



## **Minutes of the Board of Directors Wednesday, June 24, 2009**

**Members Present:** Jim Wiggin – Chairman, Jon Frederick – Vice Chair, Scott Bogle, Carol Gulla, Richard Hayes, Myranda McGowan, Dan Merhalski, Tom Morgan, Kenn Ortmann

**COAST Staff Present:** Rad Nichols, Jenn Knox

**Proxy:** Sylvia vonAulock

### **I. Call to Order**

Mr. Wiggin called the meeting to order at 8:35 AM.

### **II. Public Comment**

Mr. Nichols stated that Mr. Frederick had asked him to present a letter from a rider as public comment. The letter asked for service to the Portsmouth traffic circle. Mr. Nichols distributed the letter and COAST's response. He stated that COAST gets such letters occasionally, but unless they are directed to the Board they are not generally presented as public comment. Mr. Ortmann suggested that Mr. Nichols present such letters in the future as part of the packet, if the content is not confidential. Mr. Nichols said he would be happy to do so.

### **III. Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Frederick made the motion to approve the minutes of the May 27, 2009 meeting, and Mr. Ortmann seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously with three abstentions: Mr. Merhalski, Ms. McGowan, and Ms. Gulla, all who were not present at the May 27 meeting.

### **IV. Financial Report**

Mr. Nichols stated that there has not been much change in COAST's financial position from April to May. Fare collections and advertising revenue have been down. COAST still has not hired a Manager of Coordination Planning and Operations. In addition, the price of fuel has averaged \$1.90 per gallon, which is far below the near-\$4.00 that was budgeted. Mr. Nichols said that we are beginning to see the ARRA funds have an impact on the bottom line, most notably under the line items for materials and supplies and fringes and wages. Mr. Ortmann asked whether the actual budget had changed in light of the ARRA funds. Mr. Nichols replied that it had not. Mr. Bogle asked whether COAST would shift money from preventative maintenance to operations under the bill that would allow transit properties to spend 10% of ARRA funds on operations. Mr. Nichols said that staff would be evaluating this in the near future. Mr. Merhalski asked whether COAST was planning to spend less on marketing, since it is currently over budget. Mr. Nichols stated that this was a result of a recent marketing push for Green Commute Week.

## **V. Action Items**

- **Whistleblower Protection Policy**

Mr. Ortmann made the motion to adopt the draft Whistleblower Protection Policy for the purposes of discussion, and Mr. Frederick seconded. The adoption of such a policy is a new requirement associated with the 990 form that COAST files with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Mr. Nichols added that COAST's corporate attorney had reviewed the policy and found no issues. The draft policy was developed based on an example provided by the New Hampshire Association of Nonprofits. Mr. Nichols said he felt this policy provided good guidance for staff and the Board in case of a dispute. The motion passed unanimously.

- **Document Destruction and Retention Policy**

Mr. Ortmann made the motion to adopt the draft Document Destruction and Retention Policy, and Ms. Gulla seconded. Mr. Nichols stated that COAST's corporate attorney and COAST's accountant, Bob Ruzinsky, had reviewed this policy as well. Mr. Frederick asked whether the retention schedule would be attached to the actual policy, and Mr. Nichols stated that it would. The motion passed unanimously.

- **Coordination Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**

Mr. Ortmann made the motion to authorize Mr. Nichols to execute the MOU with the Alliance for Community Transportation (ACT), and Mr. Bogle seconded. Mr. Ortmann stated that he has been concerned from the beginning that COAST could be left holding the bag if the other organizations do not follow through on their financial commitments. He said that he was comfortable with this MOU because it does not signify a commitment of funding. Mr. Nichols said that it was one component of a packet that would be going to the state. It will formalize ACT as the regional coordination council for Region 10. The motion passed unanimously.

- **Nominating Committee Establishment**

Mr. Ortmann made the motion to establish a Nominating Committee of up to five representatives, and Mr. Frederick seconded the motion. Mr. Wiggin asked that an email be sent to all the directors asking if anyone is interested in being on the committee. He said he does not want to be nominated for an official position, but will serve on the nominating committee. Mr. Frederick volunteered for the nominating committee and nominated Ms. vonAulock as well. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Wiggin asked whether his term of office would expire when his term as an officer expires. Mr. Nichols stated that it was up to each community to appoint a representative to the Board. Mr. Wiggin said he will continue to come to meetings at least through December.

- **Lamprey Health Care Operating Agreement**

Mr. Frederick made the motion to grant Mr. Nichols authority to extend the current operating agreement with Lamprey Health Care through September 30, 2009. Ms. Gulla seconded. Mr. Nichols clarified that the current contract expires at the end of June. This motion would extend the contract for three months to allow COAST to go out to bid. The motion passed unanimously.

At this point Mr. Ortmann had to excuse himself from the meeting.

## **VI. Discussion Items**

- **2009 Survey Results**

Mr. Nichols thanked the Planning Commissions for their assistance collecting surveys, and thanked Marilyn at the Strafford Regional Planning Commission for inputting the results. Mr. Wiggin asked Mr. Nichols to send her a personal letter of thanks from the Board. Mr. Nichols said that the survey showed that the majority of COAST riders are happy with the service and would recommend COAST to their friends. Mr. Nichols presented some preliminary results, and answered questions about them. Mr. Hayes asked whether the riders had identified where they would like to go that COAST does not currently go (Question #3). Mr. Nichols replied that these answers had been recorded but not analyzed yet. He said that staff would continue to dig more deeply into the results, and produce a complete report by the end of the summer.

- **Newington**

Mr. Nichols said that he has nothing new to report about the funding situation with Newington. Mr. Nichols stated that he is planning a formal outreach to the Planning Board.

## **VII. Information Items**

- **ARRA Update**

Mr. Nichols stated that COAST had almost 80% of its ARRA funds committed. According to the Region I FTA Administrator, this put COAST far ahead of any other transit property in New England. Mr. Bogle asked if there was any indication that there would be more money available during the second round due to other agencies not committing the funds on time. Mr. Nichols clarified the difference between obligated and committed. For the funds to be considered obligated, they have to be on a grant. Mr. Nichols stated that the FTA would be getting significant political pressure to get ARRA grants out the door. That being said, it is expected that there will be opportunities for securing additional funds in a second round.

- **Surface Transportation Legislation Reauthorization**

Mr. Nichols noted that the environment for reauthorization is dynamic and rapidly changing, but it appears as if public transit has been strongly represented.

- **Section 5307 and 5317 Grant Applications**

Mr. Nichols stated that COAST has notified the FTA that our FY09 5307 grant is ready for submittal. There is a near term need to submit the grant as the online grant system does shut down for the year in late July.

As a result of no grantee interest in the 5317 New Freedom funds this year, COAST applied at the last minute for an additional \$100,000 in support of ACT and regional coordination. Mr. Bogle commented that while a decision has not been made yet, it is very likely DOT will support the project.

COAST has been asked to be a grantee for TASC's volunteer driver program. COAST is exploring its potential obligations as the grantee. Mr. Bogle commented that he has a call in to Judi Molloy for guidance. The DOT has indicated it could allow COAST to use 5317 funds to offset additional administrative expenses incurred as a result of increased oversight responsibilities.

- **State Coordinating Council for Community Transportation**

Mr. Nichols said that he was asked to be the chairman of the State Coordinating Council for Community Transportation (SCC), but he did not feel it was appropriate. The Board agreed. There was no objection to Mr. Nichols serving as the vice chairman. Mr. Nichols added that he will be the chairman of the Strafford Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC).

- **Dover FastTrans**

Mr. Nichols stated that he and Mr. LaRose would be meeting with Bruce Woodruff and Chris Parker this afternoon regarding the FastTrans routes.

- **Ridership Update**

Mr. Nichols stated that ridership on Route 2, the community routes, and the trolley was notably lower than at this time in comparison to last year. He added that we have to remember this year is being compared against COAST's best year (in terms of ridership) ever.

Mr. Morgan joined the meeting.

Mr. Nichols added that staff is working on an improved web site featuring real time updates via Twitter. Mr. LaRose said that the Twitter updates should appeal to people who are comfortable with technology, but may not feel comfortable using the bus for the first time on their own. He anticipated that COAST's Google Transit feature would be up in mid-July. Twitter and Google Transit are two technologies that cost COAST nothing except staff time. Riders could opt to have COAST tweets sent to their cell phones as text messages so they could see service updates when they are waiting for the bus. COAST would add a user guide to the website that would help explain how to use these services. In addition to service updates, staff could post links to pertinent transit-related articles through Twitter. The Twitter feature will be announced in conjunction with the new web site launch. Both of these efforts support making the bus easier to utilize and increasing the frequency of use.

### **VIII. Old Business**

Mr. Wiggin asked whether COAST had any progress regarding bus shelter advertising. Mr. Nichols said that Rochester and Portsmouth are the only communities that have agreed to allow it, and Portsmouth will allow it only in non-historic areas. So far COAST has not been able to attract an advertiser. Mr. Wiggin asked whether he needed to push Somersworth on this issue. Mr. Nichols replied that COAST is considering advertising itself in Rochester bus shelters, to show other communities what such advertising would look like.

Mr. Morgan stated that the planning board in Newington is trying to overcome the selectboard's position on funding COAST. He notified staff that COAST was on the

agenda at the July 13<sup>th</sup> planning board meeting. Mr. Bogle asked whether the makeup of the board had changed. Mr. Morgan said it had not, but the planning board had always been supportive of COAST and remains frustrated by the selectboard's opposition to financially supporting COAST.

#### **IX. New Business**

Mr. Merhalski said that this would be his last meeting. He has taken a planning position in the Lakes Region. He wished COAST all the best, and hoped that the Town of Farmington would find a replacement for him on the Board without much delay. Mr. Wiggins stated that he was sorry to see Mr. Merhalski leave, and that the Board has been glad to have a Farmington representative.

#### **X. Adjournment**

Mr. Frederick made the motion to adjourn the meeting, and Ms. Gulla seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 9:43 AM.