Lance Fritz stated that the FY21 Resolution remains the same as the current year. With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Lance Fritz made the decision to waive the requirement of the second signature on checks. About a month ago, Lance Fritz resumed signing as the second signature on checks. Tracy Rogers asked if some language should be added to the Resolution to waive the requirement for second signatures on checks in the event of emergencies or other extenuating circumstances. Lance Fritz suggested that someone could amend the motion to add such language. Discussion concluded and the vote was as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.74	Yes
William Bembury	Erving	3.17	Yes
Roxann Wedegartner	Greenfield	28.64	Yes
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	0.00	
Lance Fritz	Leyden	1.00	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	11.80	Yes
Tracy Rogers	Northfield	1.71	Yes
Paul McLatchy	Rowe	1.36	Yes
Edward Gibson	Southampton	1.88	Yes
Paula LeBlanc	Southwick	2.62	Yes
Richard Tillberg	Whately	<u>2.32</u>	Yes
	Total	56.24	

Yes – 56.24
 No – 0.00
 Abstain – 0.00

The vote passed unanimously, and the **motion** carried.

6. NOMINATION/ELECTION OF FINANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE FOR FY21:

Lance Fritz stated that the current Finance and Audit Committee members are Robert J. Decker III from Deerfield, Lance Fritz from Leyden, and Peter Otten from Buckland. Paul McLatchy made a **motion** to elect Robert J. Decker III, Lance Fritz, and Peter Otten to the Finance and Audit Committee for FY21. Lance Fritz asked if anyone else wanted to nominate someone or volunteer themselves to be on the Finance and Audit Committee. There were no other nominations or volunteers. Tracy Rogers seconded, and the vote was as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.74	Yes
William Bembury	Erving	3.17	Yes
Roxann Wedegartner	Greenfield	28.64	Yes
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	0.00	
Lance Fritz	Leyden	1.00	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	11.80	Yes
Tracy Rogers	Northfield	1.71	Yes
Paul McLatchy	Rowe	1.36	Yes
Edward Gibson	Southampton	1.88	Yes
Paula LeBlanc	Southwick	2.62	Yes
Richard Tillberg	Whately	2.32	Yes
Total		56.24	

Yes – 56.24
 No – 0.00
 Abstain – 0.00

The vote passed unanimously, and the **motion** carried.

7. REVIEW AND APPROVE CHANGES TO TITLE VI PER 5311 TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND COMPLIANCE REVIEW:

Tina M. Cote explained that FRTA had a 5311 Technical Assistance and Compliance Review by MassDOT. From the review MassDOT determined that FRTA’s 2019 Title VI program (draft), identifies Spanish as a limited English proficiency (LEP) language group in Franklin County that exceeds the safe harbor threshold of 1,000 individuals or 5% of the population. According to the 2017 American Community Survey (ACS), however, the number of Spanish speaking individuals who speak English “less than very well” in Franklin County does not exceed the safe harbor threshold. Their recommendation for corrective action was for FRTA to revise the draft

of its 2019 Title VI program to reflect the fact that there are no LEP language groups in Franklin County exceeding the safe harbor threshold.

Jeff Singleton asked for more clarification on LEP language groups and what this means for FRTA. Tina M. Cote explained that if there are limited English proficiency (LEP) language groups with populations above the safe harbor thresholds it would require FRTA to translate documents into those identified languages.

Peter Otten made a **motion** to approve the changes to FRTA’s 2019 Title VI program as presented. Tracy Rogers seconded, and the vote was as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.74	Yes
William Bembury	Erving	3.17	Yes
Roxann Wedegartner	Greenfield	28.64	Yes
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	0.00	
Lance Fritz	Leyden	1.00	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	11.80	Yes
Tracy Rogers	Northfield	1.71	Yes
Paul McLatchy	Rowe	1.36	Yes
Edward Gibson	Southampton	1.88	Yes
Paula LeBlanc	Southwick	2.62	Yes
Richard Tillberg	Whately	2.32	Yes
		<u>Total</u>	
		56.24	

Yes – 56.24
 No – 0.00
 Abstain – 0.00

The vote passed unanimously, and the **motion** carried.

8. COVID-19 UPDATES:

Tina M. Cote gave the following COVID-19 updates:

- Since initial service reductions back in March, additional fixed route service brought back online again on June 15th.
- Any riders that have been impacted by temporary service cuts can call dispatch to provide essential trips through our demand response program.
- To continue to promote social distancing, operations continue to provide rear-door boarding in large transit buses, not enforcing fare collections, installation of driver barriers, increased cleaning and sanitization of high touch points, JWO Transit Center remains closed to the public, and FRTA staff continues to work remotely.

There was discussion on riders wearing masks on the buses. Molly Morin stated that she is only aware of on instance in which a rider refused to wear a mask and overall, the drivers have done a great job enforcing wearing masks on board buses. Molly Morin added that capacity on large

transit buses has been temporarily reduced to 15 passengers and 6 passengers on minibuses. There are drivers that remain on standby to help out if buses out on route hit capacity levels.

Lance Fritz asked if FTM was working on plans for stress reduction for its staff. Molly Morin explained that when FRTA decided on temporarily implementing fixed route service reductions, both FRTA and FTM made a decision to place operations staff on rotating schedules in lieu of layoffs. This move was very well received with the union. In addition, FTM provides its staff with an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), through Concern, which has a local contact in Greenfield. Information about the program is shared with all FTM employees and any services provided to employees are completely confidential.

Jeff Singleton stated that once the COVID-19 pandemic is over he is advocating for a review of what FRTA did well and what things could have been improved upon with the response during the pandemic. Tina M. Cote agreed that FRTA would perform a review to be better prepared for the next event.

9. OTHER FRTA UPDATES:

Tina M. Cote gave some brief updates on the following FRTA projects:

- MassDOT announced that discretionary grants for our microtransit program have been extended through June 2021.
- FRTA is awaiting a response from MassDOT to determine if the New Freedoms grant can also be extended into FY21. Prior to the pandemic it was set to expire at the end of FY20.
- MassDOT has decided to push back the start of the Workforce Development grant to a later date to be determined.
- There was an incident on 6/4/20, which most people saw/read in the local news media. The driver has been terminated but there will be no further comments as the matter is still under investigation.
- As discussed with the FY21 budget, FRTA was awarded CARES Act funds to help with revenue short falls and additional expenses related to COVID-19.
- One FRTA employee had resigned during the pandemic for personal reasons.
- FRTA staff will begin transitioning to returning back into the office on June 22nd.

Molly Morin introduced Wayne Waldron to the Advisory Board. Wayne Waldron came onboard as FTM's Assistant General Manager on January 8th and this is his first Advisory Board meeting.

Jeff Singleton stated that he understands that the June 4th driver incident is a legal case and that FRTA cannot comment on it, but that FRTA needs to make clear that this is being taken seriously and is addressing any employee or policy issues in a timely manner. Tina M. Cote confirmed that, based on advice from legal counsel, FRTA will not make any comments until the investigation is closed. All employees have received training on Title VI, which covers non-discrimination. FRTA is continuing to review training and policies for its employees as well as for contractors and their employees.

Elizabeth Quirk stated that she has been following this incident on social media and it appears as though things are dying down online. Molly Morin stated that while FRTA, FTM, and First Transit have been advised not to comment on this incident during an open investigation, it in no way means that we are sweeping things under the rug. FTM is more than happy to discuss openly about, and highlight, its hiring practices, background checks, and training program, including diversity and stigma training provided by the Opioid Task Force, and will continue to be transparent about their processes. Jeff Singleton also stated that a focus on drivers that have stress and/or mental health issues is a broader topic to be discussed.

Peter Otten asked about the status of the new maintenance facility. Michael Perreault stated that the project got put on hold during the pandemic. Just prior to the pandemic settling in, the 30% cost proposal for the project came back much higher than expected. Since that time, FRTA has been working with the design team to focus on bare-minimum design elements to be able to fit our program design into our budget. This change has caused the A/E firm to submit an amendment to their contract for additional funds. FRTA is now reviewing the proposal to figure out next steps in moving the project forward. Tina M. Cote added that we still have not yet purchased the property, and that we should have more information on the project at our next Advisory Board meeting. Jeff Singleton asked how this renegotiated design would impact the project schedule and when FRTA anticipates moving into a new facility. Tina M. Cote stated that we believe the project can still be substantially completed in about 1 ½ years. There was discussion that the original project budget was estimated at \$20 million and that the current budget is slightly less than \$10 million.

The next Advisory Board meeting will be on September 17th.

Peter Otten made a **motion** to adjourn. Tracy Rogers seconded, and the meeting concluded at 11:20am.