

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, Kristen Lepore, the meeting of the Advisory Board of the Franklin Regional Transit Authority was held on November 17, 2016 at the John W. Olver Transit Center, 12 Olive St., Greenfield, MA 01301.

**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	1.70
Ted Willard	Charlemont	2.48
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	8.42
Ray Purington	Gill	1.05
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	26.29
Marlene Michonski	Hatfield	1.68
Lance Fritz	Leyden	1.00
Jeff Singleton	Montague	13.37
Tracy Rogers	Northfield	1.40
Ruth Preston	Southwick	<u>2.74</u>
	Total	60.13

Also present were:

Tina M. Cote, FRTA Administrator, Michael Perreault, FRTA Assistant Administrator, Ed Sanborn, FRTA Bookkeeper, Amy Rau, FRTA Administrative Assistant, Lisa Paquette, FTM Acting General Manager, and George Touloumtzis, FRTA Transit Advisory Committee.

Chairman Lance Fritz called the meeting to order at 4:00pm and it was noted that a quorum **was** present to hold a meeting.

**2. PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

There were no public comments.

**3. REVIEW AND APPROVE MINUTES FROM SEPTEMBER 15, 2016 ADVISORY BOARD MEETING:**

Peter Otten made a **motion** to approve minutes from September 15, 2016 Advisory Board meeting. Ruth Preston seconded and the vote was as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.70	Yes
Ted Willard	Charlemont	2.48	Yes
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	8.42	Yes
Ray Purington	Gill	1.05	Not Present
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	26.29	Yes
Marlene Michonski	Hatfield	1.68	Yes
Lance Fritz	Leyden	1.00	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	13.37	Yes
Tracy Rogers	Northfield	1.40	Yes
Ruth Preston	Southwick	<u>2.74</u>	Yes
	Total	60.13	

Yes – 59.08

Not Present – 1.05

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

#### **4. FY16 AUDIT REVIEW AND UPDATED WEIGHTED VOTE:**

Peter Otten gave a brief overview of the audit and the Finance and Audit Committee meeting with FRTA’s independent auditor, Adelson & Company, held on September 15<sup>th</sup>. The audit had no significant findings. Although the Franklin Regional Retirement System is audited by their own independent auditor, Adelson & Company felt that their figures looked good. Overall, cash assets were \$200,000 less than in FY15 because the FRTA borrowed less money and the borrowing rate was less than 1%. Accounts Payable still show the amount for the bus lost in the fire, but FRTA has the new replacement bus and the amount will no longer show on the books moving forward. The Finance and Audit Committee did pose a question to the auditor regarding retired health insurance for Council on Aging drivers and whose responsibility it is to cover those costs. There needs to be further discussion to clarify the responsibilities of the FRTA and/or the towns.

Tracy Rogers asked about the management point regarding the amount of reserve fund and if there was a way to use some of that money to offset some of the borrowing or used in another fashion. Tina M. Cote stated that, just recently, one of our buses was put out of service due to engine failure. Further investigation by our maintenance department determined that the bus will need a top end engine rebuild. FRTA then approached MassDOT regarding the process of accessing our reserve account to make this repair, MassDOT responded that this repair did not rise to the level required to use the reserve account, but that they also did not know what the process is to access the account in the event we need to in the future. Michael Perreault commented that the Massachusetts General Law states that using the money from the reserve account must be approved by the Secretary of Transportation but there is no information regarding the policy and process of accessing the account. Robert J. Decker III made a **motion** for the Chairman to send a letter to the Secretary of Transportation, requesting information regarding the policy in accessing and using the FRTA’s reserve account funds. Tracy Rogers seconded, the vote was unanimous, and the **motion** carried.

Peter Otten also discussed the two other management points in the audit. One was to maintain a segregation of duties by not having the Assistant Administrator approve his own credit card statements, but instead have the Administrator review and approve the monthly statement. The second was for FTM to review the names of inactive/terminated employees in the payroll master control files and remove those that are no longer necessary in order to mitigate any potential risk in payroll. Both of those management points have been discussed internally and those changes have been addressed. Peter Otten made a **motion** to accept the FY16 audit report as presented. Eric Twarog seconded and discussion continued. Jeff Singleton asked if the FRTA's reserve account was similar to a municipality. Ed Sanborn explained that the reserve account is based on a percentage of the FRTA's total local assessment. Jeff Singleton asked if the demand response contractors, including Councils on Aging, actually keep the rider fares collected as described on page 16 in Financial Statements and Supplementary Information, Note 8, subsection C. Ed Sanborn explained that the demand response contractors submit monthly invoices showing their total costs and the amount of fares collected from passengers. FRTA then reimburses the net cost on the invoice. Jeff Singleton asked about the pension liability and how many years out that take into consideration. Peter Otten explained that his understanding is that the amount would cover the cost for the retiree using an estimated life expectancy calculation. The vote was unanimous and the **motion** carried. Michael Perreault stated that along with the audit packet was the updated local assessment and weighted vote information. If anyone ever has any questions or would like more information regarding the calculations please contact Michael Perreault by phone or email.

## **5. MAINTENANCE FACILITY PROJECT UPDATE:**

Tina M. Cote gave a brief update on the maintenance facility project. Currently we are in the reviewing stages of the environmental testing to making sure that the site clean. FRTA met on November 14<sup>th</sup> with representatives from MassDOT to update them on the status of our project. FRTA has enough funding for the acquisition of the property and for engineering and design of the project. MassDOT made it clear that they would not be able to fund the project 100% and would need FRTA to go after federal funds for the majority of the construction costs. FRTA is continuing to search for federal funds, with a state match, for the construction of the project. FRTA's lease of the current facility is through March of 2017 with an option for a two year extension. FRTA is aware that the Town of Greenfield has plans for a project on that existing site and are acutely aware of the sensitive timeline for this project. FRTA is not sure as to when the next federal grant opportunity is, but is prepared to submit a proposal when one becomes available. The last grant award that was announced in October did not award any funding to FRTA; however, we did get a lot of positive feedback from the Federal Transit Administration on strengthening our grant proposal for the next round.

Robert J. Decker III asked if FRTA should speak with the Congressman regarding this project. Tina M. Cote stated that we are looking at every possible avenue for funding including partnering with others, looking at a smaller building footprint. Robert J. Decker III suggested the possibility of having a private party design and construct a facility and then leasing it to FRTA to operate out of. George Touloumtzis stated that the Greenfield Master Plan has a recommendation point regarding the potential of a shared-use facility with FRTA and the Town.

Tina M. Cote is trying to get clarification from the Federal Transit Administration on sharing facilities or shared fueling/washing facilities.

## **6. UPDATE ON MONTHLY BUS PASSES AND TICKET VENDING MACHINE INSTALLATION:**

Tina M. Cote stated that it has been almost a year and although it has taken longer than anticipated we are hopeful that we can start issuing the new monthly passes at the beginning of January. With the introduction of the new pass, we are hopeful that this will also increase ridership. Michael Perreault added that most of the delays in the project are related to how the system will actually work. There were some things, regarding half fare eligibilities, which the sales people assumed could be done with the fare box system but the deployment team has told us they cannot be done. FRTA has been working internally and with the vendor so we're working on solutions to those remaining issues. Furthermore, we want to fully understand how the fare system will work with the vending machine and the fare boxes prior to releasing this out to the public so that it is a smooth transition with little to no problems. Robert J. Decker III asked if the sales people sold us something that the product couldn't do. Tina M. Cote and Michael Perreault explained that it only takes one assumption on the part of FRTA make this fall apart. How FRTA collects fares and determines fare eligibilities from an operating standpoint may be very difficult or impossible to perform from a programming perspective. The fare box vendor has committed to working with FRTA to overcome these obstacles.

## **7. OTHER FRTA UPDATES:**

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

- On October 27<sup>th</sup> FRTA held a dedication of the meeting room to the memory of Bill Allen.
- Now that the parking lot expansion has been completed, the next step is to figure out the control of the lot. We are exploring the installation of a parking kiosk and working with the Greenfield Parking Enforcement to patrol the lot.
- FRTA continues to do contract reviews and office inspections for our Demand Response providers.
- Overall ridership and fare collection continues to decline. We are reviewing ridership figures and our new route changes to see if we can figure out a way to get ridership back on an upward trend. We will follow up with the board again in May with a more detailed analysis of ridership and bring back any changes to further improve service.
- On December 15<sup>th</sup> FRTA will host a Ride with the Mayor event. Greenfield Mayor Martin will ride along the Route 21 and afterwards come back to the transit center to meet with constituents and riders about transportation for the town.
- Loitering at the transit center has been slowly becoming more and more prominent. We are going to start issuing no trespassing notices for those that continue to loiter on the property without the intent to use transportation services. In addition, we are working on a procurement for additional CCTV cameras in the parking lot and other potential locations in and around the transit center to improve coverage and reduce blind spots. Lance Fritz asked if it would be appropriate to staff a security officer at the transit center.

Tina M. Cote stated that at this time it doesn't appear that it would be necessary but that it may need to be discussed again at a future meeting if things don't start to improve.

- Over the last few years MART has been receiving funding to operate an Athol/Orange shuttle service. Now the funding is ending and the state has asked that we work with MART to come up with solutions without any new funding. We are analyzing ridership statistics on MART's current shuttles and will update with more information as we progress.
- On November 30<sup>th</sup> at 10:30am, FRTA will hold a meeting to start discussions with local legislators on the need for additional funding for weekend service. Advisory Board members, especially those towns that have fixed route service, are encouraged to attend this discussion.

Peter Otten commented that driver training for COA drivers is tough to accomplish because trainings are not held often locally. Some drivers need to drive to the eastern part of the state to receive mandated trainings. Peter Otten asked if the FRTA could look at hiring a trainer on staff to train COA drivers locally, or look at some other creative solutions for training drivers locally.

Robert J. Decker III made a **motion** to adjourn, Peter Otten seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 4:57pm.