

**RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC TRANSIT AUTHORITY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
MINUTES OF Monday August 22, 2011 MEETING**

Board Members Present: Thomas Deller, Chairperson; Jerome Williams; Stephen Durkee; Michael Lewis; Maureen Martin, Anna Liebenow; Mayor Scott Avedisian; and Margaret Holland McDuff.

Also Present: Charles Odimgbe, Chief Executive Officer; Steven Richard (Outside Counsel); Maureen Neira; Ellen Mandly; and other members of RIPTA's staff and members of the public whose names are on the sign-in sheet.

Agenda Item 1: Vote on July 18, 2011 Meeting Minutes

Mr. Deller called the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m. and asked if the Board members had an opportunity to review the minutes of the meeting held July 18, 2011. The Board members indicated that they had and Mr. Lewis made a motion to approve the minutes of the meeting as presented. Mr. Durkee seconded the motion. The minutes of the meeting held July 18, 2011 were unanimously approved as presented.

Agenda Item 2: Public Comments

Mr. Deller asked for public comment and asked that the speakers keep their comments brief. He also asked that groups or organizations in attendance choose one speaker to speak on behalf of the members of the group. He reminded those present that the Board would listen to today's comments and later in the meeting discuss the results of the public hearings, but would not be voting or taking any other action today. He also said that the Board would not respond to comments.

Randall Rose from the RIPTA Riders group asked to move the public comment period to later in the meeting, after the Board has discussed that agenda item. Mr. Deller declined to move the public comment to later in the meeting, but said if there is enough time, he would take additional comments after the Board's discussion.

George McKenna a registered voter from Providence with a disability described his disability and those of his friends and said he is very dependent on public transportation, particularly to get to the pharmacy to get medication he needs and not having public transportation could be fatal to him and others. He said he strongly objects to any cuts in service on medical grounds and quoted some RI laws which he feels applies.

Paul Harrington, President of the Amalgamated Transit Unit spoke saying he represents the majority of RIPTA employees and said he applauds the efforts of the Board and RIPTA staff to postpone the

vote on service cuts. He said any cuts would be devastating to employees and riders alike. He thanked advocacy groups such as the Sierra Club for their help on this issue.

Colleen Spooner spoke and said she can't afford any other service but RIPTA as a disabled person, but she would pay a higher fare to not lose the bus service.

Marie Ricci from the Ocean State Center for Independent Living said her clients are very dependent on public transit. She said those with cars don't understand what it is like to be so reliant on public transit and don't know what it's like to have no other option in order to visit love ones, attend social events, and go to doctors' appointments. She said please do not make any cuts. Her remarks received applause.

William Atwater spoke and said he had written a letter to the legislators about the RIPTA funding crisis and possible service cuts. He read from his letter which he sent to Rep. Fox and Sen. Reed.

Paul MacNeil from Warwick spoke at length saying he uses ADA services and he described the routes he uses and the places he visits. He is concerned that cuts in service will affect the ADA corridor and he will lose service on the routes he uses. He was critical of the Governor and said he needs to show some leadership and use money from the contingency fund to help RIPTA through this

funding crisis. He said the General Assembly also needs to direct funds to RIPTA.

Roger Harris from Woonsocket spoke and said as a person in a wheelchair for 18 years he has had difficulty finding work and in order to keep looking he needs bus service and more importantly once he finds a job he will need the bus to get to work, particularly to get home from work later in the evening. He is also concerned about drivers losing their jobs.

Pete Zandron said he attended and commented at the Narragansett hearing and said public transit is a necessity. He lives in South County and is visually impaired and he relies on RIPTA to get around. He discussed some of the routes he uses and the places he goes.

Abel Collins of the Sierra Club and the RIPTA Riders group spoke and said he applauded the work of the Board members for attending the public hearings and postponing the vote on the cuts. He asked that they please go to the State House and ask our political leaders to solve this problem.

Ron Gallagher from Providence suggested that the mansion bus in Newport run every 30 minutes instead of every 15 minutes.

RIPTA bus operator, Badge # 5086 spoke as a parent of 4 adult children who use the bus to get into and around the city on the

weekend and that this is the only affordable option for them.

Douglas Williams spoke and said he urged the State to find another funding mechanism for RIPTA. He called Senator Metz and suggested taxing alcohol and giving the proceeds to public transit. He also suggested using smaller buses after rush hour to save on gas and staggering smaller buses to Kennedy Plaza later in the evening. He said he can live with less service on the holidays but he needs to have some holiday service.

Jane Galluccio spoke and said the roads in Rhode Island are in terrible condition and for this reason she does not want RIPTA to use smaller buses.

Randall Rose from the RIPTA riders group spoke and said he would make further comments later in the meeting, but right now he said that RIPTA needs a new reliable, long term funding source and it is the Board's responsibility to find it another funding method in addition to the gas tax. He said the RIPTA Riders group supports the Board's efforts and advocacy. He said the Board needs to advocate more at the State House.

Paul Harrington was recognized a second time and thanked the Board members for attending the public hearings, particularly Maureen Martin who attended all of them. Applause ensued. Mr. Harrington again thanked by Board for the delay in cuts and their continued work

on this issue.

Gene Quinn from East Greenwich said he went to college at URI and there used to be free parking, but no more so the buses help make college more affordable. He said bus service is critical for higher education.

Marjorie Rogers spoke next saying she is from Providence and she rides RIPTA every day to get to the doctors and she is very concerned for her health if service cuts are implemented. She asked that RIPTA not limit service after 10:00 pm and not to eliminate holiday and weekend serviced. She expressed concern not just for herself, but for all elderly and disabled.

Ms. Rogers asked the Board to vote against any service cuts and to lay off 41 employees and put the money towards the deficit. She finished by saying she is very dependent on RIPTA.

Deborah Saintvil from East Providence works at the Newport Yachting Center and said the midnight bus from Newport is completely full and that route is important. She said she uses the bus to save money and the environment. She said people who are socializing and drinking in Newport need the bus service to get home safely.

Charles Haigh uses the # 9 Burriville bus and it's often not full. He

suggested using a smaller bus.

Mr. Deller thanked all the speakers for their remarks and said he would open the floor for additional public comments later in the meeting if time allows.

Agenda Item 3: Chief Executive Officer's Report

Mr. Odimgbe said he and staff are working on service reductions and the upcoming annual audit therefore his CEO report would be brief to allow for the public comments relative to the public hearings in relation to potential service reductions and staff's presentation on same. He also noted the lengthy monthly E-Team report distributed at the meeting and the activities contained therein. He asked if there were any questions related to the report and he answered one question related to the use of standbys at Kennedy Plaza.

Agenda Item 4: Results of Public Hearings

Mr. Odimgbe addressed the Board along with members of senior staff and gave a PowerPoint presentation (which the Board also received in hardcopy) entitled RIPTA FY2012 Budget Deficit Crisis and Public Hearings. He said this is a summary of all the comments received at public hearings and comments submitted directly to RIPTA and that FTA regulations required us to hold the hearings and report on same.

Mr. Odimgbe proceeded to read each page of the PowerPoint presentation in detail and give additional comments. At the end of the PowerPoint Mr. Odimgbe thanked the representatives from RIPTA's unions for their assistance in working with the Authority to find solutions to the budget deficit. He said the funding mechanism for RIPTA is what has failed and led us to the situation we are in today.

Mr. Deller asked how soon the Board will receive recommendations on how to handle the budget deficit and Mr. Odimgbe said recommendations would be presented at the September Board meeting. A discussion ensued and Mr. Odimgbe answered questions from the Board members who said they need to fully understand the options and have time to consider them before any vote on this issue.

Mr. Deller then took additional public comments.

Richard Bidwell of the Gray Panthers said he was impressed by the presentation and had attended the public hearings. He asked that more information be made public and asked that job descriptions and salaries be given to him.

Paul MacNeil gave additional public comment and discussed the trolleys in Newport and asked that in the future, some public hearings be held in Woonsocket. He discussed the bus fares and said that if it

is a choice between losing service and raising fares he would pay more in fare to not lose bus service.

Abel Collins from the Sierra Club spoke again said a higher fare might force some riders off the bus. He said he is going to work with his organization to raise public awareness about the difficulties funding RIPTA and the budget deficit and hopes to get more public support.

Agenda Item 6: New Pavilion at Kennedy Plaza

Mark Therrien and Roger Mencarini addressed the Board to discuss the procurement for a new pavilion at Kennedy Plaza. Mr. Mencarini said three bids were received to replace the bike lockers at Kennedy Plaza and of the three bidders; Reilly Construction of Cranston, RI was the low bidder with a price of \$293,700.

Mr. Mencarini gave a background of the bid process and more specifics on the project which is 100% ARRA funded.

After a brief discussion, Mr. Lewis made a motion to approve the award of the contract to Reilly Construction. Mr. Williams seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Agenda Item 7: North Providence Van Approval

Mark Therrien and Roger Mencarini addressed the Board to discuss

the procurement of senior citizen van for North Providence and Pawtucket at a cost of \$88,480 and \$71,205 respectively. Staff recommends the purchase of the vehicles from Hoglund Bus Company of Monticello, MN.

Mr. Mencarini and Mr. Therrien gave background information from the Board report form on this project which came about due to a congressional appropriation by Senator Reed. The funding for this project with is an FTA grant which will pass through RIPTA as the grant recipient for the State. He said 80% of the funding will come from the FTA and the remaining 20% from the cities of North Providence and Pawtucket.

After a brief discussion, Mr. Lewis made a motion to approve the award of the contract to Reilly Construction. Mr. Durkee seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Agenda Item 8: Executive Session Pursuant to RIGL 42-46-5(a)(2) for Discussions related to Collective Bargaining

Mr. Deller said the Board would not convene to executive session.

Agenda Item 5: Board Committee Assignments

Mr. Deller asked the Board members to consider the various

committees of the RIPTA Board and which, if any, they might be willing to serve on. He asked that the Board members relay this information to Ms. Mandly and there will be a discussion of same at the September Board meeting.

Mr. Deller said there may be a need for an additional special Board meeting and he asked Ms. Mandly to query the Board members after today's meeting to determine a good date and time.

Agenda Item 9: Adjournment

Mr. Deller asked for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Lewis made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Durkee seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

**Ellen M. Mandly
Recording Secretary**