

Minutes of the Regular Meeting
Of the Allen County Regional Transit Authority Board of Trustees
Held at the RTA Administration Building
200 East High St., Lima, Ohio
January 14, 2020 @ 12:00 PM

Present were Joshua Parker, Vice-President; Joan Davis, Scott Cockerell, Doug Olsson, and Robert Moening, Board Members; Shelia Haney, Executive Director; Karen Garland, Operations Director; Brian Wildermuth, Superintendent; Marlene Shumaker, RPC; CJ Fultz, Clemans-Nelson; and Teresa Brown, Board Secretary/Treasurer. Visitor: Becca Shidler, AAA3.

First Item of Business – Roll Call: Roll Call was taken and noted for the minutes. Mr. Schroeder and Ms. Rex were not present.

Second Item of Business – Public Comments: There were no public comments at this time.

Third Item of Business – Approval of Previous Minutes (11/12/19 & 11/26/19): Mr. Olsson made a motion to approve both sets of previous minutes. Ms. Davis seconded the motion and all members voted in favor thereof.

Fourth Item of Business – Board President's Comments: Mr. Parker was running the meeting in Ms. Rex's absence. He said he was very excited about the upcoming year and thought there was going to be a lot of positive changes for RTA. There had been some routes brought back and personally, from the JFS side, there have been a people getting on and off at the new JFS facility and it is good to see. There have also been positive news articles about the routes.

Fifth Item of Business - Finance Committee (11/26/19 Finance Report and Reconciliations): There was no Finance Committee Meeting in December due to the holidays, but the reports were sent out via email. We had a gain of \$522,000 through November if you don't count depreciation. We were almost able to cover depreciation. We have two months of the sales tax booked and received a state grant of \$189,000.00. We received the state grant money in December and were able to pay off the bank loan before the end of the year. We paid all our bills and had a positive cash flow. We should end the year on a high note, and it will continue through the start of the new year. We should try to build up three months' worth of operating expenses in our savings account. Mr. Olsson asked how much money that would be, and Bob replied that off the top of his head it would probably be around half a million dollars. We will be able to buy stuff that we need and plan for growth. We have not received a copy of the Federal Review that was done in November. Shelia requested a copy again today. Our Federal Rep has been on vacation for several weeks and Bob is not sure when she is set to return. We are still waiting for the 2018 State Audit report, we have been answering any questions they have. As soon as we get that we can start preparing our 2019 numbers but will probably not have those finalized until late February. That will still not be completely final since we won't know the December sales tax until March. There will be straggler bills and the year end accruals and the PERS adjustment.

Mr. Olsson asked if Shelia had attended the City Budget Meeting the previous evening and she had. He asked if there was any action on the City's contribution and she said yes, they had taken that line item off. Mr. Olsson asked if that was accounted for in our 2020 forecast. Bob said he had included it in our 2020 forecast and in our 5-year plan. You don't want to take money off until you

know it's official. Mr. Olsson said our 2020 plan is overstated then by \$95,000. Bob said other things could be overstated and he knew the expenses were overstated. Mr. Olsson said that we may also not be receiving some grant money we had gotten in the past, due to the tax levy funds. Bob said the federal and state money will not be affected by the sales tax. It will only affect the local money such as the City. Other money we receive is service related and they ebb and flow based on services we provide.

Shelia said there were three pending grants we were awarded from ODOT. We received the \$20,400 from E & D funds. We received the \$189,000 in Operating funds and that is what we used to pay off the bank loan. There is one more for \$381,000 that we have signed for but have not invoiced yet. We are very thankful ODOT was able to contribute as it helped us get through the end of the year.

Shelia handed out copies of the 5-year plan and the STIP to the Board Members. The updates are in yellow. It includes the Capital projections for the next five years and they must be in the STIP before we can move forward with applying for the grants. Marlene needs the Board to approve it so she can take it to the Board at RPC. Mr. Parker asked what the \$50,000, \$50,000 Urban Formula program were related to. Shelia said it was the grants, it was just updates. Bob added the STIP is a document the state has to file with FTA listing all the projects we are undertaking, what portion the feds are paying, what program they are paying from, and what the local share is. You do it every four years and update it every two years. When you go to apply for grants, you need to make sure what you apply for aligns with what is in the STIP. Some of the changes are just updating the amounts, a couple are projects like the \$450,000 in CMAQ funds we were awarded to buy some buses that were not on the 2020 STIP, so we need to get it on there for the grant this year. We held back a quarter million dollars' worth of federal money from last year's allocation for the vehicle storage /parking project waiting to get more quotes and we are now ready to lock it down on a grant.

Mr. Parker asked if there were any further discussion on the Finance Report. We did not have a meeting, but the ratios are consistent with what has been presented in the past. Bob added we are doing better income wise.

Sixth Item of Business – Motion – Finance Report & Reconciliations: Ms. Davis made a motion to accept the Finance Report and Mr. Olsson seconded the motion. All members voted in favor thereof.

Mr. Cockerell made a motion to accept the STIP amendments and Ms. Davis seconded the motion. All members voted in favor thereof.

Seventh Item of Business - Operations Report: There was no Board Meeting and no committee meetings in December. The architect finalized the surveys and is getting all the electrical documents ready for the parking project. Shelia requested a timeline and he will have the electrical blueprints done by 3/1/2020.

Brian and Karen have been doing a great job keeping operations running with the lack of staff and increasing services. We have replaced the three routes we shut down in 2018. We combined two of the routes and it seems to be working out very well. We also restarted Saturday service. The passengers were very happy to have the Saturday service back. We are seeing the numbers staying consistent and our ADA service is increasing. This could be because we have expanded the fixed routes, so the ADA service area also increases. The job access numbers have gone down as they are going through some transitions, but they are still buying the monthly passes from us.

As far as the drivers and hiring, we were down quite a few. It seemed like every time we hired some, we would lose some. No one is quite sure why this is. Our pay is good compared to the other transit services, but we still don't offer insurance. The morale seems to be better than it was at the last meeting. We gave the employees their raise in December, they received their quarterly attendance bonuses in November, and any that qualified got their Safety Bonuses in December. Brian is still hiring drivers and has hired about five drivers in the last month. When we were in full force before with nights and Saturdays previously, we had 20 full-time drivers. We always have quite few part-time drivers as most of them have constraints on when they can work. We currently have 14 full time drivers. We probably won't start the evening service until the later part of the year. The new drivers need trained on getting their CDL.

Mr. Parker asked if the current drivers were already feeling stretched too thin. Brian said they were at first but with getting the new drivers hired, three of them already have their CDL. One of them is a seasonal worker who will be back out on his own quickly. Mr. Olsson asked how Brian had found the new drivers. One of them he had lunch with the guy's aunt, and she told Brian the guy was getting ready to be laid off and would be available. One other guy Brian knew and talked to him. The rest applied. Shelia added we keep the ad looking for drivers on our website and our social media. Mr. Parker asked if we had looked further into getting insurance. We have always checked with OTRP to see about getting in the insurance pool, but they have not opened it up to smaller agencies yet. We do offer the current insurance to the drivers, but it is so high they don't want it, especially if they need a family plan. When we have a part-time driver that has insurance at their other job won't come here full-time as they don't want to give up their insurance.

Eighth Item of Business – City Budget Meeting: This item had already been covered in the Finance Report. Shelia attended the meeting and let them know how appreciative we were of their support in the past.

Ninth Item of Business – Board Vacancy: The County Commissioners have appointed Robert Moening to the spot left vacant by Mr. Taylor. He will be sworn in at next month's meeting.

Tenth Item of Business – Staff Hiring for 2020: We are down three staff members now. We have not had a Finance Manager since the beginning of 2019, this is why we have been contracting with Bob. Shelia requested permission to start pushing the effort to get some applications in. When we get applications in, we will go through them and do initial background checks and interviews and then bring qualified candidates to the Board. Mr. Parker said he would offer the assistance of Ohio Means Jobs to get the position out there.

We lost our Street Supervisor a few months ago. With the expanded routes and hours, we are getting to the point where we need to replace that position. We have a Shift Leader program where drivers part-time train and assist as a supervisor and Kelli has been doing this for about three years now. She is great at it and can step into it the Supervisor job now. She works as a school bus driver so did not want to lose her insurance, but Shelia talked with her yesterday and she is willing to do it. We had some applications for the position, but Kelli is the most qualified. This shows we are promoting from within also. Shelia was checking with the Board to make sure they were okay with moving her into that job.

The other staff member we lost was Elliot who did our social media and advertising. He was also being trained to do the safety training. We are just going to try to fill in the gaps for now. We may try to tweak the job description before we look to fill it. Mr. Cockerell asked what the official title was, it was the Communications Manager. Shelia said Elliot did the press releases, social media, advertisements, commercials, used his drone to take videos. He was visiting businesses to get

advertising on the buses. We need to keep the community informed even more now so it is an important position.

Mr. Cockerell asked Brian what safety training the communications manager was doing. He said in his experience with operations, you had specific roles and asked if Elliot was doing safety training with the garage, training with the drivers, or what was Brian's ideal. Brian said he just started doing the safety training with the drivers, he had been to one training class so far. Shelia added we must send people to get certified to train the drivers on the DRIVE training, which is an ADA requirement for our drivers to have. We used to have four people who were certified to do the training and are down to just Brian now. Mr. Cockerell said when he sees communications, advertising and going out and speaking, it seems like the Safety person needs to be someone more in the Operations. Shelia said when Elliot first came in, he was part time with the communication stuff and when he became full time, we started training him in the safety part.

We always certify more than one person with the DRIVE training and we also have Defensive Driving. Shelia was teaching that class. Mr. Cockerell asked if it was always different people doing the training before and Shelia said yes, we all share it we have never had just one person doing all the training. We try to keep up with the requirements. Mr. Parker asked if we were going to get more people certified to teach DRIVE. Shelia said yes, but they only offer the class twice a year. The next one is in March and we are sending Kelli to it.

Mr. Olsson said he wanted to go back to the part of Elliot's job that was meeting with businesses for advertising on the buses. He asked what the revenue last year was for bus advertising. Bob said the bulk of the advertising was trade. Advertising revenue through November was \$69,000 and 95% of that was probably trade. The current ads on the buses, one is trade and the other one for Buckeye Health was just billed out for around \$3000 - \$4000 and those ads are set to come off, it was a 9-week contract. Bob added advertising on buses is traditionally not a big money maker for transit. Dayton abandoned their bus advertising as it was costing too much for their unionized labor to put on the bus ads and the buses look better without it.

Eleventh Item of Business – School Contract Clarification: In November we were losing drivers and having several issues with the school students and the special needs students. We talked about doing specialized training and did do an autism training with the drivers. We talked about giving them different pay since it was so stressful and more training but realized that we are professional drivers and not case managers for special needs. The decision was made to cancel the contract with the schools due to all the issues with the students and issues with the State Audit since this is not public transportation and we had to make sure we were not subsidizing this service with any grant money. We are providing a second employee on some of the routes to assist the drivers for safety of them while driving and the students and now our cost is more than our contract. We sent out the letters saying we would either need to charge more to break even or we would cancel the contract.

Lori and Karen already had a meeting set up at Lima Senior to discuss the problems we were having with one child in particular and they took the letter with them. They were very dismissed by the staff there. Shelia then received a letter from Jill Ackerman saying she was appalled at how our staff treated them, which was not the case. Jill then sent a letter to the Board Members stating they were not going to cancel the contracts, we were going to continue, and they would not provide aides or pay us our cost. Shelia spoke to the Risk Pool President and she was concerned about us providing aides. It is not our service and our drivers are not trained to deal with high-level special needs nor do we know how to train people to be aides. We were putting some of our own drivers on as aides and it didn't work. We will continue until the end of the school year. We have several emails where Lori lets the school know when we have an issue with a student, and they didn't do anything about it. Now we are going to follow the same rules we do for Uplift and if there are issues, we will suspend the student. We have suspended up to five students in the last month.

If it is a safety concern of fighting, biting, spitting, trying to get to the driver, trying to get off the bus, etc.; we will suspend the student. We permanently suspended a couple of them and a couple we suspend for a day or three days and if the behavior doesn't improve, they will be permanently suspended. This has seemed to help, when Shelia asked the staff how it was going there are no issues. The word has got out to the students that if they don't behave, they will be kicked off the bus.

Shelia highly recommended that before we go into the contract next year, we need to discuss this. There needs to be a plan if we don't have enough drivers, if the students act up, etc. There is nothing in the current contract. It was past practice that we had been doing for several years with minimal issues, and it became a big problem this year. Mr. Olsson said in a separate conversation he had with Jill Ackerman in November or early December, she told him directly that they were willing to put aides on the bus. Her staff has always told us that was not a possibility.

Mr. Olsson asked if we could go back and press Jill about it, he said he would be happy to approach her. Mr. Cockerell added he had been going back through the Board Minutes and we said we were going to meet with Jill. He thought if we went to the source, we could get it fixed. Shelia replied that Jill wasn't the source, the people that were in communication with the RTA staff need to be brought to the table too. Mr. Olsson said the City School staff need to hear from Jill that she is willing to put the aides on the bus. Aides on the vehicles is all we were asking for, our drivers are not prepared to deal with this appalling behavior. Mr. Parker said next time there is an issue we should take our time to explore the issue and get the right people at the table to discuss it before action is taken.

Shelia said we needed to watch the contracts as the State Auditors had made it very clear we could not subsidize this service with federal dollars. Mr. Parker asked if we could look at the revenues associated with the routes to compare them to the expenses. Bob said yes, we could come up with a good estimate. There is always some leeway, but they want to make sure we are doing more public transportation. They realize we might have some staff doing both or some vehicles being used for both. They just don't want to come in and see our cost is \$26 a trip and you are charging \$5. With these school contracts, we are picking up multiple people going to the same place so you can look at it a different way. We can figure it per person, per mile or per hour.

Bob said we just need to decide what we want to do as far as public and non-public. When you don't have a local dedicated funding source, most of the smaller agencies fight to get these contracts as they can be used for local match. Now that we have dedicated funding, we don't need the contracts but that doesn't mean we might not want to still do them. We can decide if we want to put our efforts somewhere else.

To clarify, we will cancel the current school contracts after the end of the school year and then meet to decide if we continue this service and prepare a more detailed contract. We will discuss at the end of this school contract what, if anything we want to do for next year and will follow the current policy on suspension as we do with the public transportation.

Twelfth Item of Business – RPC Updates: Marlene said there were no updates.

Thirteenth Item of Business – Other – S. Haney LOA (2/7/20): Shelia requested to move the February Board meeting from first Tuesday of the month to the second Tuesday of the month. All the Board Members agreed with the change.

Mr. Cockerell asked if there was a committee in place in Shelia's absence to keep filling the open positions. Shelia said we already have a process we have always done. Brian and Karen go through the applications, go through the interview questions, do the background checks, Shelia approves them; then they go through the DOT physical and drug and alcohol checks. We would go through the same process with the other positions, but would bring it to the Board since it is Administrative. She didn't think we would have a lot of applications in the next month.

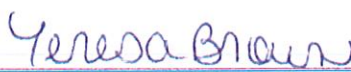
Mr. Mack, the guy that owns the property next to the garage called Shelia the previous day to see if we were still interested in buying the property down the road, possibly at the end of the year. If we are interested, he would like a letter of intent. Mr. Olsson asked if we were interested in it and we are. It has office space, room for a driver's room, it is next to the garage and is fenced in. We have talked about it for two or three years now. He knows we are getting sales tax money so wanted to know if we were interested. Mr. Olsson said before approving a letter of intent he would need to know the specifics of the economics of the transaction. Shelia said a letter of intent is not legally binding, it just says we are still interested. Mr. Olsson asked if it could be arranged for the Board to look at the property. Shelia said he is living in Cleveland so she would check and see when he will be here next. We have a key to the gate as he has let us park vehicles in there before, but we don't have a key to the building.

Fourteenth Item of Business – Adjourn: Mr. Cockerell made a motion to adjourn and Mr. Olsson seconded. All members voted in favor thereof. Meeting adjourned at 12:57 pm.

The next monthly Board Meeting is scheduled for February 11th, 2020.



Holly Rex, Board President



Teresa Brown, Board Secretary/Treasurer