

Schuylkill River Passenger Rail Authority Meeting

July 6, 2022

3:00 p.m.

The meeting was called to order by Christian Leinbach at 3:00 p.m. The following members were in attendance:

Authority Members

Christian Leinbach, Berks County Board of Commissioners, Chair

Marian Moskowitz, Chester County Commissioner, Vice Chair

Scott France, AICP, Executive Director, Montgomery County Planning Commission, Secretary

Kenneth Lawrence, Jr., Montgomery County Commissioner, Treasurer

Jim Gerlach, President, GRCA, Assistant Secretary

Peter Urscheler, Phoenixville Borough Mayor, Vice Treasurer

David Zellers, Montgomery County Director of Commerce

Brian O’Leary, Executive Director, Chester County Planning Commission

Eddie Moran, City of Reading Mayor

1. Introduction and Welcome

Dan Becker, Esquire, opened the meeting at 3:00 p.m. Each Authority member stated their name, county, and role within the Authority.

2. Elect Slate of Officers

A motion was made to nominate the proposed Slate of Officers, seconded, all voted unanimously, and the motion was carried. The elected Authority Board Officers are as follows:

Christian Leinbach – Chair

Marian Moskowitz – Vice Chair

Scott France – Secretary

Kenneth Lawrence, Jr. – Treasurer

Jim Gerlach – Assistant Secretary

Peter Urscheler – Vice Treasurer

The meeting was turned over to Commissioner Leinbach, who led the Pledge of Allegiance.

There was no public comment on specific agenda items.

3. Adopt Bylaws

There being no proposed amendments to the draft version, or need for discussion, a motion was made to adopt the bylaws, seconded, all voted unanimously, and the motion was carried.

4. Overall Project Schedule and Expectations

Brief discussion was had concerning implementation of processes and arrangements for upcoming meetings, a decision to utilize Zoom instead of Microsoft Teams was made, and an agenda item was added to the July 25, 2022 meeting to consider a translation option and look into how other Authorities handle that aspect.

5. Meeting Schedule

All were in favor to convene meetings virtually via Zoom on the fourth Monday of every month commencing at 3:00 p.m., on a reoccurring basis, subject to modification by Scott France as necessary.

6. Immediate Organizational Needs**a. *Solicitor***

A motion was made for Dan Becker, Esquire, to continue to serve as interim Solicitor and to have him prepare and submit a temporary service and fee agreement for review, to be approved at the July 25, 2022 meeting, seconded, all voted unanimously, and the motion was carried.

b. *Discuss Selection of Bank*

A motion was made for Brian O'Leary, Commissioner Lawrence, and Mayor Urscheler, to recommend one or two community banks in addition to Truist, and also recommend representatives to access the account(s) for approval at the July 25, 2022 meeting, seconded, all voted unanimously, and the motion was carried.

c. *Discuss Insurance coverages*

A motion was made authorizing Scott France to obtain two additional proposals for basic general liability insurance coverage besides the one viable proposal provided, submitted to the Authority in enough time to allow for each county to review and vet each coverage option, for approval at the July 25, 2022 meeting, seconded, all voted unanimously, and the motion was carried.

d. *Discuss Permanent Office for SRPRA*

The current address for the Authority is the Berks County Services Center which allowed for the submission of documents to form the Authority. It was agreed that this topic will be better considered once a decision is made on an executive director. Each county procuring their own permanent designated meeting space is a possibility, but that discussion being premature, no action was taken, resulting in further agreement that in the interim, the physical address of the Authority will remain the Berks County Services Center.

e. *Discuss Development of Website*

A motion was made to form a Marketing Subcommittee, consisting of Brian O'Leary, Chair, and Mayor Urscheler, Co-Chair, to undertake the tasks of establishing an internet domain, website design and the development of a logo to submit to the Authority for review at a future meeting, seconded, all voted unanimously, and the motion was carried.

7. Corridor Identification and Development Program**a. *Review the new FRA guidelines for their Corridor Identification and Development Program***

Scott France outlined the guidance issued by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), highlighted established specifications, some of which were mentionable criteria to stay concerned and aware about, and reviewed the overall purpose of the program.

b. *Formulate and post comment of interest as requested by FRA*

A motion was made to submit a letter of expression of interest, to be signed by the Chair, Commissioner Leinbach, Vice Chair, Commissioner Moskowitz, and Treasurer, Commissioner Lawrence, Jr., seconded, all voted unanimously, and the motion was carried.

8. Outside Agency Coordination Update**a. *AMTRAK***

A motion was made to notify AMTRAK that this Authority has chosen them as the operator of the Passenger Rail, and at any time that is appropriate, the Authority will support an agreement among the Authority and AMTRAK, seconded, all voted unanimously, and the motion was carried.

b. *Senator Casey's Staff*

Scott France shared positive feedback from a successful meeting held that acknowledged some strengths the Authority has going forward, and also emphasized some points that will serve as endearing factors as the process progresses.

c. Other

No discussion held or action taken on this item.

9. Formation of Subcommittee(s)

A motion was made to create a Personnel Subcommittee, consisting of Commissioner Moskowitz, Commissioner Lawrence, Mayor Moran, and Mayor Urscheler, to begin the process and bring forth recommendations relative to the hiring of an executive director for the Authority, seconded, all voted unanimously, and the motion was carried.

A motion was made to create a Planning Subcommittee, comprised of Commissioner Leinbach, Brian O’Leary, Scott France, and David Hunter, seconded, all voted unanimously, and the motion was carried.

A motion was made to create a Community Engagement Subcommittee, to assist with obtaining support tied with elected officials for specific efforts and events, made up of Jim Gerlach, Chair, Mayor Urscheler, Mayor Moran, David Zellers, and Representative Joseph Ciresi, noting that when an executive director is selected, they are likely to have a strong role within the capacity of this subcommittee, seconded, all voted unanimously, and the motion was carried.

10. Discuss Potential for Consultants

A motion was made to seek one other proposal for consideration apart from the proposal in hand from Phoenixville Consultant, John Robert Smith’s firm, who may be given the opportunity to examine the second entities’ proposal, to be attained by the Planning Subcommittee and submitted to the Authority for review in advance of the July 25, 2022 meeting, seconded, all voted unanimously, and the motion was carried.

11. Executive Director/Office Manager Positions

The need to relieve existing pressures until staff is gained, coupled with the likelihood that it may take some time for an executive director to be brought onboard was acknowledged and prompted two considerations to secure interim relief for the Authority between now and hiring. Discussion was held regarding, 1. altering the current search and approval of a consultant to become for both the long and short-term scopes of work; or 2. requesting the long-term consultant chosen to head the application process for securing an interim consultant for the short-term needs. Decision on those considerations may be posed to the selected consulting firm for them to inform of their desire to consult exclusively on both fronts.

A motion was made to refer this structuring to the Personnel Subcommittee, to recommend a consultant to act in the interim and lead day to day operations until an executive director can be hired, seconded, all voted unanimously, and the motion was carried.

12. Propose Budget

A motion was made to form a Finance Subcommittee made up of Commissioner Lawrence, Chair, Brian O’Leary, and Mayor Urscheler, to provide a draft budget and report, to be recommended for approval at the July 25, 2022 meeting or thereafter if additional time is needed, seconded, all voted unanimously, and the motion was carried.

13. Other Business

Commissioner Leinbach noted that AMTRAK leadership is considering a request for a demonstration ride at the AMTRAK Station from Philadelphia to Reading as a benefit at the April 2023 National Planning Conference, taking place in Philadelphia, which is an effort that takes money and coordination and remains under advisement.

14. Public Comment

Harry Stauffer, Reading PA – commented generally questioning cost, profit, maintenance, the direction the railroad will run, the ride schedule, and taxpayer dollars.

Commissioner Leinbach issued a brief response.

15. Next meeting

July 25, 2022 at 3:00 p.m. via Zoom.

Commissioner Leinbach adjourned the meeting at 5:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brittney Frankowski