

March 10, 2022 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: Mark Snider, Edgartown; Elaine Miller, Tisbury; Bob Wasserman, West Tisbury; Angela Gompert, VTA; Lauren Thomas, VTA

Ms. Gompert asked for a Board Member to serve as Chair for this meeting. It was decided that Elaine Miller would serve in this capacity.

9:06 am -Ms. Miller called the meeting to order.

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

Old/New Business

Minutes 10/15/21: Regarding the minutes, Ms. Miller inquired if a discussion had taken place with the Superintendent of Schools about sharing of school bus drivers. Ms. Gompert answered no, as the Superintendent hadn't met with the transportation committee yet to discuss the idea. Ms. Gompert had one correction for the minutes – which was on page three: changing “fall of 2002” to “fall of 2022.” Ms. Miller asked the Board for a motion to accept the minutes of October 15, 2021, as corrected. Mr. Wasserman made a motion to accept the minutes of the October 15, 2021 meeting, as corrected. Mr. Snider 2nd. [MSC]

FY 23 Budget: Ms. Miller spoke on behalf of the Audit & Finance Subcommittee to recommend the full Advisory Board accept the FY 23 budget as presented. Mr. Snider asked how things were going – Ms. Gompert replied that ridership was doing better and in December 2021, VTA surpassed ridership for the first time since the pandemic, when compared to December 2018 (FY 19). January and February ridership was not yet available.

Ms. Gompert shared the FY 23 Budget on screen and commented that year to date VTA had exceeded the revenue expectations in total for FY 22; expenses were on target. Ms. Gompert stated that she feels VTA is recovering slowly, and the higher than expected revenue allows the CARES and other federal funding to be extended into future use. Ms. Gompert stated the largest issue is workforce – which currently VTA didn't have enough operators for winter service, and had brought additional operators up in January from Puerto Rico to cover the gaps.

Mr. Snider inquired how the electronic ticketing works when you board the bus and if it increases efficiency. Ms. Gompert described the process to use a digital ticket, and how it makes boarding more efficient. Ms. Gompert mentioned there are still a fair amount of passengers who prefer the physical pass over the digital.

Ms. Miller asked how VTA's performance compared to other transit agencies across the State. Ms. Gompert responded that MassDOT puts out a report each fiscal year, which will be available in December. Ms. Gompert stated she believes other transit agencies are at about 60-70% ridership recovery and Worcester and Merrimack Valley had both gone fare free for the next two years to gain ridership back quicker. Ms. Miller asked if that is something the VTA should look at doing – Ms. Gompert responded that farebox revenue is only 7 -10% of their operating budget, whereas VTA's farebox revenue is about 30%. Ms. Thomas reported that the VTA did “Save Money Mondays” for the month of February and received good feedback from it. Ms. Miller asked if that would be something the VTA would continue – Ms. Gompert

replied that for the second year, free fare was offered to students and caregivers for February and April school vacations, as well as on Earth Day to those going to clean any conservation properties/beaches. Ms. Gompert said it is possible the VTA could explore going fare free for certain months, but would have to monitor how it would affect revenue.

Mr. Snider inquired how the increase in fuel prices will affect VTA – Ms. Gompert replied that VTA had pre-purchased diesel futures in February of 2021 at the rate of \$2.33/gallon which will get VTA through the rest of the fiscal year, and that there are very few unleaded vehicles in the fleet. Additionally, the increase will not affect the electric bus fleet at all, due to the 20 year purchase power agreement for electricity, and currently half the fleet is electric.

Mr. Wasserman inquired what the Other Income line in the budget consists of. Ms. Gompert replied that VTA records its MVRHS maintenance contract revenue into Other Income and at the end of the fiscal year it is applied against the expenses of the contract – parts are applied monthly to expenses.

Mr. Snider asked why “Other Salaries & Wages” expense was increased from \$850K to \$1.2M for the FY23 budget- Ms. Gompert explained that the VTA has been short several positions, and the FY23 budget accounts for a new position, “Director of Transit Operations,” a fulltime Facilities Manager position, and additional maintenance department staff. Mr. Wasserman inquired how the FY23 Other Salaries & Wages expense compares to FY19. Ms. Gompert responded that FY23 was higher, as the Facilities Manager position was not filled in FY19, the Director of Transit Operations is new for FY23, and being four years ago all wages were lower. Ms. Miller mentioned that wages need to be increased to keep employees, and that is accounted for in the FY23 budget. Ms. Gompert agreed that in order to attract candidates in the current job market, starting pay will need to be 20-25% more than VTA has ever offered before, and this is also accounted for in the Other Salaries & Wages expense for FY23. Ms. Gompert reminded the Board that Operators, Operations Supervisors, Assistant General Manager and General Manager are accounted for in the Purchased Transportation expense line. Mr. Snider offered a recommendation that any budget line item up 25% over the previous year should have a written explanation to accompany it. It was agreed that Ms. Gompert would do that going forward.

Ms. Miller asked for a motion to approve the operating budget in the amount of \$7,449,000. Mr. Wasserman made a motion to approve the VTA’s FY23 operating budget. Mr. Snider 2nd. **[MSC]**

Personnel Policy Update:

Ms. Gompert presented updates to the Personnel Policies, including the addition of two positions: Director of Transit Operations (exempt) and Postal Clerk for the Church St. Postal Station (hourly). Ms. Miller asked Ms. Gompert to detail these positions to the Board: the Director of Transit Operations position was developed based on the operational needs of the VTA after the senior operating staff left employment over the last several years. The position was advertised for many months and a candidate has been hired, with a tentative start date of August 1, 2022. This position will be the primary oversight and support for the operations department. This position will also serve a key role in the VTA Administration succession plan, and will be a strong in-house candidate for taking on the role of Administrator upon Ms. Gompert’s retirement.

Ms. Gompert stated the final update to the Personnel Policies is the addition of Juneteenth (June 19th) to the list of holidays recognized, while removing the day after Thanksgiving and one floating holiday, which will be replaced with one Employee Appreciation Day, thus keeping the number of holidays at thirteen.

Ms. Miller asked for a motion to accept the updates the Personnel Policies. Mr. Wasserman made a motion to approve the VTA's FY23 operating budget. Mr. Snider 2nd. **[MSC]**

Mr. Snider asked for a Church Street update – Ms. Gompert stated that the waterline has been moved, conduit is in the ground, and Eversource will be on-site for the next two weeks running wires, the charging pads have been set in the street and are complete, the footings have been poured for the storage boxes and pergola.

Ms. Miller requested the rest of the Board be updated on the status of the Management RFP. Ms. Thomas stated there were two submissions received, one from Transit Connection, Inc. and the other from DPV Transportation. DPV Transportation had no public transit experience and their proposed management fee was approximately \$500,000 more per contract year than Transit Connection, Inc. After a full review, the RFP Evaluation Committee recommended the VTA enter into contract negotiations with Transit Connection, Inc for management service.

Ms. Miller asked for a motion to adjourn.

Mr. Snider made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Wasserman 2nd. **[MSC]**

Ms. Miller declared the meeting closed at 10:30 AM.

*Indicates joined late or left early

Date

Signed