



**Green Mountain Transit Board of Commissioners
Minutes
December 15, 2020 - 7:30 a.m.
101 Queen City Road, Burlington VT 05401
Virtual Meeting via Zoom Meetings**

The mission of GMT is to promote and operate safe, convenient, accessible, innovative, and sustainable public transportation services in northwest and central Vermont that reduce congestion and pollution, encourage transit oriented development, and enhance the quality of life for all.

Present:

Commission Sharrow
Commissioner Pouech
Commissioner Wallis
Commissioner Derenthal
Commissioner Baker
Commissioner Buermann
Commissioner Waninger
Commissioner Krohn
Commissioner Dimitruk
Commissioner Gallagher
Commissioner Bohne
Commissioner Davis
Commissioner Brewer
Commissioner Kaynor
Commissioner Poylte
Karen Plante, Payroll Administrator
Jenn Wood, Public Affairs and
Community Relations Manager

Jamie Smith, Dir. of Marketing and
Planning
Nick Foss, Finance Director
Jon Moore, General Manager
Chris Damiani, Transit Planner
Kim Wall, Grants Manager
Pam McDonald, Accounting
Coordinator Trish Redalieu, Dir. of
Human Resources Debbie Coppola,
Senior Accountant Nick Foss, Dir. of
Finance
Matt Kimball, Capital Projects
Manager

Absent:

Commissioner Spencer
Ross McDonald, VTrans

Public:

N/A

Open Meeting

Commissioner Waninger opened the meeting at 7:30AM

Adjustment of the Agenda

There were no adjustments to the agenda.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.



Consent Agenda (Action Item)

Commissioner Buermann asked for his attendance to be added to the November 10th, 2020 meeting notes. Commissioner Sharrow approved this motion. Commissioner Baker accepted. All were in favor and the motion carried.

VTrans Update

Ross McDonald was not in attendance nor anyone else from VTrans to provide an update.

General Manager Report – Updates and Opportunity for Questions

Mr. Moore mentioned that the Microtransit (now known as MyRide by GMT) is starting before next board meeting. There is extensive training upcoming for staff. Mr. Moore expressed his thanks all the staff who have helped with this process. The other update is in regards to seasonal staff. Due to covid-19, there are difficulties finding staff. As previously discussed service has been reduced in the mountain towns somewhat. Staff has put together a staffing plan through new year and then will be keeping a close eye on ridership to determine sustainability of staffing service in those areas since there is currently the use of full time staff. At the same time many drivers, especially in Burlington are taking time off, largely due to the pandemic. Commissioner Sharrow asked about rate being paid to those full time staff. Mr. Moore confirmed that it is a blended rate. Commissioner Bohne asked whether if we reduce the service, will the local funding contributors get a credit or want to pay less. Stowe has reached out already to inquire about a reduced rate to reflect reduced service. Mr. Moore has said to them he would like to wait and see how it goes but there may be financial concessions that need to take place. Commissioner Sharrow asked about if the service cuts would come under the 10% rule. Mr. Moore was uncertain but also rural communities are not subject to that rule, only urban routes. Commissioner Waninger asked if the VPTA has weighed in. Mr. Moore said that VPTA has only focused on the upcoming contract and hasn't discussed this issue. The next area of focus for the VPTA will be legislative.

Board Committee Reports

Operations – Commissioner Sharrow said operations had talked much about microtransit.

Finance – Commissioner Bohne indicated that Mr. Foss will cover their committee when he does the budget.



Strategy – Commissioner Buermann said strategy also talked about microtransit as well as TCI. They also prepared for strategic goals and the process to do in the next pseudo retreat when it happens. Commissioner Kaynor had a question about the strategic plan schedule. Mr. Moore said the foundation was laid for the plan – e.g. KPIs. Next strategy meeting is a working session to build it out further but with the intent to ensure other committees can include their ideas. So strategy will outline but not finalize such that others on board are not able to contribute. Mr. Moore noted that the first step is establishing the goals. Then they would continue on to strategies, tactics, and outcomes. Next item for the committee would be the replacement for transit development plan which includes strategic goals but process if farther out. Commissioner Kaynor encouraged the sharing of documents as they evolve so other board members can add input.

Leadership – Commissioner Waninger said leadership did discuss board retreat. She advised the board to look for an email from staff to find next date in Jan/ Feb timeframe. The committee also discussed the board member self-eval process. As well as premium pay which is on the agenda today.

Diversity, Fairness & Inclusion Update & Discussion

Commissioner Poylte shared that this committee did meet but other two commissioners could not attend. It was a productive meeting and the group came up with a name for the committee – Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) Committee. Likewise a mission statement was development and confirmed (pasted below). Commissioner Poylte shared that she has talked with many who do equity work and they are saying that GMT should be looking for consultant for 3-6 months. That also aligns with our budget right now for this work to evaluate where we need to go and it was acknowledged that the most needs to be done internally. Work wouldn't be done in that short timeframe but rather by the end of the 3-6 months, the committee will have learned what it needs to do for the work moving forward. She also shared that there is concern about finding the right consultant especially since they are in high demand right now. The next meeting is slated for January 12, 2021. The other item discussed was to include public members to committee, those who are actual riders not liaisons. The latter would come into process in other ways. In the meantime, the committee may start reviewing internal documents to see what we can do ourselves to review for wording and processes and to move GMT in the direction we want to move forward to.

JEDI Mission Statement

The Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) Committee is charged with guiding GMT's ongoing work to create an equitable and safe work environment for all our employees and provide a public transportation service that is safe and accessible for all people. The JEDI Committee, in



collaboration with a consultant, will gather and review data, propose policies and best practices to advance equity and diversity, identify and work with community partners, and hold GMT accountable to its goal of building an internal and external environment that is safe, accessible and welcoming to all.

Commissioner Wallis asked about members. Commissioner Poylte said there are three commissioners, Mr. Moore, Ms. Wood and the on the driver/ union side - Nate, Farhan, and Val join; the committee is soon to add Santi from the Bhutanese community. Then there would be two to three from the public for which there will be an application process. Commissioner Waninger asked if GMT is giving stipends to the public to attend. Commissioner Poylte stated that the idea will go on the next agenda as there are many things to discuss regarding the budget.

FY21 Quarter One Financials Presentation

Mr. Foss shared his screen to show the budget. As of now GMT is showing a surplus on both sides – about \$33k in total. Starting from top things are looking very good in state, local and federal revenue budget. GMT got the mid-year amendment and staff are reviewing it so that is not reflected in the budget. Thus it needs to be decided if there is another budget adjustment or just an update via the finance committee. Overall Mr. Foss does not see a whole lot of concerns. One of the big items this year is that the finance department had to reflect the transfer of fixed assets to RCT since they took over some service (e.g. GMT sent vehicles and shelters to them). Yet GMT did not bill the full match amount so had to remove roughly \$240k from budget as a loss. Mr. Foss noted GMT is showing a profit in Medicaid and are also seeing a drop in the trips, down about 10% since the fiscal year started. Ridership is down for that program and as that continues, it will affect revenue as there are still overhead expenses.

Mr. Foss discussed the transit rate on rural side is concerning now as we cut a decent amount of service so it increased the per hour cost - now at about \$97/ hour transit rate whereas last year this time it was \$79/ hour. GMT is under benchmark in largest category of salary. Mr. Foss noted that the unemployment is a little concerning but GMT did receive a cares act credit. Also under the vehicle maintenance line item, especially in rural it shows the positive impact of getting new vehicles. All in all, GMT is lower in expenses this year compared to last year.

Premium Pay Discussion

Commissioner Waninger said the budget discussion on the agenda is setting the stage for this conversation so she transferred to the next item to have the budget information presented.



Mr. Moore stated that it is good news that the vaccine is started but the reality is still June or later until the general population has full access. He is hoping transit is prioritized as essential service but it is currently hard to predict. As case counts have increased, employees have asked if premium pay would be reinstated. Mr. Moore reviewed the prior premium pay steps and agreements. He shared that now staff is looking for policy guidance from the board for next steps. He shared that the total previously paid from March through the end of September was roughly \$500,000 or about \$32,000 per pay period based on the \$3/ hour supplement. He noted that at that time GMT also had CARES funds which are now baked into budget to make it balance. While the budget will show it is balanced that is due to dipping into reserve funds. The large part of the budget looking good is regarding fuel since the price/ gallon has bene down but is now increasing. Likewise, the volume will also increase as routes come back on line. Similarly, on the rural side, with seasonal starting that will increase fuel usage. If costs increase, GMT would be looking at reserve funds or cost reductions which would likely be service which Mr. Moore feels would be counterproductive. If we do not have revenue, Mr. Moore is asking what would the board like to do and whether staff should take time to assess where and how funds would need to be allocated to cover premium pay. Commissioner Waninger said that the leadership committee did discuss this and did support the idea but it really came down to whether GMT could afford the costs. So in general that committee concluded they would support reinstating the increase if there is a way to afford it however that only seems possible with additional cares funds.

Commissioner Waninger posed the question of should staff invest time and dedicate resources to review if we can afford premium pay. She opened the floor to discussion with that question. Commissioner Bohne said it seems GMT is balancing the books on the backs of cutting service and merely looking for cares funds that GMT likely won't get and thus does not think GMT can afford the premium pay. In addition is the fact that currently there are not concerns with the way in which service is operated that suggests drivers are subject to increased virus exposure. He wanted to know from Mr. Moore how staff feel. Mr. Moore said staff are concerned due to the increase in case counts and agrees GMT has taken any and all precautions possible. To date there have been two who have tested positive and there is reason to believe that both exposures were from outside the work place so none from workplace exposure. It was acknowledged that there are multiple systems in place to protect staff but of course GMT cannot guarantee 100% as there are always risks even for general community activities. Commissioner Sharrow shared that one option would be to reinstate fares but then drivers might not want fares due to increased risk. Thus, he said that between premium pay and fares, that one should ask drivers their preference. Commissioner Pouech agrees with Commissioner Bohne and stated how in March when it was early it made sense when we really didn't know the virus. Plus the fact that Mr. Moore feels confident that we have done well with safety so feels that GMT should take any potential money and put it towards precautionary measures and equipment rather than pay. He said



that is staff were being exposed would be another thing but that is not the case. Therefore, he would rather spend time and money to ensure operations are as safe as possible including no fares. He reiterated that the data is telling us this is the best approach. Mr. Moore says this is all valid and the one thing GMT has not yet done is new equipment for on board purifications but is looking into it. To do the urban fleet, the cost would be roughly \$250k so it is something to consider and is perhaps VTrans would be open to providing capital for those safety improvements. He noted that while premium pay doesn't increase safety but these such measures would.

Commissioner Poylte says she appreciates the conversation and shared how they dug in deep in leadership discussions. Moving forward she does not think staff should invest time to look at how to finance premium and agrees that the money could be utilized to keep all safe (drivers, passengers, community). While she would love to give staff pay but the only two areas of how to pay is fares or cutting service and thus, doesn't see how that is a good use of staff time given all that info and how GMT does not want to take the already anticipated steps. With funding more safety measures for all the investment goes into the future.

Commissioner Waninger said that it seems the board does not wish for staff time to be spent on the research of premium pay especially given other organizational challenges it is facing. All board members agreed.

FY22 Operating Budget Presentation (Action Item)

Mr. Foss shared his screen and the budget. He went through a review of changes and stated that FY22 funding is primarily by all of legacy 5307 reserves as well as how GMT spent most of the cares funds for that year but pushed some to FY22. He noted that since the majority are not cares act, there is the local match needed.

Commissioner Gallagher asked question about passenger revenue and whether that covers if the state provides money so GMT could be fare free. Mr. Foss said he has been in discussions with the state around fare free and is more confident to possibly receive funds for the rural side but not urban.

Mr. Foss said it is overall a balanced budget. He said it is important to note that it is the case by using fund balance reserves. He said that on the urban side it is using local capital match fund to fill the hole whereas on the rural side it is from using what he calls an "unrestricted, undesignated net position". When he shares the FY20 audit presentation, he will review this internal calculation to help all better understand reserve funds.

Commissioner Wallis said that there seems to be lots of uncertainty so was wondering how nimble can GMT be. Mr. Foss said that was more of an operations question and thus, passed it off to Mr. Moore who stated that every year a budget



adjustment is done therefore it would be possible to see actuals as FY22 approaches. Thus, Mr. Moore said that this budget will likely change a lot and that this is just a starting point. He noted that a very conservative approach was taken given the uncertainties and added that it included a 4% urban increase for assessments.

Commissioner Kaynor made the comment that it looks like from the numbers in packet that trips from paratransit are down so in actuality that means member assessments may in fact not be going up that much.

Commissioner Buermann posed a question regarding reserves, wondering is GMT running out of money. Mr. Foss talked about cares funds not needing a match as well as how reserve funds have been impacted along with how various legacy capital funds have been shifted.

Commissioner Pouech had comments from his perspective on the Hinesburg selectboard and how it will be difficult to get a budget passed to cover GMT local match request given the reduction in service (temporary suspension of the 116 commuter). He shared that this line item would be placed on the Australian ballot this coming year, highlighting the challenges. Mr. Foss clarified that Hinesburg would get 4% increase for FY22 as they are part of assessments for that fixed route.

Commissioner Baker asking about the process to understand how assessments are done and communicated to towns. Mr. Foss explained the year over year variations but he sends letters to town/ city managers, copying copy board members in the urban towns. He stated that Jenn Wood manages conversations with towns in the rural areas. Commissioner Kaynor talked of his experience and encouraged Commissioner Pouech to avoid Australian ballot if possible.

Commissioner Bohne stated he feels GMT is operating in an unsustainable manner and as there is a need to look for funds that the board should be prepared to institute fares as quick as possible as they could use those funds to cover losses. Mr. Foss noted that the budget includes a 1.5% in salaries in FY22 and that FY21 is a collective bargain year so adjustments may be needed. Commissioner Sharrow shared concerns around current funds relative to operations and the need to look close at what GMT is providing compared to what GMT is getting paid for. Commissioner Davis second what Commissioner Sharrow stated and how we need funding from somewhere else. Mr. Moore stated the budget does include fare charging starting July 1st unless there is a revenue replacement and how that is perhaps possible in rural area but unlikely on the urban side. He noted that staff is under impression that the board is ok with that regarding fares. He noted that GMT can rebound in FY22 with regards to ridership levels that so could increase funds with fares and then wouldn't need reserves but that it is an unknown as to how quickly ridership will rebound.



Action needed to approve taking the FY22 operating budget to a public hearing. If there is initial approval today, GMT would send preliminary letters to towns for planning purposes.

Mr. Moore asking for initial FY22 operating budget approval to move to public hearing. Commissioner Dmitruk made a motion, Commissioner Bohne seconded. There was no additional discussion. All were in favor and the motion carried.

FY22 Capital Budget Presentation (Action Item)

Mr. Kimball reviewed capital budget as provided in packet (p. 56 – 59) and noted the following new urban items for bus replacements, renovations (external/ internal), miscellaneous parts requested yearly, engine and transmission rebuilds, passenger amenities, and office equipment. Then for rural he shared the items including bus/ vehicle replacements, facility improvements, and office equipment. Commissioner Bohne asked if these needed a match and Mr. Foss confirmed yes. Commissioner Bohne stated that in the past not enough local funds would come in to match so that will present potential problems. Commissioner Kaynor said he didn't see any new vehicles as noted being electric. Mr. Kimball stated that none are in this budget rather all are all diesel and gas. Commissioner Kaynor requested that at least the driver release vehicle be hybrid or electric. Mr. Kimball said that is not planned. Commissioner Kaynor said he realizes the additional funds needed but that these investments are for 4-12 years and thus, GMT should be as forward looking as possible. He inquired about funding options from utilities (e.g. Tier III). Mr. Moore said that from the staff perspective there is a desire to pursue with electric but based on the Proterra experience and lacking a strategic plan, he does not have the confidence to include it in the FY22 budget. Commissioner Davis tagged onto the comments of Commissioner Kaynor and understands it is difficult to electrify but with smaller vehicles he thinks GMT should be doing its best to move especially the smaller vehicles to electric or hybrid.

The motion to approve the FY22 budget was posed and Commissioner Kaynor made a motion to approve with a suggestion that if an equal cost hybrid or electric for smaller vehicles was an option that GMT would pursue that. Commissioner Davis seconded. There as no further discussion. All were in favor and the motion carried.

Commissioner Waninger asked if the board was willing to flip the two executive sessions so that Mr. Moore could stay on and would not have to return. All agreed to switch the agenda around.

Mr. Moore briefed that there is a finding for staff to give an update on a pending labor arbitration. Commissioner Davis made a motion, Commissioner Bohne seconded. All were in favor and the motion carried.



Commissioner Waninger asked per the agenda: *Is there a motion to find that premature public knowledge of a pending labor arbitration would clearly put GMT at a substantial disadvantage?*

Commissioner Poylte motioned to move to Executive Session inviting Mr. Moore. Commissioner Davis seconded. All were in favor and the motion carried. The board entered executive session at 9:22AM

Possible Executive Session: 1 V.S.A. § 313(a)(1)(D), Arbitration or Mediation

Is there a motion to find that premature public knowledge of a pending labor arbitration would clearly put GMT at a substantial disadvantage?

Is there a motion to enter executive session to discuss a pending labor related arbitration under the provisions of Title 1, Section 313(a)(1)(D) of the Vermont State Statutes?

At 9:23 the Board entered an Executive Session with Mr. Moore to be briefed on an arbitration and mediation with the union.

No actions were taken. A motion was made to exit the Executive Session by Commissioner Sharrow and seconded by Commissioner Pouech. All were in favor and the motion carried. The board exited the Executive Session at 9:31AM.

Executive Session: 1 VSA 313(a)(3), Personnel

Is there a motion to enter executive session pursuant to 1 VSA 313(a)(3) to discuss the six month General Manager job performance review?

At 9:32 the board entered an Executive Session to discuss the 6-month evaluation of GM Jon Moore.

(Commissioner Brewer, Wallis & Davis left before vote to exit session)

No actions were taken. A motion was made to exit the Executive Session by Commissioner Gallagher and seconded by Commissioner Pouech. All were in favor and the motion carried. The board exited the Executive Session at 9:54AM.



Adjourn

Commissioner Krohn motioned to adjourn, Commissioner Kaynor seconded. All were in favor and the motion carried. Commissioner Waninger adjourned the meeting at 9:55AM.