



**Board of Directors Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday, April 12, 2023**  
**1:30 p.m.**  
**269 Melrose Street, Providence**  
**Transportation Board Room**

**Members Present:** Normand Benoit, Board Chair; Robert Kells, Board Vice Chair; Michelle Wilcox, Board Treasurer; Patrick Crowley, Board Secretary; James Leach; Heather Schey; Peter Alviti; and Marcy Reyes

**Absent Members:** None.

**Also Present:** Scott Avedisian, CEO; Chris Fragomeni, Esq., Board Counsel; Courtney Marciano, Senior Executive Officer; Chris Durand, Chief Financial Officer; Jamie Pereira, Chief of Security; Steven Colantuono, Chief Legal Counsel; Kathy Nadeau, Chief Human Resources Officer; members of RIPTA's staff; and members of the public.

**Call to Order:** Mr. Benoit called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m., indicating that quorum was present.

**Agenda Item 1:** **To Consider for Approval the Draft Regular Meeting Minutes of the March 15, 2023 Meeting.**

Mr. Kells makes a motion to approve the minutes of the March 15, 2023 meeting. Mr. Crowley seconds, and the motion passes with favorable votes by Ms. Wilcox; Mr. Leach; Ms. Schey; Ms. Reyes; Mr. Alviti; and Mr. Benoit.

**Agenda Item 2:** **Public Comment**

**1.) Ginny Moffitt:**

- a. Reminds the Board and members of the public that Mr. Avedisian made sure that all Paratransit drivers had work during Covid. If he hadn't helped to make sure that drivers delivered meals for Meals on Wheels or helped get Honeywell workers to their jobs, a lot of people would have lost their jobs.
- b. Tells the Board a story that both Mr. Avedisian and Ms. Nadeau both spent a day on the bus with her and truly listened to her concerns and requests for drivers. Within a few days Ms. Moffitt said many of her requests were addressed.
- c. Credits Mr. Avedisian and management with keeping RIPTA moving forward.

**2.) Nick DeCristofaro:**

- a. Mr. DeCristofaro states that the Union is having difficulty with restructuring the schedules for fixed-route, although he believes they are on the right path to fixing some of the problems. Mr. DeCristofaro states that he feels many of the Union

concerns aren't fully addressed. He expresses his concern that if only two complaints at a time are addressed, nothing positive will ever happen or nothing will ever get resolved.

- b. Mr. DeCristofaro is concerned that the Union and management used to have monthly service review meetings and now those meetings happen more infrequently.
- c. Mr. DeCristofaro raises concerns over access to restrooms for drivers. He feels that the Union and management need to work together to address the restroom issue for drivers.
- d. Mr. DeCristofaro raises concerns that Board members' emails with the @ripta.com exchange do not work. He tried emailing members of the Board and those emails bounced back and he's not sure why.
- e. Mr. DeCristofaro continues to address concerns over restroom availability. He feels that all runs should have a restroom available to them at the end of each line.
- f. Mr. DeCristofaro restates that the @ripta.com emails should be functioning so that members of the public can reach out to the Board directly with comments or concerns.
- g. Mr. Alviti asks Mr. DeCristofaro about claims that service review meetings are no longer held monthly. Mr. DeCristofaro states that the meetings really should be held monthly so both the Union and management can bring concerns to the table. Mr. DeCristofaro said that the Planning Department used to schedule service review meetings. Mr. Alviti asks that even after the school bus crisis in Fall 2022 if the service review meetings have increased or if they have stayed the same. Mr. DeCristofaro replies that the frequency of the meetings has not increased. Mr. DeCristofaro states that only two meetings have happened since the fall.
- h. The discussion turns back to restroom availability and additional questions were raised about access. Mr. DeCristofaro reiterates how difficult it is for a driver, especially in the middle of their run, to stop and adequately secure a bus. Additionally, he says that the most ideal places for restroom stops are at the end of the run so the bus is empty, and the bus is more easily secured.
- i. Mr. DeCristofaro details where drivers typically stop for restroom facilities- saying that retail stores, supermarkets, etc. are typically where they are most easily able to use the bathroom. However, if there are lines it creates problems with making sure service runs on time. Mr. DeCristofaro states that when Mr. Ray Studley was CEO there was a discussion about free-standing, self-sanitizing restrooms that would cost in the area of \$12,000 a year, but nothing ever came of it. He states that people have been fired over the restroom issues and where they chose to relieve themselves.
- j. Mr. Alviti asks that board emails get up and running; that would be helpful. Ms. Reyes requests that the Union begin to attend Board meetings and come prepared to discuss how things are going operationally. She also asks that all issues raised by Mr. DeCristofaro are brought with suggested resolutions to the next Board Meeting.

### **3.) Patricia Raub:**

- a. Reiterates support for the Board resolution for fully funding RIPTA going forward and to address the financial cliff being met. She encourages the Legislature and the Governor to implement the Transit Master Plan (TMP).
- b. April is Earth Month and thinks RIPTA should reiterate Agency efforts to combat climate change and be an active partner for the Act on Climate.

- c. Very pleased with Mr. Avedisian's promise to continue to provide services and facilities in Kennedy Plaza until the final location on Dorrance Street is up and running.
- d. Very happy with the efforts of Mr. Avedisian and the City of Providence to help with security and safety in Kennedy Plaza. Although having extra police presence will help deter some of the security issues, Transit Riders would like additional training for police in de-escalation techniques and when to make referrals to social services providers. They also need to remember to know and respect people's civil rights. Transit Riders would like to see better lighting in Kennedy Plaza and that the terminal be open whenever buses are operating. They would also like to see all stops in Kennedy Plaza closer to the terminal during the later hours when fewer buses are operating.
- e. Transit Riders met with Mr. Pereira the week before the meeting and presented a list of concerns and issues to him. Ms. Raub was pleased with the progress already made by Mr. Pereira and his team. Digital arrival boards have been resolved. Ms. Raub still has concerns over missing panels on shelters. The paper list for bus 78 has been ripped off and it's now difficult to determine where the bus goes.
- f. Ms. Raub asks that we continue to work on keeping Kennedy Plaza clean of trash and debris.

**4.) Christopher Plouffe:**

- a. Mr. Plouffe has used and fully supports the free bus pass program. Mr. Plouffe expresses that he is a Type 1 diabetic and that because of the free bus pass program he's been able to get to his doctor's appointments that he otherwise may not have been able to.

**5.) Kevin Simon:**

- a. Mr. Simon reminds the Board that he was part of the group that helped rally for the free fare pilot. He thanks both the Board and the Administration for helping get this pilot off the ground. Mr. Simon expresses that there are many success stories since the program's implementation.
- b. Mr. Simon asks that the program continue and that if anyone has any questions about the necessity of the program to come to one of Mathewson Street's Sunday morning breakfasts to see firsthand the impact free fare has.

**6.) David Morales:**

- a. Representative Morales expresses that he often advocates to his colleagues who sit on the finance committees that RIPTA needs to be fully funded. He also is working with them to define steps to fully fund the Transit Master Plan.
- b. He expresses to Board members that the resolution should pass unanimously to send a message to the General Assembly about the necessity to fully fund the organization.
- c. His goal is to make transit as accessible as possible and thanks RIPTA for determining steps to get the TMP funded and open accessibility to all Rhode Islanders.

**7.) John Flaherty:**

- a. Mr. Flaherty expresses his appreciation to the Board for being proactive in trying to fully fund RIPTA. He feels that by taking a proactive approach, the Board is helping save riders a lot of angst as the fiscal cliff approaches. He does not want to see the deep service cuts should the Agency not secure financing.
- b. Mr. Flaherty believes the resolution to fully fund RIPTA sends a clear message to decision makers.

**8.) Paul Lebon:**

- a. Mr. Lebon is an RI native who has worked in transit for more than 30 years. He was a community advisor on getting three separate transit agencies up and running.
- b. Although he expresses his knowledge of transit, he also expresses suggestions as a rider, most specifically at TF Green Airport. He expresses the need for additional busing to and from the airport.

**9.) Liza Burkin:**

- a. Ms. Burkin is part of the Providence Streets Coalition and thanks the RIPTA Board and RIPTA administration for pushing for more funding.

**Agenda Item 4:           Comments from the Chairman of the Board**

Mr. Benoit expresses that he, along with Mr. Avedisian, have discussed and agreed to put a freeze on all non-essential hiring for the time being.

Mr. Alviti asks if there is a projected cost-savings associated with implementing a freeze.

Ms. Nadeau said that, while she doesn't have the numbers in front of her, she could certainly provide a cost-savings estimate.

Mr. Alviti and Mr. Crowley express that without understanding the financial impacts of implementing a freeze, they do not believe it would be beneficial to the Agency, especially considering the driver shortage. Ms. Nadeau expresses that this freeze would not impact drivers, mechanics, maintenance crews, etc.

Ms. Reyes would also like to have a more clearly defined definition of what non-essential positions Ms. Nadeau and Mr. Avedisian are alluding to.

Mr. Crowley and Mr. Alviti express that they would still like to see the cost-savings analysis before making any further decisions.

Agenda item deferred for further discussion.

**Agenda Item 5:           Election of Officers**

Mr. Crowley makes a motion to defer this agenda item to the next meeting. Mr. Alviti seconds; and Mr. Leach votes in favor.

Ms. Wilcox; Mr. Kells; Ms. Reyes; Ms. Schey; and Mr. Benoit oppose.

Mr. Crowley makes a motion to nominate Mr. Leach as Board Chairman. Mr. Alviti seconds and Mr. Leach votes in favor of the motion.

Ms. Schey; Mr. Kells; Ms. Reyes; Ms. Wilcox; and Mr. Benoit oppose.

The motion does not pass.

Ms. Wilcox makes a motion to nominate Mr. Benoit as Board Chairman. Ms. Schey seconds, and Mr. Kells; Ms. Reyes; and Mr. Benoit vote in favor of the motion.

Mr. Alviti; Mr. Leach; and Mr. Crowley oppose.

The motion passes with favorable votes.

Ms. Reyes makes a motion to elect Mr. Kells as Vice Chairman. Ms. Wilcox seconds and the motion passes with favorable votes by Mr. Crowley; Mr. Alviti; Mr. Leach; Mr. Benoit; Ms. Schey; and Mr. Kells.

Mr. Benoit asks board members if they have any other opinions or recommendations for changing other board roles. No members have any suggestions. Ms. Wilcox remains as Board Treasurer; Mr. Crowley remains as Board Secretary.

**Agenda Item 6:**            **Free Fare Pilot Program**

Nate Hannon, Customer Service Operations Administrator for RIPTA, presents the request.

Mr. Crowley makes a motion to amend the free fare bus pass program from 775 passes to 1,000 passes and to study the program through September 30, 2023. Mr. Alviti seconds the motion. Mr. Leach votes in favor of the motion. Mr. Benoit; Ms. Wilcox; Mr. Kells; Ms. Schey and Ms. Reyes oppose the motion. The motion does not pass.

Ms. Wilcox makes a motion to extend the current program through September 30, 2023, for current participants. Ms. Schey seconds the motion. The motion passes with favorable votes from Mr. Kells; Ms. Reyes; Mr. Benoit; Mr. Alviti; and Mr. Leach.

Mr. Crowley abstains from the vote.

**Agenda Item 7:**            **Insurance Renewals**

James O'Brien, Claims Director for RIPTA, presents the request.

Mr. O'Brien presents the request for the Commercial Property insurance policy renewal.

Ms. Wilcox makes a motion to approve. Ms. Schey seconds and the motion passes with favorable votes by Mr. Crowley; Mr. Leach; Mr. Kells; Ms. Reyes; Mr. Alviti; and Mr. Benoit.

Mr. O'Brien presents the request for the Commercial General Liability insurance policy renewal.

Mr. Leach makes a motion to approve. Ms. Reyes seconds and the motion passes with favorable votes by Mr. Crowley; Mr. Kells; Ms. Wilcox; Ms. Schey; Mr. Alviti; and Mr. Benoit.

**Agenda Item 8:**            **CCRI Bus Stop Enhancement Project**

James Canty, Executive Director of Project Management and Jack Plouffe, Project Manager for RIPTA present the request.

Ms. Wilcox makes a motion to approve. Mr. Alviti seconds and the motion passes with favorable votes by Mr. Crowley; Mr. Leach; Ms. Reyes; Mr. Kells; Ms. Schey; and Mr. Benoit.

**Agenda Item 9:            Public Transit Authority Safety Plan (PTASP) Reapproval**

Jamie Pereira, Chief of Security and Operations for RIPTA, presents the request.

Ms. Wilcox makes a motion to approve. Ms. Reyes seconds and the motion passes with favorable votes by Mr. Crowley; Mr. Leach; Ms. Schey; Mr. Kells; Mr. Alviti; and Mr. Benoit.

**Agenda Item 10:            Resolution for Funding RIPTA**

Christopher Durand, Chief of Finance for RIPTA, presents the request.

Mr. Crowley makes a motion to table the item for further study. Mr. Alviti seconds and the motion passes with favorable votes by Mr. Leach; Ms. Reyes; Mr. Kells; Ms. Wilcox; Ms. Schey; and Mr. Benoit.

**Agenda Item 3:            CEO Report**

Scott Avedisian, RIPTA's CEO, presents the CEO report. Topics included in his update were:

1. Employee Spotlight and Commendations

**Agenda Item 10:            Executive Session to consider, discuss and act upon such matters as may be closed to the public pursuant to: R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-46-5 (a)(2) sessions pertaining to collective bargaining or litigation, or work sessions pertaining to collective bargaining or litigation; and R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-46-5 (a)(1) sessions pertaining to job performance.**

Upon motion by Mr. Crowley, which was seconded by Mr. Alviti, the following vote was adopted and passed with favorable votes by Mr. Leach; Mr. Kells; Ms. Reyes; Ms. Schey; Mr. Wilcox; and Mr. Benoit.

**Voted:            Executive Session to consider, discuss and act upon such matters as may be closed to the public pursuant to: R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-46-5 (a)(2) pertaining to collective bargaining or litigation, or work sessions pertaining to collective bargaining or litigation.**

**The Board, staff, and counsel entered executive session at 4:16 p.m.**

**The Board, staff, and counsel exited public session at 4:29 p.m.**

Attorney Fragomeni reports out (1) that during the Executive Session, pursuant to R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-46-4(b), the Board unanimously voted to keep all votes taken in Executive Session, except for the vote to adjourn Executive Session, sealed so as to not jeopardize any strategy or negotiation; and (2) that the Board unanimously voted to adjourn Executive Session and return to public session.

Mr. Crowley makes a motion to seal the minutes of the Executive Session. Ms. Reyes seconds and the motion passes with favorable votes by Mr. Leach; Mr. Kells; Mr. Alviti; Ms. Schey; Mr. Wilcox; and Mr. Benoit.

Respectfully submitted,

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Patrick Crowley, Secretary