



**Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation  
DRAFT Minutes of the Board of Directors  
Wednesday, May 27, 2015**

**Members Present:** Scott Bogle (Past Chairman), Cynthia Copeland (arr. 8:40), Jen Decker (Secretary/Treasurer), Steve Fournier, Colin Lentz, Kenn Ortmann (Chairman), David Sandmann, Maria Stowell, Sylvia vonAulock (arr. 8:43) and Juliet Walker

**COAST Staff Present:** Rad Nichols, Jeff Donald, Heather Hesse-Stromberg, Deidra Howard and Anne Rugg

**I. Call to Order**

The Board Meeting was called to order at 8:35 am.

**II. Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Sandmann made a motion to accept the minutes. Ms. Walker seconded. All voted in favor to approve the minutes.

**III. Public Comment**

Ms. Rugg gave an overview of commuteSMARTseacoast's activities and their recent Social Marketing award. The award was for the very successful Pease B2B Commuter Challenge held last fall. There is another Seacoast B2B (Business to Business) Commuter Challenge coming June 8-19<sup>th</sup> for greater seacoast area companies and organizations. The Challenge is to see which entities can log the most sustainable trips, have the most team spirit and most social media buzz. Ms. Rugg thanked the City of Portsmouth, Rockingham Planning Commission, Strafford Regional Planning Commission and COAST for signing up to participate.

Ms. Hesse-Stromberg introduced Deidra Howard, COAST's new Bookkeeper/Office Manager. Ms. Howard comes to COAST having worked for 8 years as the Bookkeeper at The York Inn and, more recently, at The Hearing Aide Shop. She brings a lot of experience and expertise in Peachtree (COAST's accounting software). Ms. Howard will be trained by Mr. Ruzinsky so she can, over time, take over all of his responsibilities.

Mr. Nichols recognized Ms. vonAulock for her 16 years of service on the COAST Board of Directors. Ms. vonAulock is leaving her position with the Town of Exeter to become the Deputy Director at Southern New Hampshire Planning. Mr. Nichols thanked her for her active engagement and involvement on many committees, most especially the Nominating Committee. Ms. Walker thanked Ms. vonAulock for her creative ideas and for leading by example. Ms. Ortmann noted that Ms. vonAulock was an active and proactive member of the Board and showed great sensitivity to the environment and needs of COAST's consumers.

Mr. Nichols also noted that he had received a letter of resignation from Karen Anderson from Greenland. Ms. Anderson had been on the Board for 7 years but, given Greenland's non-contribution, was unable to continue as a representative. Ms. Walker noted that Ms. Anderson participated for a long time and made a good effort considering her town was not always supportive of COAST.

Mr. Ortmann inquired about a replacement on the Board for Ms. vonAulock. Mr. Nichols stated that he had been in touch with Town Manager Dean to ensure a timely replacement is nominated.

#### **IV. Financial Report**

##### **March 2015 Income Statement and Balance Sheet**

Mr. Nichols reported that revenue gaps are closing slowly by 2%-4% every month. He noted that the winter weather significantly impacted ridership and continued well into spring. Mr. Nichols also noted that advertising revenue continues to be down, but reported that he had a very successful meeting with ATA (Alternate Transit Advertising). ATA noted that shelter advertising is the current space in demand. Mr. Nichols indicated that he is pursuing the possibility of shelter advertising in both Somersworth and Dover.

Mr. Nichols reported that expenses are lower than anticipated in the Coordination Program but that, come July, there will be an increase in activities.

Mr. Nichols noted that, in coming months, he hopes to have Ms. Howard present the Financial Report at Board Meetings.

#### **V. Old Business**

##### **Staffing Updates**

Mr. Nichols informed the Board that COAST is looking for a Demand-Response Supervisor for the Demand-Response and ADA Paratransit Program. The search for candidates will begin internally but if the position can't be filled internally, we will advertise the position. If external candidates are sought, it is hoped that the position will be filled by mid-August.

Mr. Nichols reported that we will be looking for a part-time Administrative Assistant for pass sales and other office duties. The position will be for 4.5 hours a day, 5 days a week. The position will likely be filled temporarily over the summer while the scope of work is determined.

##### **Somersworth Municipal Funding**

Mr. Nichols informed the Board that he attended a City Council Meeting on April 4. At that meeting a motion was put forward and passed, by a 4-3 vote, to fully fund COAST through the city's Transportation Improvement Fund. Using this funding source, COAST will no longer be funded through the general fund portion of the city budget. Mr. Nichols noted that the TIP does not replenish fast enough to be an adequate source of funding for COAST in the next budget cycle. Mr. Nichols met subsequently with Mr. Pepin and Mr. Marty Dumont to discuss how to approach moving forward in Somersworth.

Mr. Ortmann requested that we keep the Somersworth funding issues on the Agenda to explore ways we can be proactive with town representatives to be prepared for the next budget rounds.

Ms. Walker noted that some communities have a misperception that other communities (e.g., Portsmouth) have a magical source of money from which to draw. She assured that there is no such source and all communities are in the same boat.

Ms. Walker asked what the anticipated shortfall in Somersworth would have been. Mr. Nichols said it would be just under \$25,000. He noted that this is the first time the City has used the Transportation Improvement Fund for any purpose and that some council members are adamantly against using the money this way. Those who oppose using the funds feel the money should be used for repairing roads and bridges.

Mr. Bogle noted that years ago there was an attempt to increase the optional vehicle registration fee at the municipal level, but people felt it was not yet the time for an increase. Ms. Copeland noted there is no statewide agreement about how much this fee should be.

Mr. Bogle suggested we work with the Municipal Association to determine who is participating and if there's support to increase the amount.

Mr. Ortmann asked for a volunteer or two to spearhead the connection with the Municipal Association. Mr. Fournier volunteered to reach out to Mr. Cordell and Mr. Bogle and Ms. Copeland offered to assist. All agreed it is not too early to start this discussion.

### **Coast Administrative Offices**

Mr. Nichols reported that nearly all Administrative staff have relocated to 6 Sumner Drive. Mr. Nichols, Ms. Howard, Ms. Hesse-Stromberg, Ms. Rugg, Mr. Donald and the Call Center are located at 6 Sumner Drive. Mr. Nichols stated there will be an Open House once staff are more settled.

## **VI. New Business**

### **ACTION ITEMS**

#### **Route 7 Service Modifications**

Meetings have been held between COAST, Exeter and Newmarket to discuss what can be done to operate a service that continues to connect the two communities and allows for timely transfers to UNH's Wildcat service (Route 5) in Newmarket, which will allow for travel further into the COAST system.

The following were areas of significant consideration:

- Limiting geographic service coverage to Exeter/Stratham/Newmarket, and to streamline the route in Exeter;
- Making timely connections with Wildcat's Route 5 in Newmarket;
- Operating on an approximate 1 hour frequency;
- Operating three weekdays and Saturday each week;
- Maintaining ADA Paratransit service access in Exeter and Newmarket.

On May 18 and 19, COAST staff made presentations to both the Exeter Selectboard and Economic Development Commission and both were in strong support of the solution that has been crafted.

A draft schedule was distributed with the understanding that final timing and bus stops selections need to be completed.

There was discussion about whether COAST should continue to call it Route 7 or to give the route another number. It was agreed that the reconfigured route should remain known as Route 7 to avoid confusion and to allow for those familiar with our system to understand the resolution of the issues that led to the modification.

Mr. Fournier noted that he wishes it didn't stop in Stratham because they don't support COAST but that he understands the Market Basket is one location where his residents want to go.

Ms. Decker noted this is a great opportunity to work with Wildcat to improvement the relationship and make for a more cohesive system.

There was discussion about seeking contributions from Stratham businesses, particularly Market Basket. Mr. Nichols noted that he had approached the Manager at Market Basket and was told that funding requests are not handled locally. Mr. Nichols indicated that COAST will put together information to present to Market Basket after the relaunch.

Ms. Copeland asked what size bus will be used and where it will be stored. Mr. Nichols indicated that a 30' bus will be used and that he is in discussions to locate the bus in Newmarket to cut down on the cost of deadhead miles.

Discussion about a Manchester Hannaford, which matched the cost of runs, led to exploration of whether we could pitch something similar to grocery stores in Stratham. Mr. Ortmann suggested we could give the stores a certain number of tickets for cash contributions.

Ms. Walker noted that the focus should be not only on COAST passengers that are patrons, but the business's employees that use COAST as well.

Mr. Donald clarified that ADA services will only run on the days of service.

**Action Required:** *That the Board of Directors approve the proposed service modifications for implementation on June 29, 2015.*

Mr. Ortmann made the motion above and added that it was with the understanding that some fine-tuning on days, times and possible stops may be completed. Mr. Sandmann seconded and all voted in favor.

Mr. Fournier thanked Mr. Nichols and COAST staff for all of their efforts in developing this resolution.

### **Board Member Agreement**

The Board Development Committee recommended the approval of the new Board Member Agreement that clearly spells out board member duties, code and conduct and Board and staff responsibilities.

**Action Required:** *That the Board of Directors adopt the Board Member Agreement as proposed by the Board Development Committee.*

Mr. Sandmann made the above motion. Ms. Copeland asked that page 2, the 7<sup>th</sup> bullet under Board Member Agreements, be changed to include programmatic issues so it reads:

- Refrain from intruding on administrative and programmatic issues that are the responsibility of management.

Mr. Sandmann made the revised motion, which was seconded by Ms. Walker. All voted in favor and Ms. Copeland, Ms. Decker, Mr. Ortmann, Mr. Sandmann, Ms. Stowell and Ms. Walker all signed and submitted their Board Member Agreements.

### **Executive Director Annual Review**

Mr. Ortmann reported that the review committee (Mr. Ortmann, Mr. Bogle, Ms. Decker and Ms. Walker) met and reviewed Mr. Nichols' job duties and evaluated his performance using the following scale:

- Outstanding
- Commendable
- Fully Competent
- Needs Improvement

Mr. Ortmann noted that "fully competent" is the base expectation and is like an "A" grade; commendable would be considered an "A+" and Outstanding an "A++). Mr. Ortmann noted that all of Mr. Nichols ratings were Fully Competent and above. He indicated that an area for further discussion and development is strategic goal setting and clarification of responsibility of Board vs. staff.

Mr. Ortmann reported that last year, the review committee pledged to look at rate differential to get back on track with regard to Mr. Nichols compensation. He noted that last year had been the first time Mr. Nichols' pay had been adjusted since he became Executive Director in 2007. The current review period covers September 29, 2013 through September 29, 2014. The committee resolved to give Mr. Nichols an adjustment in pay of 8.1% retroactive to September 29, 2014 with annual reviews to occur in a timely manner and with more modest increases to occur on a regular basis going forward. The 8.1% increase is based on performance and to catch up with what similarly positioned non-profit Executive Directors are compensated in New Hampshire and Northern New England.

Ms. vonAulock asked how the committee came up with 8.1%? Mr. Ortmann indicated it was to fill the gap between the recommendation and what the Board Committee recommended last year. Mr. Bogle noted that Mr. Nichols and the Executive Committee had done benchmarking available through the NH Association of Non-Profits last year and the percentage was based on that. Ms. vonAulock noted that the amount is already outdated. She noted that if it is a correction to get us to what was recommended in 2014, then the increase in 2016 will require further correction and asked why we wouldn't just make the full correction now to be completely caught up. Mr. Ortmann noted that the personnel committee will be reconvening this summer to complete Mr. Nichols' review for this past year.

Mr. Ortmann made a motion to increase Mr. Nichols' salary by 8.1% retroactive to September 29, 2014 as step two in a three step process to bring Mr. Nichols' salary in line with industry standards. Mr. Sandmann seconded the motion.

Mr. Fournier indicated he was concerned with the misperception an 8% raise might leave and suggested we use the actual dollar amount. He suggested changing the motion to include a dollar amount. Ms. vonAulock stressed that the salary needs to be fair and equitable and that we need to ensure we don't fall behind again.

Mr. Bogle reminded the Board that this is incremental and that the 8.1% is intended to be the second of three steps.

Mr. Ortmann withdrew the motion and made the following motion: to increase Mr. Nichols' salary to \$95,000 retroactive to September 29, 2014, as step two in a three step process, to bring Mr. Nichols' salary in line with current and comparable Executive Director salaries. Mr. Sandmann seconded the motion and all voted in favor.

Mr. Nichols thanked the Board for their support and the opportunity to have a review of his performance.

## **VII. INFORMATION ITEMS**

Mr. Nichols informed the Board that on May 19<sup>th</sup> the House of Representatives passed H.R. 2353, a short-term authorization of MAP-21. This will extend the MAP-21 authorization through July 31, 2015.

Ridership through April is down 2.0% from the same period in FY14.

## **VIII. Community Updates**

Ms. Copeland reported that SRPC had its first statewide convening with Tom Burack from NHDES as the speaker. She noted that the SRPC Annual Meeting would focus on workforce development.

## **IX. Adjournment**

Mr. Sandmann made a motion to adjourn at 10:10, second by Ms. Walker. All voted in favor