



Approved July 28, 2021

**Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation  
Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting  
Wednesday, June 23, 2021**

**PRESENT:** Denis Hebert, Margaret Joyce, Colin Lentz, Dave Sandmann, Michael Scala, and Juliet Walker

**ABSENT:** Scott Bogle, Arthur Capello, Adam Causey, Sönke Dornblut, Martin Dumont, Lauren Haley, Valerie Labrie, Dennis Shanahan, Dave Sharples, Maria Stowell, Shelley Winters, and Thomas Wright

**STAFF:** Rad Nichols, Heather Hesse-Stromberg, and Margot Doering

**I. CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS**

The meeting was called to order at 8:40am.

**II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mr. Lentz made a motion to accept the May 2021 minutes and Mr. Scala seconded the motion. Ms. Joyce, Mr. Lentz, Mr. Sandmann, Mr. Scala, and Ms. Walker voted in favor, and Mr. Hebert abstained.

**III. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mr. Nichols indicated there was no public comment nor major employee anniversaries to note. He did point out that in the next 6 months there are 8 employees with anniversaries that will reflect a combined 100 years of experience at COAST.

**IV. FINANCIAL REPORT**

Ms. Doering reported the following items of note from the May financials. Farebox revenue was lower in May due to fewer number of operating days. She noted that State Assistance represents the first draw that we made under the Maine DOT grant. She noted the draw was only for 5 months of funding because the contract started in January. She reported that expenses were also down slightly due to the number of operating days in May. Our insurance increased a little because we replaced some now retired vehicles with new ones, causing our insurance to go up. Mr. Nichols reported that he compared hours of service between April and May and both service days and wages were down 3%.

Ms. Doering noted that Accounts Receivable is high because we put in our request to FTA a little late and it came through at the beginning of June vs. prior to the end of May.

Mr. Scala asked what the prospects are for advertising revenue increasing. Mr. Nichols noted that we have always had a stronger connection with local advertisers than regional/national advertisers, and it is taking longer for local advertisers to bounce back. The local advertising contracts have always helped us weather any tumultuous times but this time most of those core contracts, particularly the annual ones, were cancelled or not renewed because of COVID. Mr. Nichols reported that Jane Cutter from ATA Outdoor indicated that COAST is currently her best performing organization and that ATA is working hard to build new relationships. He noted that we have seen some new contracts coming in. For example, Whole Foods has purchased some

advertising to promote their new store. He also noted that there is always a lag between their invoicing for ad sales and their actually get paid. Ms. Joyce asked for information regarding costs of advertising for the possibility of advertising Chamber events.

## **V. OLD BUSINESS**

### **Facility Planning & Financing**

The final Conceptual Plan and Cost Estimate for 42 Sumner Drive were provided by CMA Engineers in early July along with results from the boring testing. These documents were distributed prior to the meeting and were made available at the meeting. The test results show some issues with the soil which resulted in an increase in the cost estimate.

Mr. Nichols spoke recently with Senator Shaheen's staff and was told that, while COAST was one of their top internally ranked projects, the funding needed to undertake our project (\$14.7M) is apparently far more than the Senate is willing to consider for Congressionally directed funding (\$500K-\$1M). Mr. Nichols will ask the engineering firm if we can split the project into two parts and build the bus storage garage first allowing COAST to be more competitive by going after funding for one part of the project versus both parts together.

### **Staffing**

As recently announced, temporary service suspensions have been put into place (affecting only certain runs on four routes during some afternoons), so that we can hopefully get new staff trained and get back to full service sooner than later. We had to put it into place a day early due to ongoing staffing issues. We will be challenged in July with key people going out on vacation. We only have one week in which we can do training in July. Otherwise, training will have to wait until August.

### **Triennial Review**

Our final exit interview for our 2020 Triennial Review will take place on June 29<sup>th</sup>. At this point, it appears as if we may have achieved another finding free review. Only 10% of transit systems nationwide have finding free reviews.

## **VI. New Business**

### **Action Items**

#### **Action Item #1: Establish Nominating Committee**

In accordance with COAST Bylaws, (Article XII, Section 2), a Nominating Committee of up to five representatives shall be appointed by the Chairperson at least 60 days prior to COAST's Annual Meeting. The Nominating Committee may nominate 1 or more candidate for each office and position open on the Executive Committee.

The current Officers are:

Chairperson	Mr. Dave Sandmann
Vice-Chairperson	Ms. Juliet Walker
Secretary	Mr. Dennis Shanahan
Treasurer	Mr. Arthur Capello

The current Executive Committee consists of:

Mr. Dave Sandmann  
Ms. Juliet Walker

Mr. Arthur Capello  
Mr. Dennis Shanahan  
Mr. Scott Bogle (Past Chairperson)  
VACANT (Chairperson's appointee)  
Rad Nichols (non-voting)

**Action Required:** *That the Chairperson shall appoint a Nominating Committee of up to five (5) representatives to:*

1. *Nominate a slate of Officers to be voted on at the September 2021 Board of Directors' Annual Meeting.*
2. *Develop a slate of appointments to the Executive Committee, if necessary, to be voted on at the September 2021 Board of Directors' Annual Meeting.*

Ms. Walker made a motion that the Chairperson shall appoint up to 5 persons for the Nominating Committee to nominate a slate of Officers and a slate of appointments to the Executive Committee at the September 2021 Board of Directors' Annual Meeting. Mr. Hebert seconded, and all voted in favor.

The Nominating Committee will consist of:

Scott Bogle (Chair)  
Margaret Joyce  
Colin Lentz  
Michael Scala

### **Committee Reports**

**Executive Committee** – did not meet.

**Board Development Committee** – The Board Development Committee put out the results of the Board Self-Assessment. Fourteen of sixteen board members responded. The Board Development Committee will come back to the Board after taking a deeper dive look at the results.

**Legislative Committee** – did not meet.

**Policy Committee** – did not meet.

**Finance Committee** – Met on Monday, June 21<sup>st</sup> to review the May financials.

## **VII. Community Updates/Information Items**

### **Ridership**

Ridership data for May was provided and showed that we are continuing to see stronger ridership but, because May was a shorter month, we did not see a gain over April. It is coming back slowly, but it is coming back.

### **Economic Impact Study**

The Regional Public Transit Economic Impact study is just being wrapped up and should produce some very helpful information. Mr. Bogle conducted some interviews for the study and there were many comments regarding how much businesses depend on transit to keep staff working. One restaurateur noted that he has staff leave mid-shift because they have to catch the bus. Businesses expressed their desire for a longer service day. The goal is to have the results of the Study be presented at the July meeting.

Ms. Walker noted that board meeting attendance was up during COVID and that, though she knows we have to have a physician quorum, it would be great to have people participate through call-ins as well to keep people engaged. She stressed that the commute to meetings is a barrier for people. Mr. Sandmann noted that he wants to find a way to encourage people to participate. Mr. Nichols shared that he would want to find a central location that doesn't require lugging a lot of equipment around. Mr. Sandmann stated that we will look at having meetings rotate to allow more people to attend. Mr. Scala offered his Conference Room for Board Meetings, as did Ms. Joyce.

Ms. Walker reported that the bus route that currently goes to City Hall in Portsmouth needs to have the Portsmouth Library get looped in because the library staff request monthly that they be added to that line. Mr. Nichols shared that servicing both may not be possible so a choice may have to be made by Portsmouth.

Mr. Lentz asked how the Shipyard workers have adapted to their new service and losing the coaches. Mr. Nichols shared that ridership has dropped off considerably and it's unclear what those riders are doing instead. Mr. Nichols noted that the new service provides them with more options than they had before, is much less expensive, and offers a longer service day if they must work overtime (scheduled or unscheduled). He stressed that this has historically been a group that has not responded well to change.

Ms. Hesse-Stromberg reported that 62% of COAST staff are fully vaccinated. She is doing an assessment on staff retention from January 2015 through June of 2021. Ms. Doering will be working on aligning the 5-year plan with construction of our new facility so we can get a sense of local match needs in that scenario.

Mr. Hebert asked if we are good through 2024 financially? Mr. Nichols stated that we are good through 2025, assuming the ARPA funds we think will be coming to the area come through.

### **VIII. Adjournment**

Mr. Lentz made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Mr. Hebert seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 9:32am.