



**Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation
Minutes of the Board of Directors
Wednesday, March 24, 2010**

Members Present: Jon Frederick – Chairman, Scott Bogle – Vice Chairman, Kenn Ortmann – Secretary/ Treasurer, Karen Anderson, Barbara Broderick, Cynthia Copeland, Leif Gerjuoy, Jerry Hejtmanek, Kit Morgan, Sylvia vonAulock, Michael Watman

COAST Staff Present: Rad Nichols, Jeremy LaRose, Jenn Knox, Dianne Smith

Others Present: Jim Wiggin

I. Call to Order

Mr. Frederick called the meeting to order at 8:30 AM.

II. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Gerjuoy made the motion to approve the minutes of the January 27 meeting, and Mr. Ortmann seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

III. Public Comment

A presentation was made to Mr. Arvid “Jim” Wiggin for his years of service on the COAST Board of Directors, including two years as the Chairman. Mr. Ortmann thanked Mr. Wiggin for his service to the Board from 2005 to 2009 and presented him with a plaque. Mr. Wiggin thanked COAST staff, Mr. Watman for originally appointing him, and Mr. Bogle for his behind-the-scenes efforts regarding Newington’s recent vote to fund COAST service and Mr. Nichols for stepping up to lead the organization when he did. He asked that the Board write a letter to the resident who spoke up at the town meeting in support of COAST. Mr. Nichols thanked Mr. Wiggin on behalf of COAST staff and presented him with a gift certificate. Mr. Wiggin departed to a chorus of well wishes.

Mr. Nichols said that a longtime employee, Mr. Paul Pouliot, had finished his employment with COAST the day prior. He wanted to publicly recognize Mr. Pouliot for all of his efforts, notably influencing almost every part of the operation since 2001.

V. Financial Report

• **January 2010 Income Statement and Balance Sheet**

Since the employee to be introduced was not yet available, Mr. Frederick skipped to Section V of the agenda. Mr. Nichols presented the January financials. He said there is not much fluctuation compared to recent trends. He commented that the large amount of cash assets on the balance sheet is not a normal occurrence, and reflects a new federal draw.

• **2009 Audit Report**

Ms. Smith brought the audit reports upstairs and passed them out. The audit

results had been discussed at the January meeting but not been printed and bound for final distribution.

IV. Employee Introduction

Mr. Nichols introduced COAST mechanic Dan Sinks. Mr. Sinks started his comments by stating that COAST is the best employer he has worked for. He likes the size of the shop and the fact that he works locally. Mr. Ortmann asked whether he has seen any changes since he started in 2005 that are more or less problematic from the maintenance perspective. Mr. Sinks said that it's been night and day. In years past, he would have to chase a bus about once a week for some major problem, and buses would be out of service for weeks and even months at a time. Mr. Ortmann asked whether the drivers need any additional training so they know how to use their equipment correctly and avoid abusing it. Mr. Sinks said the drivers are generally very good about keeping an eye open for problems and communicating any issues to the mechanics. Mr. Sinks left the meeting.

VI. Old Business

- **Southeast NH Regional Coordination Council Advisory Committee (ACT)**
Mr. Nichols stated that the Local Government Center was no longer comfortable extending liability coverage to ACT through COAST. Mr. Nichols stated that he felt this was related to a transition in leadership at LGC and the fact that the liability issue may be resolved if and when Senate Bill 321 passed. Until the fate of the bill is known, COAST and ACT are in a holding pattern. Ms. Copeland added that other RCCs in Nashua and the Upper Valley are having the same insurance issues.
- **Recent Board Orientation Session**
Mr. Nichols stated that the first-ever orientation session for board members went well. He offered a copy of the orientation binder to any members who were interested, and said he hopes to have the Transit Terms section finished soon. He had intended to close the orientation session with a tour of the facility and a short bus ride, but ran out of time. Mr. Ortmann commented that this could be done at the end of a short Board meeting. Mr. Watman commented that the binder was very useful and valuable for new members such as himself.

VII. New Business

Action Items

- **Body-on-Chassis Vehicle Procurement [ARRA]**
Mr. Nichols presented the bids for two body-on-chassis buses. One vehicle was already approved, but staff waited so it could package the two together under a single IFB. Mr. Nichols recommended proceeding into a contract with Northern Bus Sales. Mr. Bogle made the motion to authorize the procurement of these 2 vehicles for a price not to exceed \$66,173 each, and Mr. Watman seconded.

Mr. Ortmann asked why staff was not recommending Patsy's, the lowest bidder. He said he was concerned that companies might get the impression that it's not worth submitting a bid to COAST because we won't give them their business, even if they are the lowest bidder. Mr. Nichols responded that staff was following

procurement guidelines and was recommending award to the contractor that they felt was the most responsive and responsible bidder.

Mr. Morgan entered the meeting.

Mr. Gerjuoy recalled the warrantee problems that COAST had when the propane trolleys arrived. He said that a good long-term relationship with the vendor was very important.

Mr. LaRose commented that one cutaway would replace a vehicle that has surpassed its life expectancy. The other new cutaway would be used to expand capacity for our ADA service and possibly also serve as a neighborhood-friendly vehicle for bus service in Dover.

Mr. Bogle asked about the relative reliability of the different vehicles quoted. Mr. Nichols said that these vehicles are often made as if they are disposable and can be challenging to maintain. The motion passed unanimously.

Discussion Items

- **Newington Funding**

Mr. Nichols stated that the vote by the Town of Newington to approve COAST funding had passed by a total of three votes. This marked the first time in 12 years that COAST had been funded by the Town. This is also the first time ever that Newington has met the full local match request. Staff is planning to get on the planning board's agenda so they can discuss how to stay in the town's good graces.

Mr. Ortmann suggested that COAST look for ways to modify our existing outreach efforts to become more visible to Newington residents. For instance, if we were already going to use a bus for food drives, toy drives, etc., we could park the bus in downtown Newington. If Newington residents do not see any sign of a COAST bus this year, they may be less likely to vote for funding again next year. Mr. Morgan agreed that the residents see bus service in the abstract, and that COAST should look for ways to show it is not some monolithic government agency. He said that the town once had a van to transport elderly residents to doctors' appointments. The service stopped due to high insurance costs, but the need is still there, and maybe COAST could do something to help. Mr. Nichols commented that COAST may be able to address this need through its regional coordination efforts.

- **5316 & 5317 Grant Submissions**

Mr. Nichols said that COAST submitted grants to the DOT for consideration on behalf of ACT. Ms. Smith explained that the grants would fund several things: travel training for COAST riders, a manager to oversee a network of volunteer drivers, weekly service for the elderly and disabled in rural communities, and vehicles for ADA paratransit and volunteer drivers. Providing a COAST vehicle for these volunteer drivers would help reduce issues around insurance, training and maintenance. Mr. Morgan commented that the DOT hopes to make decisions on these grants in the next week or two, and added that Region 10 has

been very proactive in filling the transportation void despite the lack of financial support from the state. Ms. Smith stated that of the 38 cities and towns in Region 10 there are a notable number lacking any transportation service at all.

Ms. Copeland stated that the Strafford Regional Planning Commission recently studied transportation availability for low-income and non-English-speaking populations. She said that in this region there is a good match in the downtown areas, due to the historic employment patterns in the mills, but transportation is lacking in the rural areas.

There was some discussion of TASC's service in its member communities. Mr. Bogle said that TASC's director is now a full-time paid position, so it should be able to expand volunteer capacity. He said that the Rockingham Planning Commission studied the best practice in volunteer driving, and found that it was very important for the director to focus on development and have the ride scheduling done by someone else.

VIII. Information Items

- **Links to APTA and CTAA**

Mr. Nichols said that he provided links regarding federal transportation funding extensions and re-authorization. Now that the health care bill passed, Mr. Nichols heard this morning that immigration would be next. It is unclear when transportation funding will finally become a national priority.

- **Letters of Support**

Mr. Nichols commented that COAST has sent out numerous letters of support for 5310 programs looking for capital funding.

- **Ridership**

Mr. Nichols said that year to date, ridership is up 7% from this time last year. Until all the rain came, March was on track to be the highest ridership month ever. We are currently trending toward the best year in our history, and we may top 400,000 rides for the first time ever.

Mr. Ortmann asked if COAST had submitted any applications for this round of CMAQ grants. Mr. Nichols said that COAST itself did not, but stood to benefit from grants that UNH and the DOT submitted. Mr. Ortmann made a motion for staff to send a letter in support of UNH's proposed service between Durham and Rochester. Ms. Copeland seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously. Ms. Copeland said that the staff at both transit providers had worked well together, but UNH's disappointing decision not to join forces with COAST was made at a higher level. Mr. Nichols added that COAST is sharing its Google Transit feed with UNH, given the many connections between the two services.

Ms. vonAulock commented that Route 7 ridership is down significantly, and asked that staff present some proposed changes to the route at the next meeting. She said that the Beach Bus service highlighted the demand for service between Exeter and the Epping Wal-Mart, and said that perhaps Epping would come on board and help fund such a service. Ms. Broderick said that part of the drop may be due to the technical college moving from Stratham to Pease. Mr.

Nichols stated that serving the south end of the bay is a challenge with the resources currently available. Route 7 is already trying to do a lot with very little. Mr. Gerjuoy said that going through Newmarket twice makes the route very long. Perhaps the route could be divided into two: one going from Epping to Exeter to Stratham to Greenland to Portsmouth, and the other going from Newmarket to Stratham to Exeter.

XI. Adjournment

Mr. Ortmann made the motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Gerjuoy seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:45 AM.