



REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Meeting of the St. John's Transportation Commission
Thursday, August 18, 2022 12:00pm
In-Person at 25 Messenger Drive and via Webex

In attendance:

Paul Walsh	Chair
Ian Froude	Vice-Chair/City Councillor
Tolulope Akerele	Commissioner
Lynn Zurel	Commissioner
Derek Coffey	Deputy City Manager, Finance and Administration
Kevin Breen	City Manager
Ron Ellsworth	Commissioner/City Councillor
Maggie Burton	Commissioner/City Councillor
Judy Powell	General Manager
Donna Power	Administrative Assistant

Regrets:

Kirsten Morry	Commissioner
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I. PROCEDURAL

The Chair called the meeting to order at 12:02 PM.

II. AGENDA

MOTION: To approve the agenda as presented.

Moved by Commissioner Ellsworth; seconded by Commissioner Zurel. Motion Carried.

III. MINUTES

MOTION: To approve the minutes of the July 21, 2022 regular meeting as presented.

Commissioner Zurel, in reference to #4. *Financial Statements for June 2022*, wished to clarify the intention of the comment by adding "... as it means the Commission is kept informed in a timely manner." The amended minute now reads as follows:

4. Financial Statements for June 2022

The financial package for June was tabled for the Commission's information. Commissioner Zurel expressed thanks for the Finance team for compiling the information and noted that there were no surprises in the June statements, which is good news as it means the Commission is kept informed in a timely manner.

Moved by Vice Chair Froude; seconded by Commissioner Akerele. Motion Carried.

MOTION: To approved the minutes from the July 26, 2022 Special Meeting as presented.

Moved by Commissioner Akerele; seconded by Commissioner Zurel. Motion Carried.

IV. BUSINESS ARISING

1. Marketing Committee Update

Vice Chair Froude provided an update on the July 6, 2022 meeting of the Marketing Committee. There were two topics of discussion – the Community Bus service and the Air Miles® Reward Miles program.

Community Bus – The committee discussed options to increase ridership on the Community Bus, including the possibility of offering on-demand service as well as creating an awareness campaign.

Air Miles® Reward Miles – The committee had preliminary discussions on options for a rewards program when the current contract expires (April 2024). Possibilities include extending the contract and/or developing a new internal program.

V. NEW BUSINESS

1. Terms of Commissioners

(K. Breen joined the meeting at 12:15pm.)

At the end of this year, Chair Walsh and Commissioner Morry both finish their second two-year term. Those two vacancies will be advertised. Additionally, Commissioners Akerele, Zurel and Burton are nearing the end of their first two-year term and are eligible for reappointment if interested. The General Manager asked to be notified if Commissioners wish to commence a second two-year term. Since Commissioner Burton holds a Council Representative position, reappointment will be referred to/at the discretion of City Council.

2. General Manager's Report

Third Party Assessments for GoBus Eligibility:

Commissioner Zurel requested confirmation on the target end date for GoBus eligibility assessments for existing customers (September 30, 2022) and inquired about next steps based on the assumption that this target will not be met. The General Manager noted that either a contract extension or a new RFP would be required. Commissioner

Ellsworth commented that it would be prudent to examine if there is value in continuing the assessments.

The Commission acknowledged that this topic is not on today's agenda but does require further discussion. It will be added to a future meeting's agenda.

Ridership:

Vice Chair Froude acknowledged the 16% increase in ridership for July. This marks the 3rd month in a row of substantial growth.

Shelter – Gathering Place:

Commissioner Akerele inquired if the shelter that is to be removed will be utilized at another bus stop. The General Manager responded that yes, it will be reused.

Vice Chair Froude expressed concern about removal of this shelter, noting the growing level of homelessness in the community. He requested to delay the removal to allow him time to speak directly with the Executive Director of The Gathering Place to explore alternative solutions. K. Breen and Commissioner Ellsworth both acknowledged the complexity of the issue and noted that this is not unique to bus shelters. Removing people from one location merely displaces them to another. Allowing time to look for other solutions (even though it may be above and beyond what Metrobus is operationally required to do) is reasonable.

ACTION: Chair Walsh requested that Vice Chair Froude follow up with the Commission on this matter prior to the next meeting.

Electrification Plan:

K. Breen requested clarification if staff training for maintenance of electric buses was included as a deliverable in the scope of work for the electrification plan. The General Manager responded that staff training will be included since the maintenance work will be done in-house.

3. Executive Summary Report

The Executive Summary Report for July 2022 was tabled for members' information.

4. CUTA Conference & CUTA 2022 Transit Policy Forum

The General Manager informed the Commission that CUTA's annual conference and trade show is taking place in Montreal on October 22-26, 2022 and requested that any Commissioners who wish to attend please let her know. Commissioner Ellsworth expressed his interest in attending.

The General Manager also informed that CUTA is hosting a Transit Policy Forum in Ottawa on September 20, 2022. A decision hasn't been finalized if a representative will attend.

5. Planning – Transfer Terminal

[The goal of developing improved transfer terminals, particularly in the west end, has been part of Metrobus' operational plan for several years. To date, the preferred parcel of land on which to develop a transfer terminal is owned by the Province and requests to acquire the land have been unsuccessful.] The General Manager suggested that, as part of future planning for Metrobus, it may be worthwhile for key decision-makers to visit with Halifax Transit to look at how they've constructed transfer terminals and how they use them. Commissioner Akerele agreed that this is a very good idea, and it need not be limited to one day or exclusively to terminals; comparing services with other similar properties is a beneficial exercise.

Vice Chair Froude requested to see a business plan related to transfer terminals, as a rationale for the visit to Halifax Transit, before the end of the year. The General Manager agreed to this timeline and noted that without first acquiring the space to develop terminals, the work cannot happen.

6. Financial Statements for July 2022

Commissioner Zurel inquired if there is a year-end reconciliation to account for any deficit for the Mount Pearl and Paradise services. The General Manager responded that both municipalities pay a fixed amount based on a per kilometer rate so this has never been necessary because we do not go over budget – the rate is set on the budget. July's data shows increased costs related to (unbudgeted) signing bonuses and retroactive wage increases. K. Breen noted that the City has processes in place for some regional services whereby they do a year-end reconciliation based on actuals since costs can arise throughout the year that were not foreseen at budget time. He also expressed that if costs exceed what Metrobus is charging Mount Pearl/Paradise, then the actual costs should be billed to them. Commissioner Zurel suggested it may be appropriate to review the agreements with Mount Pearl and Paradise to address this issue.

Noting that many of the explanations for variances in the financial statements are attributable to the LIFT program, Commissioner Zurel expressed concern about the possibility of other factors being missed by assuming that a large variance is solely based on how the LIFT figures are reported. It would be helpful to know what the LIFT figure is so that the variance can be more accurately analyzed.

There are more employees enrolled in the Defined Contribution pension plan than anticipated/budgeted resulting in a variance of \$27K this month. The General Manager

noted that estimates are used to create the budget, based on the number of employees expected to retire and to be hired throughout the upcoming year. This year, more people have entered the Defined Contribution plan than anticipated.

K. Breen inquired about the overage in Buildings and Yards by \$150K. The General Manager responded that much of this is related to the move of the radio system to a new tower, which was not budgeted. Cost estimates were not available at the time the budget was created.

VI. OTHER

The next meeting of the St. John's Transportation Commissioner is scheduled for September 22, 2022 at 12 PM.

Commissioner Zurel commented that it is important to establish meeting dates in advance and to stick to that schedule. If the General Manager must be away at a regularly scheduled meeting time, a succession plan should be in place to allow the meeting to continue as scheduled. The General Manager noted that such a plan can be created if it is the wish of the Commission; it does not currently exist as this has not been an issue in the past.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Business concluded at approximately 1:02 PM.

MOTION: To adjourn the August 18, 2022 business meeting of the St. John's Transportation Commission.

Moved by Commissioner Zurel. Meeting adjourned.