

# RHODE ISLAND PUBLIC TRANSIT AUTHORITY

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### MINUTES OF Monday, February 22, 2016

**Board Members Present:** Mayor Scott Avedisian; Stephen Durkee; Maureen Martin; Margaret Holland McDuff; Princess Sirleaf Bomba and Mark Susa.

**Absent:** Stephanie Ogidan Preston and Director Peter Alviti

**Also Present:** Raymond Studley, CEO; Benjamin Salzillo, In-House Legal; Christian Capizzo, Outside Counsel; Marie DiToro, Recording Secretary; and other members of RIPTA's staff, and members of the public whose names are on the sign-in sheet.

**Agenda Item 1:**      Approval of the January 25, 2016 Minutes

Ms. Martin makes a motion to approve the January 25, 2016 Board Meeting minutes as presented. Ms. Sirleaf Bomba seconds the motion and it passes unanimously.

**Agenda Item 2:**      Public Comment

*(Board members take public comments under advisement, but do not respond except for clarifications. Members may follow-up on public comments in writing post-meeting as permitted by applicable law.)*

Mayor Avedisian welcomes Mr. Rhodes to speak. Mr. Rhodes states that he is from the RIPTA Riders Alliance. He states that he would like to speak on the increased fares. RIPTA Riders Alliance is concerned about regular rider's fares and also the senior/disabled fares. In both cases the monthly passes are too expensive. They suggest tying the two cases together. Although it is late in the process the RIPTA Riders Alliance is calling on the Authority to postpone the Fare Increase scheduled to go into effect on March 1, 2016. They feel the Board simply has not addressed the issue of monthly passes for low income seniors and disabled so they will be charged the same \$70.00 monthly pass the regular riders are charged. \$70.00 per month is nearly a \$1000.00 a year. It is an unaffordable expense for those living on a fixed income. It is already higher than comparable systems. Last summer, a survey of websites, showed the average monthly cost of 21 systems came to \$46.15 and transfers only \$0.09. RIPTA is proposing a monthly pass cost equal to 35 trips when the average of the other systems was 32 trips.

RIPTA Riders is also concerned with regular rider's fares. Some numbers to be aware of is the fare increase from \$62.00 to \$70.00 for monthly pass, \$0.50 to \$1.00 for transfers and the loss of the discounted 15-ride passes will hit RIPTA's most frequent and loyal riders. They are already higher than fares of comparable systems. Last summer a survey of websites showed of 21 systems the monthly pass was \$46.15 as previously stated.

It has been pointed out that Rhode Island's commute by transit rate is barely half of what should be expected to the density. RIPTA is not living up to its potential to reduce congestion, pollution and help invigorate the economy. In part, this is to the already high fares. RIPTA Riders feel that before a step backwards is had; let's see what can be done to avoid fare increases at least until the next fiscal year.

They feel that the current fare increases satisfy no one and arouse strong opposition and urge RITPA and the leaders at the Statehouse to roll back these high fares at least until there is a chance to work with the current General Assembly and Governor's Office to see if the fare increases can be avoided. Thank you.

Mayor Avedisian welcomes Ken Rocha of Rocha Collision to speak. Mr. Rocha states he was here two meetings ago with a complaint that RIPTA owes him money and it has not been paid and that letters were sent and he is not going anywhere. He states that a year ago a bill was sent for \$692.49 for a car that a bus hit, it was the rental bill, which was paid to the consumer. Mr. Rocha states the normal rule of thumb in the auto body business is that you pay the rental agency. Mr. Rocha states he was told by RIPTA to obtain reimbursement from the consumer. He states that is not how he does business, he sent a bill, and he wants to get paid. Mr. Rocha shows pictures of the car to the Board, stating it was a severe accident, pointing out damage to the car. \$4,219.04 is what he came here for last time when he asked for help, he states Mr. Salzillo does not understand and he wants a third party to present his bills to who will understand. He wants to get paid. Mayor Avedisian states he will speak with Mr. Salzillo and Mr. Studley. Mr. Rocha states he would like to meet with Mr. Studley. Mayor Avedisian states that when we have a claim from an individual we pay the individual, we do not pay a third party in that claim.

Mayor Avedisian welcomes Mark Susa, board member, to speak. Mr. Susa states he has two things to say, one is it is a bad thing about the cost, and second listening to 630 WPRO, John DiPietro. At the ATAC meeting it was asked if we could possibly keep the RipTiks at Shaws and Stop & Shop and \$10 monthly pass.

Mayor Avedisian welcomes Barry Shaw from RIPTA Riders Alliance. He has 5 brief points to make. First is Strategic Plan, questions is there is a stakeholders group and that RIPTA Riders Alliance would like to be a part of that. Second, the Riders have issued a statement about the move of neighborhood health plan employees out of the city into a suburban location. They wanted to call attention to an anti-transit sprawl as we see it. Third relates to legislation beyond the budgets coming. The Alliance has asked Rep. Naughton and Sen. Pichardo to introduce companion bills to change the board appointment process, we want to be on the list of organization that the Governor will give due concern and get suggestions from. Fourth point is regarding legislation introduced to limit liability to \$100,000; perhaps the RIPTA Riders can help, but they need more information. Finally, we also back traffic safety legislation that helps pedestrians. The bill that is active relates to distracted driving by prohibiting hand held use while driving, we feel that it would be good for the safety of bus passengers and other motorists, also can get involved through the Traffic Safety Coalition organized by RIDOT. RIDOT, the Attorney General's Office, AAA and others back this bill.

Mayor Avedisian welcomes Tom Cute, President and BA of ATU reports on major pieces of legislation passed in DC, Map 21 extension the federal highway money and included in that is a study on items of concern to bus operators; one is the blind spots on the left side of the busses. Ongoing Map 21 study is to review the design of busses; years ago visibility was better, today because of the designs of the busses there is a post and making a left turn operators have to bob and weave in order to see and with that constant movement there is neck and shoulder strain, position of mirrors were at a lower angle years ago and did not impede the vision of the bus operator as they make a left hand turn because people walk about 3 miles per hour, so when you are taking a left turn you are doing less than 5 miles per hour, or there can be an island and you are almost in the same path as that person walking and you're not going to see them. That is going to be studied under the Map 21. Another thing is being looked at is access to restrooms, not criticism of the Authority, it causes a whole malady of illnesses, there are scientific studies and what will be looked at is the proper time to be built into schedules for restroom breaks for operator safety and well-being. Just received the new 2016 Gilligs and they

are beautiful vehicles. Around the country some transit authorities purchased vehicles that don't have the clear view and vision that a bus operator has to have for a left-hand turn. Fortunately for us we have a well-stocked maintenance area. Concerning funding, read in the paper that RIPTA is receiving an influx of cash that is going to be designated for street car operations and for smart cities and getting \$50 million for improvements. These things are overall positive and we are heading in a direction where we provide better and more secure transportation and facilities for the riders of our system, especially with the rehabilitation of the Gateway Center and the Pawtucket Hub and these are all positive steps. We look forward to keeping the Board informed of these issues and also protective shields, bus operators around the country are subjected to assaults because we deal with cash fares and people who sometimes have emotional issues. Europe they have redesigned the front of the bus, the American manufacturers haven't done this yet, but some of the shields that are currently in place in this country are after-market. It is the nature of our jobs where we come in contact with individuals and there is potential of conflict over fares and for the safety of our passengers and our drivers, and anything that has happened on the road has been quickly addressed by Mr. Tierney, Mr. Pereira and Mr. Studley.

### **Agenda Item 3: CEO Update**

Mayor Avedisian invites Mr. Studley to present the CEO Report and an update on the Strategic Plan. Mr. Studley first wants to inform the Board that he and Benjamin Salzillo have met with Mr. Rocha multiple times, and that they are at a point where a resolution needs to be had, we just disagree with the information he has provided to us regarding the rental agreement. Mayor Avedisian states he too has tried to explain to Mr. Rocha, when has come to his office, that when someone hires him to provide a rental car that is a contract between he and the person not between RIPTA and the person and Mayor Avedisian has tried to explain that to Mr. Rocha.

Mr. Studley continues with the Strategic Plan update and states that our current plan is from 2011 and expires in March of 2016. In the fall last year we started with an internal staff committee to try and take a look back at what we did well in the last Strategic Plan and what areas were most successful and which ones still remain. In December Sarah Ingle hosted 15 sessions with our staff trying to get their thoughts on what they felt the next 5 years of our strategic plan should have in it. We just completed that and we have had a workshop with our staff and our next step is to have a workshop with the Board so that we can give you a draft of what we are looking and tweak that and going forward the next 5 years and once we get closer to a final design at that point we can start with the stakeholders. Two things we were discussing is a 4 or 5 year, a 2020 plan and then Statewide Planning is coming out with their long-range planning document in the fall of this year and we are going to try to align ourselves with that to come up with a 10 or 15 year transit plan, due diligence over the next several years to accomplish our plan and the transit hubs starting, the potential for us to get an award for the downtown circulator. With all those things coming into play we have the Quonset Development Study which started to get underway last month, looking at van pools and the need to get better transit. Mr. Studley mentions the Board workshop next month on the 9<sup>th</sup> and the staff is meeting on the 7<sup>th</sup> internally and to review everything and from there we can make some decisions as the board sees fit.

Mayor talks about how encouraging it is to see a projected surplus, he states he's been on the board for 4 years and is not sure he has seen one of those before and wants to say great job and knows the whole team has worked really hard. Fiscal 2016 has an \$80,000 surplus, expenses are \$2.4 million under, and the staff has done a great job.

Mr. Studley also mentions continuing work with BHDDH and the Governor's Office and OHHS weekly on programs.

Mr. Durkee asks what the KP security situation is. Mr. Studley responds that he met with the City and Downtown Improvement District and we have asked and requested multiple times increased police presence and says there is a need for higher police presence. With RIPTA transporting people into the area with businesses that serve the employment district, it creates opportunity for crime, not a lot of violence crime, often times the homeless are victims of crime. We have discussed various options with the City, even if we attempt to put a security force down there, you can't have a security force that does not have arrest powers and cannot put someone in handcuffs. It just puts another layer on, we would be better off with more street supervisors. The end result is we just need more police officers down there. Mr. Studley states he has sent letters to the FTA to try and find a way we can help supplement police details; we also spoke to the federal delegation about it and will speak with them again when we are down there for the legislative conference. Have asked our GSA to look at that area being considered a Critical Infrastructure Cluster and the reason is if it gets designated as such, that may tap into Homeland Security monies that both the City and RIPTA can look at.

Mr. Durkee states that the MBTA and TF Green have a police force.

Mayor Avedisian states that he has talked a lot about this with Ray and Mr. Pereira and Mr. Tierney and part of the issue is if we move forward with the suggestions about hiring a private firm, it is just another layer without arrest powers. He would rather the discussion be on whether or not we need transit police, maybe the airport police take that on as another function.

Mr. Durkee continues that the intention is we are having a discussion about Strategic Planning and we are trying to grow the system and as we try to do that especially now with multi-hubs we are going to need a different type of oversight for those facilities.

Mr. Studley states that one of the 5 pillars is safety; in our strategic planning is Safety.

Mayor Avedisian continues that the Amtrak Hub works well for us because there are Amtrak police there all the time, which creates a totally different environment.

Further discussion is had about transit police in the state - TF green police, rail police. Need an integrated plan to handle all the platform stops as it relates to rail, Kennedy Plaza and where the hubs. Kennedy Plaza if it going to be used for civic space with Burnside Park you need police presence, including at the substation in Kennedy Plaza and that it needs to be a focal point.

Mr. Durkee gives kudos to the maintenance team on the Ride vans

Ms. Martin makes a motion to accept the CEO's Report, Ms. McDuff seconds the motion and it passes.

#### **Agenda Item 4: Commercial Property Insurance Policy**

Mayor Avedisian welcomes Ben Salzillo and Gary Primavera. Mr. Salzillo states this is a request for authorization to enter into a contract for commercial property insurance; the annual premium cost is \$156,877.00 covering all our properties for liability. Mayor Avedisian states that he and Mr. Studley reviewed the list of properties and that a review of the properties is needed. Mr. Salzillo states that RIPTA is in the process of retaining a firm to do appraisals and advise us on the highest and best uses of those properties and will come up with a comprehensive plan going forward. Discussion was had as to how the properties came to be owned by RIPTA and what original use was back when it was the UTC, and federal money used for original purchase.

Mr. Durkee moves to approve the contract as presented, Ms. Martin seconds the motion and it passes.

**Agenda Item 5:      FY 2016 Budget Update**

Mayor Avedisian welcomes Ms. DiLauro to presents the budget amendment, Ms. DiLauro states that typically halfway through the year we propose an amendment to the budget. The CEO report discusses the few changes that were already made. Our estimate for gas tax has been revised down. We are asking the Board to approve an amendment that will move our revised 2016 budget from a projected deficit of \$812,000, to a projected surplus of \$80,684. The board is directed to the handout which takes you through the process; the two biggest pieces as far as our increased revenues are the BHDDH Pilot and the fact that the new FAST Act has given us the ability to pull 20 percent instead of 10 percent of our ADA costs. That amounts to an additional \$2.8 million. Mr. DiLauro states RIPTA is not proposing pulling anywhere near that much, and are thinking in FY 16 about \$850,000, although gas tax is running pretty well, so RIPTA will take as little of that as we can to get through the year and we will span that over a two year period moving into 2017. The budget process for 2017 is starting now so we won't go into the same level of detail and we will be coming back in the summer to revise that. All of the changes are annualized and the Governor's budget does suggest that the General Assembly's budget would cover our debt service, giving us a projected surplus with all the changes of \$231,530. As far as the decreased revenues, for gas tax, we have a net loss due to the delay in the senior disabled and the reduction in the fare increase and we have some changes in federal revenues; mostly delay of some of our projects. Overall we see a net increase of \$244,000 in revenues. Not a lot of big changes in expenses, we have some shifts taking place in personnel again, but the increase turnover throughout the year has necessitated us just showing a few of those here. We were able to just move between programs. We have a few, an intern for safety, we have a need for trainers and we are putting two additional trainers on, that would help us out getting the drivers up and trained both on the Paratransit and Fixed Route side. The net decrease in expenses there is \$648,000 for FY 16, for an amended surplus of \$80,684. The shift there is a positive \$893,000.

Mayor Avedisian clarifies that the BHDDH Pilot is what used to be the Department of Mental Health, Retardation and Hospitals, relying on RIPTA to do more of the actual trips for their clients.

Mr. Studley explains that there are centers throughout the state and each center provides data to the BHDDH and we service some of those now, so currently we serve about 500 or 600 clients a day taking them to those centers. The federal government side of BHDDH put them under a consent decree to offer transportation to make sure that those clients were getting to and from work during the mid-day, so let's say someone goes to a BHDDH center at 7:30 they may work at say another location for business from 10 to 2 and then have to come back to the center. So our Ride program, Mark Therrien and Brooks Almonte have been meeting with BHDDH, trying to create an environment where we have an MOU and with our new Reveal software we can set up tablets and audit trails in CMS to take on that majority of those trips.

Mr. Durkee inquires whether this will be an ongoing source of revenue. Mayor Avedisian and Mr. Studley comment that they are working toward that. All of the agencies are now pulled together on this with DCYF transporting some clients, BHDDH does some and this is a way for it to be more integrated. Mr. Studley states that part of the FAST act is for state's medical transportation overall. If we are moving people from nursing skilled care to home care, non-emergency medical transportation goes from the middle of the road to top tier because if we

can't transport people for health care appointments, their next call will be to 911 and then re-hospitalized again. Based on the fact that the top 10 in age are 65-75-85 and above we have an aging population in Rhode Island, we really need focus on that and whatever the delivery system should be that what we are dealing with Secretary Roberts about and coming up with that solution and the federal government realizes that, they put specific funding coming out of the Circular specific to that program, what is the best delivery system for each state and we can actually potentially apply for grants and come up with a coordinated plan.

Mr. Durkee asks Mr. DiLauro to explain again what the FAST act adjustment is. Ms. DiLauro states that formerly they could take 10% of the ADA costs which run about \$2.8 million a year; but the FAST act specifically gives you the ability to pull 20% federal dollars reimbursed, so we would be able to take an extra \$2.8 million. However, the total pie does not change, it is the way it is we are slicing it, so we are taking operating dollars at the expense of the capital program, but definitely to get through this period we've been going through the past few years it gives us the ability to balance our budget.

Mr. Durkee states he wants to be sure what we are doing will be ongoing and we don't want to have this moment where we can balance our budget and next year we can't and it just gets worse.

A discussion is had of the reason for the BHDDH program additional revenues, and watching what CMS and the federal government is doing on the planning side where BHDDH and OHS will go and continue to go and that is followed it will be more of a sustainable plan, than just contract for a year for an emergency.

Mayor Avedisian states he and Mr. Studley have had discussions with the Governor's office on changes in state legislation that would allow us to be more competitive, to serve different markets to bring more money into the Authority.

Ms. Martin states it was a terrific job by everyone involved. Mr. Studley mentions the UPass program and that RIPTA is currently working with URI, RIC and CCRI to develop the UPass Program for those institutions and currently those institutions supplement 50 % of the cost, so they can go to the bookstore and buy that. CCRI has 16,000 students and RIC has 7,000 or 8,000, and discussions are underway where they can currently get on the UPass program.

Mr. Durkee moves to accept the budget amendments as presented, Ms. Martin seconds the motion and it passes.

#### **Agenda Item 6: Request for Proposals 15-30 Tire Leasing Services**

Mayor Avedisian welcomes Mr. Harwood and Mr. McGrane. Mr. McGrane asks the board to award a 5 year contract to Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company of Akron, Ohio to provide tire leasing services to the Authority. The estimated five-year average annual cost based upon current fleet size and annual mileage is \$692,898. The Request for Proposals was issued December 11, 2015 and was publicly advertised and proposals were received on January 15, 2016. Two companies Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company and Michelin North America of Greenville, South Carolina submitted proposals. A proposal evaluation review committee meeting was held on February 12, 2016. This committee recommends awarding the contract to Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company. This committee represented a cross-section of RIPTA's staff of Finance, Maintenance and Procurement. The contract includes leasing of tires used on RIPTA's revenue and non-revenue vehicles. Also included are the mounting, dismounting, balancing and disposal of tires. RIPTA staff conducted a lease versus buy analysis in accordance with FTA regulations. The analysis demonstrated that it was more cost effective to

lease the tires rather than purchase. The contract is funded 80% through grant number RI90x063 and 20% from RIPTA operating funds. We ask the board's approval.

Mr. Durkee moves to approve the contract as presented, Ms. Holland McDuff seconds the motion and it passes.

**Agenda Item 7:      Adjournment**

Mr. Durkee makes a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Holland McDuff seconds the motion and it passes unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

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Marie DiToro  
Recording Secretary