

November 5, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Martha's Vineyard Transit Authority Advisory Board

Ms. Gompert stated in accordance with Governor Baker's emergency modification of the Open Meeting Law this meeting will be held virtually. Remote participation only via Zoom Communications.

Present: Alice Butler, Oak Bluffs; Mark Snider, Edgartown; Elaine Miller, Tisbury; Bob Wasserman, West Tisbury; June Manning, Aquinnah; Lenny Jason, Chilmark; Angela Gompert, VTA; Lauren Thomas, VTA; Bruce Norling, Auditor.

9:33 am -Ms. Butler called the meeting to order.

Public Comments: None, no members of the public present.

Old/New Business

FY 21 Audit Presentation: Ms. Gompert introduced Bruce Norling, CPA, PC, who had conducted the VTA's independent audit for FY 2021. Ms. Gompert reminded the Board that VTA management staff would not be present during the presentation; Ms. Gompert and Ms. Thomas left the meeting.

Mr. Norling addressed the Board, saying the audit went very well and FY 21 was a stable year. Mr. Norling stated the cooperation he gets from Ms. Gompert, Ms. Thomas and their team is extraordinary. Mr. Norling explained the various tests and confirmations that are performed and stated he was pleased with the outcome.

Mr. Snider posed two comments to Mr. Norling: He feels the revenue and expense comparisons from 2021 to 2020 are confusing, as 2020 was inconsequential as a measure. Mr. Snider also feels the audit report masks the condition of the VTA because of the CARES funding received. Mr. Norling responded: the comparison of 2021 to 2020 is a requirement of the accountant standards for government entities. In regard to the CARES funding, Mr. Norling stated grants are necessary for the VTA to operate and that it is not his role to predict what sustainability of grants will be in the long term. Mr. Wasserman commented that Mr. Snider's point was an important one, and it is something that the Board should spend some time on with Ms. Gompert. Ms. Miller commented that the only way to adjust for the possible shortcoming in funding will be to cut service or increase the cost of service, which is something that will have to be talked about.

Ms. Miller inquired about the schedule for Federal Award contributions of \$2M and if that was to assets. Mr. Norling confirmed that those contributions outlined on the scheduled were made to capital assets.

With no other question on the audit, Mr. Norling exited the meeting at 9:55 am. Ms. Gompert and Ms. Thomas then returned to the meeting.

Ms. Butler asked the Board for a motion to accept the FY21 audit. Ms. Miller made a motion to accept the audit of June 30, 2021. Ms. Manning 2nd. [MSC]

Housing Discussion: Ms. Gompert reported that last season the VTA had five employee rental properties, which housed 30, but were still short; the VTA will need housing for approximately 45 for summer 2022. Ms. Gompert explained that TCI will begin bringing drivers in from off-island as soon as January. Ms. Gompert stated that she is looking at a more long term potential lease to own situation with Island Housing Trust (IHT) for year round and seasonal affordable

housing. IHT is currently working with a home owner on Plantingfield Way in Edgartown who would like their property to go to affordable housing. Ms. Gompert stated this property located on Plantingfield Way is assessed at \$2.4M and that IHT could purchase for \$1.25M and the VTA would enter into a long term tenancy agreement, with the potential to purchase the property in the future. Ms. Gompert stated that the VTA needs to look to house more than just employees, but also employees and their families, in order to keep the workforce in place. Ms. Gompert stated she has also been looking for housing off-island in New Bedford for daytime commuting workers. Ms. Gompert asked the Board for guidance and open discussion on this matter.

Ms. Manning inquired how many employees could be housed on Church Street. Ms. Gompert replied that no more than 7 seasonally, with the complexity that there can't be more than 4 un-related people living together on a year round basis. Ms. Miller asked how many the VTA can house presently – Ms. Gompert replied there is currently housing available for 16, which includes two year round and one seasonal rental.

Ms. Gompert shared that the preference from both MassDOT and FTA is, in this current political climate that the VTA get into a long term lease situation and deal with a purchase in the future. Ms. Gompert stated that in the VTA's five year capital plan there are funds budgeted for the purchase of a house in FY23. Ms. Gompert continued that she has been discussing these housing complexities with MassDOT.

Ms. Miller stated that she is familiar with IHT, and that it would be a good partnership for the VTA. Ms. Miller asked for clarification on the funding. Ms. Gompert explained that the first round of the federal relief funds (CARES) had no stipulations put on it, meaning it could be used for capital assets/improvements or operations. In total, the VTA received over \$8M in federal relief funds from the three rounds – to date only \$1.75M has been used – these funds have been programmed out to FY26. Discussion followed concerning funding as it relates to the IHT opportunity and the process of obtaining the property.

Ms. Gompert stated that she felt it would be beneficial if a Board Member could work with her on this IHT opportunity, as it is a priority for the VTA. Ms. Miller said she is willing to get engaged in this project.

Looking ahead, Ms. Gompert advised that there will need to be an Audit & Finance Subcommittee meeting to accept the FY23 budget; West Tisbury construction will most likely begin in the fall/winter of 2022.

Mr. Snider asked for an update on Edgartown project. Mr. Gompert replied that the three trees on Church St. would be coming down in the next few days, and the construction fence is there and work will begin shortly on the right side of the property; items such as the lamp posts, pergola, inductive cabinets, and replacement trees have been ordered. Ms. Gompert stated she would also like to see some of the VTA infrastructure, like the battery storage units, be shared with the towns, so it is beneficial to everyone, as battery electric technology becomes more common on the Island. Discussion followed.

Ms. Butler asked for a motion to adjourn.

Ms. Manning made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Miller 2nd. **[MSC]**

Ms. Butler declared the meeting closed at 10:41 AM.

*Indicates joined late or left early

Date

Signed