



**Minutes of the Board of Directors
Wednesday, May 27, 2009**

Members Present: Jim Wiggin – Chairman, Jon Frederick – Vice Chairman, Cynthia Copeland – Secretary/Treasurer, Scott Bogle, Richard Hayes, Kenn Ortmann

COAST Staff Present: Rad Nichols, Jenn Knox

Others Present: Bob Ruzinsky

Proxy: Carol Gulla

I. Call to Order

Mr. Wiggin called the meeting to order at 8:40 AM.

II. Public Comment

Mr. Nichols stated that there was no public comment.

III. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Ortmann made the motion to approve the minutes of the April 22, 2009 meeting, and Mr. Frederick seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously, and with the support of the proxy.

IV. Financial Report

Mr. Nichols reported that COAST was currently under budget as a result of low fuel prices and the fact that money allotted to coordination had not been spent to date. He added that advertising and fare revenues have been slowing. Based on the preliminary analysis of the recent rider survey, Mr. Nichols did not think the fare increase has been as significant an issue as he had previously thought. The advertising revenues have been down because of the economy and the fact that area companies are increasingly making marketing decisions at the national corporate level rather than at the regional or local level. Yesterday Mr. Nichols had a meeting with Alternate Transit Advertising (ATA), to discuss conceptual plans for a new COAST marketing campaign using a partially vinyl wrapped bus. Mr. Ruzinsky stated that such a campaign could produce revenue for COAST because the federal government reimburses for some of our marketing expenses.

V. Action Items

- **Heavy-Duty Buses (2) and Trolleys (3) [ARRA]**
Mr. Nichols noted that this contract would be COAST's largest contract using

ARRA funds currently available to the organization, and will allow COAST to have the minimum 50% of funds under contract before September 2009. Mr. Nichols provided details on the pricing received through Gillig. The price for the 35' Gillig buses was \$378,000 each, the replica trolley buses \$452,625 each. Mr. Nichols explained that the most notable differences in the base buses between those recently purchased and these being considered are the length, 5' shorter, and the engines, 2010 model year. Mr. Nichols stated that the new engines meet the new tighter emissions requirements, and by themselves add approximately \$30,000 to the overall cost of each vehicle.

The trolley buses pricing did come in higher than the original estimate. Mr. Nichols stated that he likely would be able to negotiate the price down, as he and Mr. Smith did when they visited the Gillig plant last year to discuss the final 40' bus specifications. However, he noted that COAST also will need to purchase some additional equipment and tools, especially in light of the new engines.

Mr. Bogle asked whether any projects on our original stimulus project list now will not be able to be completed due to the higher than expected cost of the trolleys. Mr. Nichols stated that he did not feel that would be the case as some of the items in this procurement would reduce the need to include them in other project scopes. Additionally, some quotes for projects had been coming in for lower costs than expected. Mr. Ortmann asked whether we are getting \$70,000 worth of additional value in each trolley compared with regular buses. Mr. Nichols stated that the City of Portsmouth as a project partner is very committed to the trolley concept.

Mr. Wiggin asked about the effect of available stimulus money on the quotes. Mr. Nichols stated that these prices are based on a Fall 2008 contract (SAMTrans) that COAST is piggybacking on, that was entered into before ARRA. Mr. Wiggin asked if COAST was required to pay union wages. Mr. Nichols replied that the payment of union wages is inevitable due to Buy America requirements and the limited availability of bus manufacturers that COAST can purchase from.

Mr. Ortmann inquired that while it is worth spending money to create an image, might there be another way to create that image, such as a bus wrap made to look like a trolley. Mr. Nichols noted that this was possible, but that it does not come close to the look and feel of an actual trolley. Mr. Ruzinsky added that on a national scale trolleys most appeal to non-riders, whose support transit systems need when budget season comes around. Non-riders like how the trolleys look, and they tend not to associate the trolleys with public transit. Mr. Nichols added that it may be possible to shave some off of the quoted price as we learn more about all of the quoted options.

Ms. Copeland stated that the FTA will be looking carefully to see who performs well on these initial grants, and she would like to see COAST perform well and get the bonuses.

Mr. Wiggin asked what will happen to our current trolleys. Mr. Nichols replied that they will be retired and sold off. Mr. Wiggin commended that the word "may" in Mr. Nichols' description of the project suggests that the vehicles might not necessarily be funded at 100%. Mr. Nichols added that ARRA does give the

option of funding at less than 100% federally, but COAST would not be taking that option. Mr. Hayes asked about the timeline involved in this contract. Mr. Nichols stated that we need a signed contract before the end of August. Ms. Copeland made the motion to authorize Mr. Nichols to proceed with the procurement for these five (5) vehicles through the Gillig Corporation, and Mr. Bogle seconded. The motion passed unanimously, with the support of the proxy.

- **Building A/C Unit Replacement [ARRA]**

Mr. Nichols noted that the current A/C unit serving the dispatch area, the lunchroom area, and the board room is no longer working. COAST had received quotes from Dowling Corporation and Stroger's HVAC, and we are waiting for a third quote from Martel Plumbing and Heating. Ms. Copeland stated that she had dealt with all three contractors and all of them had done a good job. Mr. Nichols stated that he wants to move forward with this project as soon as possible so that the staff is comfortable when the warmer weather hits. He noted that at least one staff member has a health condition that could be exacerbated by the heat. Mr. Ortmann made the motion to authorize Mr. Nichols to proceed and enter into a contract not to exceed \$7,500 for the required work, and Mr. Frederick seconded. The motion passed unanimously, with the support of the proxy.

VII. Information Items

- **Beach Bus/ Route 7**

Mr. Ortmann stated that the Board agreed at the last meeting that it was too late to work on a Beach Bus proposal for this summer, but that we should consider it for next year. Mr. Nichols stated that COAST would be working on this through the Exeter Transportation Committee. As requested, COAST responded to the letter that Mr. Nichols brought to the Board as public comment at the last meeting. Mr. Nichols added that the Beach Bus did accomplish one of its main objectives, which was to attract significant publicity. However, it may have also taken away from COAST's efforts on Phase 2 of service improvements to our core network. Ms. Copeland asked if the Beach Bus would connect to Route 7. Mr. Nichols stated that for the Beach Bus to be successful, it would need to run 7 days a week. Since the Beach Bus ran only on the weekend last year, it did not connect with Route 7, or any other COAST route.

Mr. Nichols stated that he and Mr. LaRose had met with UNH and proposed a plan to combine Wildcat Transit Route 5 and COAST Route 7 to more efficiently serve Durham, Stratham, Newmarket, and Exeter. However, Wildcat Transit was not interested in extending service beyond Newmarket. This may partially be due to UNH's interest in connecting to Exeter via the Downeaster, albeit infrequently. Further service changes to Rte. 7 will be discussed through ongoing dialogues with the communities along the route and the Exeter Transportation Committee.

Mr. Bogle asked whether Mr. Nichols had had any further conversations with Beverly Hollingworth about running a service down Route 1. Mr. Nichols stated that he had not. Mr. Bogle offered to contact Fred Welch and set up a meeting.

- **Newington**

There was no new discussion.

Mr. Wiggin asked that both the Beach Bus/ Route 7 and Newington topics be added to the next meeting's agenda, since the directors most interested in these discussions were not present.

V. Discussion Item

- **Green Commute Week**
Mr. Nichols stated that Jeremy LaRose did a great job spearheading COAST's Green Commute Week effort. Mr. Hayes thanked COAST for the donations to two Strafford Community Action Program (CAP) food pantries. He said that the donations came at a particularly good time and helped fill some empty shelves. Mr. Bogle added that COAST had partnered with Seacoast Area Bicycle Routes (SABR), since Green Commute Week had been based on the old National Bike to Work Day.
- **Biennial Passenger Survey**
Mr. Nichols thanked the Strafford Regional Planning Commission and the Rockingham Regional Planning Commission for their help in surveying riders last week. He distributed preliminary results based on the 58 surveys that have been tabulated so far. Ms. Copeland stated that she had assumed her organization would input the results, as they have in previous years. Mr. Nichols confirmed this was the plan.
- **Wentworth-Douglass Hospital Improvements**
As a result of their latest expansion plans, the City of Dover is requiring the hospital to make street improvements to Central Avenue. Mr. Nichols and Mr. LaRose met with hospital officials and agreed in principal on a new bus shelter for the stop, a curb cut so the bus can pull out of traffic, and an 8-ft. sidewalk to better accommodate wheelchair passengers boarding and alighting. Mr. Nichols stated that he had provided the same comments to the City.
- **Ridership Update**
Mr. Nichols stated that FastTrans has been performing well, and that Route 2, the trolleys, and the community routes have had lower ridership than this time last year. Mr. Ortmann noted the significant difference in fuel prices between this and last year likely is also having a notable effect. Mr. Wiggin asked whether the hospital's new facility on Indian Brook Drive was becoming a more popular destination for riders now that more doctors have moved in. Mr. Nichols said that it was. He also mentioned that the preliminary plans have FastTrans Route 35 connecting the Indian Brook facility with the hospital. He stated that he hopes this cross-town route would be in place by early fall.

VIII. Old Business

- **Facility Lighting Retrofit and Efficiency Upgrades Update (ARRA)**
Lighting: Most of the office spaces will receive the new lighting. Some spaces, such as the hallway next to the board room, do not have enough overhead

clearance to accommodate the new fixtures. Mr. Nichols stated that the new fixtures added less than \$1,000 to the total cost of the upgrade.

- **Bus Shelter Solar Security Lighting Add-On (ARRA)**
Security lighting in shelters: Each shelter from Tolar will cost \$5,000, and the solar lighting will cost an additional \$1,750 per shelter. Mr. Wiggin asked if there were any shelter locations in the service area that posed a safety threat to passengers. Mr. Nichols stated that he did not think so, but if it became clear that a particular location needed lighting to make it safer, the lighting could be easily added later. Mr. Nichols mentioned the possibility of getting solar-lit bus stop posts instead, which would achieve the same result more cost effectively.
- **Municipal Local Match Updates**
Mr. Ortmann asked whether Mr. Nichols was aware of any problem areas regarding this year's budget cycle. Mr. Wiggin stated that the minimal increase is being looked at in Somersworth. Mr. Nichols stated that he had not heard of any problems in Dover, but did note that COAST's funding is now in the city council's budget rather than the city manager's.

IX. New Business

There was no new business to discuss.

X. Adjournment

Mr. Ortmann made the motion to adjourn the meeting, and Mr. Hayes seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 9:52 AM.