

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, Matthew Gorzkowicz, the meeting of the Advisory Board of the Franklin Regional Transit Authority was held on May 23, 2024 virtually on the Zoom.us 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>
Jennifer Reynolds	Bernardston	1.94
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.52
Bob Daley	Chester	1.19
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	5.05
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	32.69
Jeff Singleton	Montague	11.35
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.16
Rick LaPierre	Shelburne	2.79
Stephen Johnson	Southampton	1.61
Carol Smith	Southwick	2.20
Susan Bronstein	Westhampton	1.02
	<u>Total</u>	<u>62.52</u>

Also present were:

Tina M. Cote; FRTA Administrator, Michael Perreault; FRTA Deputy Administrator, Wayne Waldron, FTM General Manager, Steven Pardoe, FTM Assistant General Manager, Megan Rhodes, FRTA Transit Advisory Committee Chair, and Steve Ellis, Montague Town Administrator.

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

2. REVIEW AND VOTE TO ACCEPT MINUTES FROM NOVEMBER 16, 2023 MEETING:

Peter Otten made a **motion** to accept the meeting minutes from November 16, 2023. Susan Bronstein seconded, and the vote was as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Jennifer Reynolds	Bernardston	1.94	Yes
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.52	Yes
Bob Daley	Chester	1.19	Not Present
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	5.05	Yes
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	32.69	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	11.35	Yes
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.16	Yes
Rick LaPierre	Shelburne	2.79	Abstain
Stephen Johnson	Southampton	1.61	Yes
Carol Smith	Southwick	2.20	Yes
Susan Bronstein	Westhampton	1.02	Yes
	Total	62.52	

Yes – 58.54
No – 0.00
Abstain – 2.79
Not Present – 1.19

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

OLD BUSINESS:

3. DISCUSSION/UPDATE ON WEEKEND FIXED ROUTE SERVICE/FAIR SHARE AMENDMENT:

Tina M. Cote explained that weekend Fixed Route service started in January for both Saturdays and Sundays, with no additional local assessments to Towns during this initial pilot phase. All MA RTAs have been pushing for 7-day a week service, but many RTAs have been struggling with staffing shortages and challenges. Although only operating for a short period of time, FRTA has already had to cancel Sunday service and reduce Saturday service over the last few weekends due to staffing challenges. Over the last few weeks FRTA has been working on a marketing campaign to hire new drivers. In addition, union negotiations have been completed, which include an 8.6% increase to get CDL starting wages to \$21.00 per hour. Over the last several months, FTM managers have been covering routes to avoid cancelling services. Tina M. Cote stated that FRTA received just over \$1,000,000 in additional funding through the Fair Share Amendment and would need to spend those funds by December 2024.

Jeff Singleton stated that FRTA is the only RTA in MA that does not have weekend Fixed Route service. Tina M. Cote added that the intention is for FRTA to continue to collect data on the pilot service and solicit feedback from public hearings to make a plan for any changes. FTM has been working to train non-CDL drivers to get their CDL license, but it has been difficult to find a balance between hiring and training drivers and retaining drivers after getting their CDL license and leaving to take a job elsewhere. Steve Ellis commented that municipalities are facing similar issues, and that Montague has been trying new hybrid employment steps/grades to attract and retain new employees. Peter Otten added that with Kuzmeskus hiring drivers at \$30.00 per hour

it makes it hard for FRTA to compete. Discussion concluded that the State needs to recognize the inequities between non-profit and for-profit wage gaps.

4. DISCUSSION AND VOTE TO HOLD PUBLIC HEARINGS/COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS ON WEEKEND FIXED ROUTE SERVICE:

Peter Otten made a **motion** to approve the FRTA to hold public hearings/community conversations on weekend Fixed Route service. Jeff Singleton seconded, and the vote was as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Jennifer Reynolds	Bernardston	1.94	Yes
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.52	Yes
Bob Daley	Chester	1.19	Not Present
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	5.05	Yes
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	32.69	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	11.35	Yes
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.16	Yes
Rick LaPierre	Shelburne	2.79	Yes
Stephen Johnson	Southampton	1.61	Yes
Carol Smith	Southwick	2.20	Yes
Susan Bronstein	Westhampton	1.02	Yes
		Total	62.52

Yes – 61.40
 No – 0.00
 Abstain – 0.00
 Not Present – 1.12

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

5. DISCUSSION AND VOTE ON FREE FIXED ROUTE FARES OR REINSTATING FARE COLLECTIONS:

Tina M. Cote recommended that the Advisory Board continue to suspend fare collections on the Fixed Routes through FY25. As discussed previously, the cost of collecting fares outweighs the amount of fares collected. FRTA continues to receive Federal COVID relief funds to cover lost fare revenues.

Peter Otten made a **motion** to extend suspension of fare collections on Fixed Routes through June 30, 2025. Robert J. Decker III seconded, and the vote was as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Jennifer Reynolds	Bernardston	1.94	Yes
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.52	Yes

Bob Daley	Chester	1.19	Not Present
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	5.05	Yes
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	32.69	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	11.35	Yes
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.16	Yes
Rick LaPierre	Shelburne	2.79	Yes
Stephen Johnson	Southampton	1.61	Yes
Carol Smith	Southwick	2.20	Yes
Susan Bronstein	Westhampton	1.02	Yes
	Total	62.52	

Yes – 61.40
 No – 0.00
 Abstain – 0.00
 Not Present – 1.12

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

NEW BUSINESS:

6. UPDATE FROM FINANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE:

Peter Otten provided an update from the Finance and Audit Committee. The committee had recently met with FRTA staff and discussed the proposed FY25 operating budget. There were some revisions made to the draft budget prior to being sent to the full Advisory Board, based on feedback from the discussion during the Finance and Audit Committee meeting. Jeff Singleton asked where the Fair Share Amendment funds are included in the budget. Tina M. Cote explained that those funds are included in line item 411040 (DOT State Assistance) as they are included in the same contract as the State Contract Assistance, along with approximately \$15,000 of additional funds received from MassDOT for fare-free Demand Response trips during the holidays.

7. REVIEW AND APPROVE FY25 BUDGET:

Peter Otten made a **motion** to approve the FY25 budget as presented. Robert J. Decker III seconded, and the vote was as follows:

Name	Town	Weighted Vote	Vote
Jennifer Reynolds	Bernardston	1.94	Yes
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.52	Yes
Bob Daley	Chester	1.19	Yes
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	5.05	Yes
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	32.69	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	11.35	Yes
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.16	Yes

Rick LaPierre	Shelburne	2.79	Yes
Stephen Johnson	Southampton	1.61	Yes
Carol Smith	Southwick	2.20	Yes
Susan Bronstein	Westhampton	1.02	Yes
		Total	62.52

Yes – 62.52
 No – 0.00
 Abstain – 0.00
 Not Present – 0.00

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

8. REVIEW AND APPROVE ADMINISTRATOR’S SALARY:

Eric Twarog explained that the Finance and Audit Committee discussed and recommended a 3% increase in the Administrator’s salary for FY25. Peter Otten added that the Advisory Board is only responsible for setting the Administrator’s salary and that the Administrator is responsible for overseeing all other administrative staff. After discussion concluded, Peter Otten made a **motion** to increase the Administrator’s salary by 3% for FY25. Robert J. Decker III seconded, and the vote was as follows:

Name	Town	Weighted Vote	Vote
Jennifer Reynolds	Bernardston	1.94	Yes
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.52	Yes
Bob Daley	Chester	1.19	Yes
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	5.05	Yes
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	32.69	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	11.35	Yes
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.16	Yes
Rick LaPierre	Shelburne	2.79	Yes
Stephen Johnson	Southampton	1.61	Yes
Carol Smith	Southwick	2.20	Yes
Susan Bronstein	Westhampton	1.02	Yes
		Total	62.52

Yes – 62.52
 No – 0.00
 Abstain – 0.00
 Not Present – 0.00

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

9. REVIEW AND APPROVE FY25 RESOLUTION:

Tina M. Cote explained that the FY25 Resolution document was missing from the meeting agenda packet, but that the language has remained the same from the FY24 Resolution. Michael Perreault read the Resolution language aloud. Peter Otten made a **motion** to approve the FY25 Resolution as read. Robert J. Decker III seconded, and the vote was as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Jennifer Reynolds	Bernardston	1.94	Yes
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.52	Yes
Bob Daley	Chester	1.19	Yes
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	5.05	Yes
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	32.69	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	11.35	Yes
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.16	Yes
Rick LaPierre	Shelburne	2.79	Yes
Stephen Johnson	Southampton	1.61	Yes
Carol Smith	Southwick	2.20	Yes
Susan Bronstein	Westhampton	1.02	Yes
	Total	62.52	

Yes – 62.52

No – 0.00

Abstain – 0.00

Not Present – 0.00

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

10. NOMINATION/ELECTION OF CLERK FY25-27:

Jennifer Reynolds volunteered to be the Clerk for FY25-27. Peter Otten made a **motion** to elect Jennifer Reynolds for the Clerk for FY25-27. Carrie Florek seconded, and the vote was as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Jennifer Reynolds	Bernardston	1.94	Yes
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.52	Yes
Bob Daley	Chester	1.19	Yes
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	5.05	Yes
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	32.69	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	11.35	Yes
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.16	Yes
Rick LaPierre	Shelburne	2.79	Yes
Stephen Johnson	Southampton	1.61	Yes
Carol Smith	Southwick	2.20	Yes
Susan Bronstein	Westhampton	1.02	Yes
	Total	62.52	

Yes – 62.52
 No – 0.00
 Abstain – 0.00
 Not Present – 0.00

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

11. NOMINATION/ELECTION OF FINANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE FOR FY25:

Eric Twarog, Peter Otten, and Robert J. Decker III all stated that they would continue to serve on the Finance and Audit Committee if elected. Jeff Singleton made a **motion** to elect Eric Twarog, Peter Otten, and Robert J. Decker III to the Finance and Audit Committee. Jennifer Reynolds seconded, and the vote was as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Jennifer Reynolds	Bernardston	1.94	Yes
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.52	Yes
Bob Daley	Chester	1.19	Yes
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	5.05	Yes
Eric Twarog	Greenfield	32.69	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	11.35	Yes
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.16	Yes
Rick LaPierre	Shelburne	2.79	Yes
Stephen Johnson	Southampton	1.61	Yes
Carol Smith	Southwick	2.20	Yes
Susan Bronstein	Westhampton	1.02	Yes
		Total	62.52

Yes – 62.52
 No – 0.00
 Abstain – 0.00
 Not Present – 0.00

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

12. DISCUSSION AND VOTE ON UPDATED PERSONNEL POLICY:

Tina M. Cote presented the Advisory Board with a updated draft of the FRTA Personnel Policy for consideration. Discussion concluded and Rick LaPierre made a **motion** to approve the updated Personnel Policy as presented. Susan Bronstein seconded, and the vote was as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Town</u>	<u>Weighted Vote</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Jennifer Reynolds	Bernardston	1.94	Yes
Peter Otten	Buckland	1.52	Yes
Bob Daley	Chester	1.19	Yes
Robert J. Decker III	Deerfield	5.05	Yes

Eric Twarog	Greenfield	32.69	Yes
Jeff Singleton	Montague	11.35	Yes
Carrie Florek	Russell	1.16	Yes
Rick LaPierre	Shelburne	2.79	Yes
Stephen Johnson	Southampton	1.61	Yes
Carol Smith	Southwick	2.20	Yes
Susan Bronstein	Westhampton	1.02	Yes
	Total	62.52	

Yes – 62.52
No – 0.00
Abstain – 0.00
Not Present – 0.00

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

13. TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE UPDATES:

Megan Rhodes gave the following updates from the May 9, 2024 meeting:

- Weekend Fixed Route service driver shortage was discussed.
- FRCOG is updating its Regional Bike Plan including coordination of buses and bikes.
- Officer elections resulted in Megan Rhodes being elected as Chair and George Touloumtzis elected as Vice-Chair of the Committee.

14. FRTA UPDATES:

Tina M. Cote gave the following updates:

- Huntington Demand Response service abruptly ended recently. FRTA is working with Hilltown CDC to pick up and provide the services to the Southern Hilltowns.
- Now that we're preparing to move into the next fiscal year, FRTA is looking to get Demand Response contracts back from Towns at the beginning of July.
- MassDOT solar panel grant is progressing to get solar panels at new garage.
- Continuing to hire for new bookkeeping position. Trying to be flexible with offering part-time or full-time hours. Now looking for an Administrative Assistant position that may help with bookkeeping duties.
- Three new accessible minivans were put into service this month.
- Two new grants were recently awarded: 1) New expanded Demand Response and Access service for Sunderland and Shutesbury; and 2) Joint BRTA/PVTA/FRTA Greenfield, Pittsfield, and Northampton transit connections. These grants are expected to start late fall/early winter but waiting for more details with MassDOT contract.

The next Advisory Board meeting will be on September 19, 2024.

Peter Otten made a **motion** to adjourn. Bob Daley seconded, and the meeting concluded at 5:02pm.