

Berkshire Regional Transit Authority
Minutes of the Finance/Audit Committee

January 17, 2019 at 2:30 PM
BRTA Intermodal Transportation Center
One Columbus Avenue, Pittsfield, MA 01201

MINUTES

Berkshire Regional Transit Authority Finance/Audit Committee Members present:

Sandra Lamb, North Adams; Peter Gallant, Lanesborough; and Doug McNally, Windsor
Also present: Robert Malnati and Sarah Vallieres, BRTA staff

1. **Approval of Minutes for September 27, 2018 -VOTE**

Committee members reviewed the minutes of September's meeting. Ms. Lamb made the motion to accept the minutes, was seconded by Mr. McNally, and approved by all.

2. **Labor Issue**

Mr. Malnati explained the labor issue is settled. The president of the union became involved due to the lack of confidence in the business agent/negotiator. This was not a true negotiation. Mr. Malnati's opinion was the strike was about proving a point and they would strike no matter what. Mr. Malnati discussed the wage increase for PMB employees for their 3 year contract. They had to be attentive of the new Massachusetts minimum wage law increase. MassDOT asked about the labor issue and how the new minimum wage would impact the RTAs. MassDOT is not keeping pace with the cost of living. The new PMB contract, over this 3 year period of time, will be an additional \$67,000.

During the strike, outside vendors provided over 1000 trips for chemo, dialysis, etc. at the cost of \$43,000. The PMB budget for expenses will be down: labor, fuel, etc. The auditor will look at BRTA's 6 month review and discuss whether adjustments should be performed now or reconciled at the end of the year. Mr. McNally asked when the fixed route and paratransit contracts expire, to which Mr. Malnati answered, June 30, 2021. Mr. Malnati also stated that negotiations will be done earlier, to which Mr. McNally agreed BRTA should make it clear up front so they will be less inclined to play games. Mr. Malnati said the morale at PMB is good and Mr. Greiner had sent an email to all employees: no retaliation.

In discussion of the labor issue:

Mr. Gallant wants to quantify the data due to the strike.

Ms. Lamb stated all of our riders are very happy.

Mr. McNally praised the media relations with BRTA where all positive articles were reported.

3. **Route 11N BCC-Tyler & East Street- VOTE**

Mr. Caine, AGM created the new schedules for this evening route and included a map, at BRTA's customer requests. Mr. Malnati presented the schedule for this pilot service which includes both Tyler Street and the new Berkshire Innovation Center. Mr. Gallant noticed instead of the Stop and Shop bus stop, it should be listed as the 99, as it is on that side of the road.

This pilot has been discussed with BCC and advertised by them including when students were enrolling in Spring semester courses. BRTA will release the posters and press releases tomorrow. Mr. McNally felt this should work as BCC is growing their evening courses. Mr. Malnati explained the MassDOT grant application would time this evening route into the Routes 1 and 21X traveling to North and South County respectively. Mr. McNally asked if this loop could continue to Berkshire Crossing for additional ridership

opportunity, to which Mr. Malnati said we would explore and possibly make adjustments. Mr. McNally made the motion to endorse the Route 11N to BCC, Tyler Street, and East Street and was seconded by Ms. Lamb. Mr. Gallant amended this to ensure the Stop and Shop change on the bus schedule. All approved this motion.

4. **Task Force Update**

Mr. Malnati stated there have been 11 RTA Task Force meetings so far and he has attended some. The 3 MassDOT public meetings have been postponed. There have not been any minutes to the meetings. At today's meeting, the RTAs were making a presentation for the first time with Senators Chandler and Peake. This includes the RTA criteria for forward funding; how to distribute the \$88M using increased numbers of the MBTA; and the discretionary funding for RTA projects. The final report is due 2/15 and had not had a lot of public participation. The RTA's need to begin formulating our FY20 budgets with uncertainty on what number to use for the increase in operating costs, like minimum wage and insurance. Mr. Gallant stated the lack of the availability of the minutes is an issue. Mr. Malnati shared the RTAs should have the funding answer by the end of the month. This Task Force has tied up MassDOT; there has been no discussion yet about our Program Preview.

5. **Old Business**

No old business.

6. **New Business**

Federal Shutdown: Mr. Malnati would like to research possibly establishing a line of credit by BRTA's financial institution in case the shut-down is prolonged as a safe guard. Currently the BRTA cannot drawdown operating assistance, which will need to occur in the future. In anticipation of strike end, BRTA printed 2000 complimentary ride cards for customers that bought a pass near the time of the strike. A policy has been created and procedures to be adhered to. So far 11 have been issued and 6 have been redeemed. Ridership for December has decreased 60% and paratransit has decreased 30% based upon revenue. Fixed route had 11 days of service. 2 marijuana retail establishments have opened on fixed route lines in Great Barrington and Pittsfield. This may increase traffic and also could increase ridership. BTM is tracking the numbers. The City of Pittsfield emailed Mr. Malnati about a Wayfair employee shuttle going from the McKay Street parking garage to the site in the Clock Tower building. BRTA will be researching creating a small bus route.

7. **Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be March 28, 2019 at 2:30 PM and will discuss budget development.