

BERKSHIRE REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY  
MEETING OF THE ADVISORY BOARD

September 28, 2023  
4:01 PM

**ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES**

**Berkshire Regional Transit Authority Advisory Board Members Present:**

Sarah Fontaine, Adams; William Elovirta, Becket; Rob Reilly, Lanesborough; Mindi Morin, Lenox; Frank Abbott, Monterey; Sherri Youngkin, New Ashford; Sandra Lamb, North Adams; Sheila Irvin, Pittsfield; Nadine Hawver, Sheffield; and Douglas McNally, Windsor  
Benjamin Elliott, Great Barrington came in during the Administrator's Report.

**Berkshire Regional Transit Authority Advisory Board Members Absent:**

Charles Ketchen, Alford; Ray Killeen, Cheshire; Jeff Levanos, Clarksburg; John Boyle, Dalton; Melanie Vicneire, Egremont; Cynthia Bosley, Florida; Earl Peck, Hinsdale; Sherman Derby, Sr; Hancock; Andrea Wadsworth, Lee; Eric Mendelsohn, Mt. Washington; Brandi Page, Otis; James Welch, Peru; Alan Hanson, Richmond; Andrew Provost, Savoy; Jamie Minacci, Stockbridge; Kent Lew, Washington; Brian O'Grady, Williamstown; and Brian Morrison, Rider Representative.

**Also, present:** Robert Malnati, Sarah Vallieres, and Gina LePage King, BRTA; Rauley Caine, BTM; Patty Annechiarico, Anuja Koirola, BRPC

	Voting Shares	Present	
Adams	2.8124	2.8124	
Alford	1.0000	0.0000	
Becket	1.0000	1.0000	
Cheshire	3.4428	0.0000	
Clarksburg	1.0078	0.0000	34.75
Dalton	2.4426	0.0000	needed for
Egremont	1.0010	0.0000	quorum
Florida	1.0000	0.0000	
Great Barrington	3.3315	3.3315	
Hancock	1.0000	0.0000	37.4399 quorum when
Hinsdale	1.2269	0.0000	meeting was called to order
Lanesborough	2.3242	2.3242	
Lee	3.8089	0.0000	40.7714 present during
Lenox	4.7367	4.7367	Administrator's Report
Monterey	1.0000	1.0000	
New Ashford	1.1044	1.1044	
North Adams	5.7136	5.7136	
Otis	1.0000	0.0000	
Peru	1.0123	0.0000	
Pittsfield	16.6803	16.6803	
Richmond	1.0000	0.0000	
Savoy	1.0000	0.0000	
Sheffield	1.0673	1.0673	
Stockbridge	3.0741	0.0000	
Washington	1.0000	0.0000	
Williamstown	2.7121	0.0000	
Windsor	1.0010	1.0010	
Disability Community	1.0000	0.0000	
Rider Representative	1.0000	0.0000	

**1) ROLL CALL**

S. Irvin called the Advisory Board meeting to order at 4:01 PM stating this meeting will be recorded for purposes of the notes of the Board Minutes.

**2) ADVISORY BOARD ORIENTATION- NEW**

R. Malnati presented the BRTA Advisory Board Orientation power point slideshow to review what is expected of the BRTA Advisory Board. This orientation at the Advisory Board Meeting is new and will be an annual exercise. BRTA also holds a more in-depth new Advisory Board Orientation. He stated that anyone interested can send him an email and he will set something up. Some of the points discussed were: the 4 responsibilities as an Advisory Board member; the overview of Advisory Board meetings; the role of the Advisory Board member, weighted votes and quorums; and Open Meeting Law. R. Malnati explained the Massachusetts Conflict of Interest training program and annual forms that Board Member need to be submit to the BRTA.

**3) MINUTES OF THE MAY 18, 2023 MEETING – VOTE**

D. McNally made a motion to accept the minutes of the May 18, 2023 meeting, Sandra Lamb seconded the motion. S. Fontaine, M. Morin, F. Abbott, S. Youngkin, and N. Hawver abstained. The Minutes of the May 18, 2023 Advisory Board meeting were passed.

Town	(3) Minutes of the May 18, 2023 Meeting	(5) BRTA Safety Plan Update	(6) FY 2023 Draft Financial Statements	(7) Cash Reports May, June, July and August 2023	(8) New Marlborough Membership	(9) West Stockbridge Membership	(14) Adjournment
Adams	Abstained						
Becket	Yes						
Lanesborough	Yes						
Lenox	Abstained						
Monterey	Abstained						
New Ashford	Abstained						
North Adams	Yes						
Pittsfield	Yes						
Sheffield	Abstained						
Windsor	Yes						

**4) ADMINISTRATOR`S REPORT**

R. Malnati stated the FY24 budget was signed by the Governor containing funding at \$94M and \$3.5M at the 60% ridership/ 30% population/10% services level. The BRTA received ½ of that funding. The RTAs will receive \$56M from the Fair Share Amendment and BRTA will be receiving about \$1.4M but it’s not clear when receipt will come or the terms of spending. The RTAs submitted a Spending Plan/Allocation Plan to Mass DOT which was approved by the Secretary of Transportation.

R. Malnati shared the Massachusetts Secretary of Transportation's tour of Western MA included a visit to the BRTA. Additional members on the tour included the Undersecretary, MassDOT, BRTA Advisory Board Chair Irvin and Vice Chair McNally amongst many others. R. Malnati discussed BRTA's needs and included materials.

R. Malnati explained the GM R. Caine has been working on the bus stop sign project in different communities. New signs were erected in Allendale, the Clark in Williamstown, Village at Greylock in Lanesborough, and Tyler St. There is a Selectboard meeting in Adams that BRTA will be attending. These signs will help to increase visibility in the community and bring awareness to people of what the bus does and how to get it. The ITC bus bays have been changed to letters for a dedicated bus route to pull into, making it easier for customers. Fixed route ridership ended FY23 with just under 500,000 customers, which is less than 3% of pre-covid numbers. This could have been exceeded if the routes weren't cancelled. This workforce shortage issue is a national issue and was recently discussed between the BRTA and the RMV during the Transportation Secretary's visit. On Monday, October 2 a few additions will be made to a couple of routes.

R. Malnati discussed the annual borrowing exercise that occurred in July. This year there were 4 bids and Jefferies LLC at 4.5% and a net interest of 3.797% was awarded. There was a discussion about the Route 1 bus route slight increase in hours and will continue to meet the Route 34.

R. Malnati stated the State Auditor's review on Paratransit is ongoing with a site visit next week. A draft report will be given once the audit is final. The BRTA's external auditors met with the Finance Committee and provided a thorough review of the financial statements.

R. Malnati explained the Facility Condition Assessment was completed at the end of the fiscal year. The report will become part of the 5-year Capital Plan.

R. Malnati provided a discussion on the Berkshire Flyer and the possibility of service next year will be determined at a later date by MassDOT. Ridership was a little better than last year.

R. Malnati shared the news of a Federal discretionary grant award of \$2.2M to purchase 2 new hybrid electric 35' buses and replacing 2 bus lifts at the Maintenance Facility. This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> award under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law that was awarded to BRTA and S. Vallieres did a great job with writing these grants.

R. Malnati discussed ideas for BRTA's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration as providing incentives for customers to ride, like providing a free ride giveaway, golden ticket for a month to be placed in a drawing, ride with the Administrator, etc. There was a discussion on another fare free event. There is a MassDOT grant that will be for fare free rides.

##### **5) BRTA SAFETY PLAN UPDATE- VOTE**

R. Malnati discussed the Safety Plan updates that were provided in the Board Packet. Any changes made were highlighted in the document for the Board Members to review and included updated data from 2018-2022 and the new Safety Committee Meetings. R. Caine is the chair of these quarterly meetings.

D. McNally made a motion to accept the Safety Plan updates and N. Hawver seconded the motion. All stated aye and the BRTA Safety Plan Updates were passed unanimously.

Town	(3) Minutes of May 18, 2023 Meeting	(5) BRTA Safety Plan Update	(6) FY2023 Draft Financial Statements	(7) Cash Report May, June, July, and August 2023	(8) New Marlborough membership	(9) West Stockbridge Membership	(14) Adjournment
Adams		Yes					
Becket		Yes					
Great Barrington		Yes					
Lanesborough		Yes					
Lenox		Yes					
Monterey		Yes					
New Ashford		Yes					
North Adams		Yes					
Pittsfield		Yes					
Sheffield		Yes					
Windsor		Yes					

**6) FY 2023 DRAFT FINANCIAL STATEMENTS-VOTE**

R. Malnati stated that the Finance Committee met with the external auditor and reviewed the Draft Financial Statements in its entirety. The Auditor provided the BRTA with an unmodified or clean opinion on the financial statements. Finances were accurate with nothing missing, no issues, and no material deficiencies. R. Malnati reviewed the draft Financial Statements that were provided via email to the Board. Two other documents in the packet were the Management letter where a couple of recommendations were made, and OMB Uniform Guidance providing all federal grants.

D. McNally made the motion to accept the FY23 Draft Financial Statements and S. Lamb seconded the motion. All stated aye and the FY 2023 Draft Financial Statements were unanimously passed.

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Adams			Yes				
Becket			Yes				
Great Barrington			Yes				
Lanesborough			Yes				

Lenox			Yes				
Monterey			Yes				
New Ashford			Yes				
North Adams			Yes				
Pittsfield			Yes				
Sheffield			Yes				
Windsor			Yes				

**7) CASH REPORT MAY, JUNE, JULY, and AUGUST 2023- VOTE**

R. Malnati shared the Cash Reports for May, June, July, and August 2023.

S. Lamb made the motion to accept the cash reports for May, June, July and August and N. Hawver seconded the motion. All stated aye and the Cash Reports for May, June, July, and August 2023 were passed unanimously.

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Becket				Yes			
Great Barrington				Yes			
Lanesborough				Yes			
Lenox				Yes			
Monterey				Yes			
New Ashford				Yes			
North Adams				Yes			
Pittsfield				Yes			
Sheffield				Yes			
Windsor				Yes			

**8) NEW MARLBOROUGH MEMBERSHIP- VOTE**

R. Malnati presented two communities, New Marlborough and West Stockbridge have both requested to be a member community of the BRTA. Both town Selectboards have voted yes and now need a vote from the BRTA Advisory Board.

N. Hawver made the motion to accept New Marlborough as a new BRTA member community, D. McNally seconded the motion. There was a discussion on concerns of what the town of New Marlborough actually wanted and an increase in the quorum amount. It was determined that this community wanted more access to transportation. All state aye and New Marlborough was unanimously voted in as a new BRTA member community. BRTA will send the approval of the BRTA Advisory Board to MassDOT.

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Becket					Yes		
Great Barrington					Yes		
Lanesborough					Yes		
Lenox					Yes		
Monterey					Yes		
New Ashford					Yes		
North Adams					Yes		
Pittsfield					Yes		
Sheffield					Yes		
Windsor					Yes		

**9) WEST STOCKBRIDGE MEMBERSHIP-VOTE**

D. McNally made the motion to accept West Stockbridge as a new BRTA member community, N. Hawver seconded the motion. There was a discussion on concerns of what the town of West Stockbridge actually wanted. It was determined that this community wanted more access to transportation. All stated aye and West Stockbridge was unanimously voted in as a new BRTA member community. The BRTA will send the approval of the BRTA Advisory Board to MassDOT.

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Adams						Yes	
Becket						yes	
Great Barrington						Yes	
Lanesborough						Yes	
Lenox						Yes	
Monterey						Yes	
New Ashford						Yes	
North Adams						Yes	
Pittsfield						Yes	
Sheffield						Yes	
Windsor						Yes	

**10) BUDGET YTD**

R. Malnati provided an overview of the BRTA budget through August 2023. Overall, the budget looks good.

**11) RIDERSHIP YTD**

R. Malnati reviewed the ridership year to date. There is a 13% increase in fixed route and a 12% increase in paratransit.

There was a discussion on having another fare free event and R. Malnati shared there is an upcoming MassDOT grant BRTA can apply for.

**12) TOPICS FOR FUTURE ADVISORY BOARD MEETING**

There was a discussion on BRTA's role in the Berkshire Flyer, to which R. Malnati answered regarding the pass-through contract for the manager and Downtown Pittsfield Inc's customer assistance and surveys. BRTA is part of the Flyer Steering Committee.

There were no other replies for topics for future Advisory Board meetings.

**13) NEXT MEETING DATE/TIME**

R. Malnati tentatively scheduled the next meeting for October 26, 2023 at 4 PM. The next Finance Committee meeting will be October 19, 2023 at 1:00 PM.

**14) ADJOURNMENT**

N. Hawver made the motion to adjourn and B. Elovirta seconded. All stated aye and the meeting ended at 4:51 PM.

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Lenox							yes
Monterey							yes
New Ashford							yes
North Adams							yes
Pittsfield							yes
Sheffield							yes
Windsor							yes

**Meeting Materials:**

- BRTA Advisory Board Packet**
- BRTA Public Notice and Agenda**
- Updated Safety Plan**
- Draft Financial Plans**