

# Schuylkill River Passenger Rail Authority Meeting

## Approved Minutes

August 28, 2023

3:00 p.m.

The following members were in attendance:

### **Authority Members in Attendance:**

Christian Leinbach, Berks County Board of Commissioners, Chair  
Scott France, Executive Director, Montgomery County Planning Commission, Secretary  
Jim Gerlach, President, GRCA, Assistant Secretary  
Kenneth Lawrence, Jr., Montgomery County Commissioner, Treasurer  
Peter Urscheler, Phoenixville Borough Mayor, Assistant Treasurer  
Brian O’Leary, Executive Director, Chester County Planning Commission  
Eddie Moran, Mayor, City of Reading

### **Authority Members Absent:**

Marian Moskowitz, Chester County Commissioner, Vice Chair  
David Zellers, Montgomery County Director of Commerce

#### **1. Call to Order**

Commissioner Christian Leinbach, Chair of the SRPRA, called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.  
Mr. Dan Becker of Kozloff Stoudt Attorneys, legal counsel for the Authority, read the guidelines for making public comments.

#### **2. Adoption of July 24, 2023 Minutes**

Christian Leinbach called for any corrections to the minutes.

*As there were no corrections or objections to the draft minutes of the July 24, 2023 SRPRA meeting submitted, the minutes were approved.*

#### **3. Board Member Comments**

*There were no Board member comments.*

#### **4. Public Comment on Agenda Items**

*There were no public comments on agenda items.*

#### **5. Formation of Committee To Explore Potential Need for Amendment to Articles of Incorporation and/or By-Laws – Action**

Mr. Dan Becker explained that recently completed grant applications completed on behalf of the SRPRA raised the question of whether there is a need to amend the Authority’s Articles of Incorporation and/or its By-Laws. He suggested that a committee be formed and meet as soon as possible to determine if action is needed. Upon discussion, an amended motion was proposed to nominate Board Members Scott France and Brian O’Leary to form the committee, along with Dan Becker and Tom Frawley. Tom said that if the action is approved, he would convene the committee as soon as possible.

*Mayor Peter Urscheler motioned, and Commissioner Ken Lawrence Jr., seconded, all voted unanimously, and the motion was carried to approve the formation of a committee to determine whether the SRPRA's Articles of Incorporation and/or its By-Laws require amendment.*

**6. Renewal of Authority D&O Liability Insurance Policy – Action**

Tom Frawley reported that the Authority's D&O liability insurance policy with ALTRU expires soon; there is a slight annual premium increase from \$1,975 to \$2,085 if the Board approves the renewal of this policy.

*Mayor Peter Urscheler motioned, and Mr. Brian O'Leary seconded, all voted unanimously, and the motion was carried to approve the renewal of the SRPRA's D&O liability insurance policy with ALTRU.*

**7. Committee Reports**

**a. Finance – Commissioner Kenneth Lawrence Jr., Chair**

**i. Adoption of Revised 2023-2025 Budget – Action**

Commissioner Ken Lawrence Jr. explained that the SRPRA's 2023 budget has been updated to reflect new knowledge of the Authority's costs, as the Finance Committee now has a better handle on forecasting to-date costs. Tom Frawley said that the costs to-date were lower than forecasted, and that the Authority is in good financial shape. He added that the "ask" from the individual participating counties going forward is slightly reduced from what was in last year's budget. Berks County contributed in advance, so Chester and Montgomery Counties' contributions will be \$50,000.00 each in 2023, and \$75,000.00 each in 2024.

*Commissioner Ken Lawrence Jr. motioned, and Mayor Peter Urscheler seconded, all voted unanimously, and the motion was carried to adopt the SRPRA's 2023-2025 revised budget.*

**ii. Motion to Pay Bills – Action**

Commissioner Lawrence said there were three bills presented for payment, subject to the Board's approval.

*Commissioner Lawrence motioned, and Brian O'Leary seconded, all voted unanimously, and the motion was carried to approve the payments of three bills presented in the SRPRA's August 28, 2023 Board meeting packet.*

**b. Marketing & Public Relations – Brian O'Leary, Chair**

**i. Committee Update**

Brian O'Leary reported that the committee met in August. They have fine-tuned the website and the SRPRA's social media is up and running. He encouraged meeting attendees to like and share the postings. The committee is also at work preparing a press release for when the Federal Corridor ID program announces its results.

**c. Planning – Scott France, Chair**

**i. Committee Update**

Scott France reported that the Planning Committee meeting with PennDOT has been rescheduled and will be held at the end of November. There were over 90 eligible applications in the current round

under FRA Corridor ID consideration; he does not know how many applications will ultimately be accepted.

Scott added that the FRA did not expect their decision on the results of the applications for the corridor program to be released or made public until November, and the next round will probably not take place until 2025.

Scott shared bus ridership information from the bus service currently running from Reading to Philadelphia. It is approximately 50 riders per day, 2 round trips per day, which is double the initial volume.

Scott reported that he attended the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) webinar last Wednesday. It outlined the three steps of the Corridor ID Program: 1) Scope; 2) Service Development Plan; and, 3) Preliminary Engineering (including NEPA). He presented some summary slides on Corridor ID program, which is the primary mechanism for developing passenger rail corridors and projects around the country. He reminded the Board that although it will connect to the Northeast Corridor, the SRPRA service would be considered a new line. He also noted that even though the level of non-federal commitment may be modest to start, it will grow during implementation and beyond.

**d. Personnel – Comm. Moskowitz, Chair**

i. Committee Update

On behalf of Commissioner Moskowitz, Chair, who was not present, Mayor Peter Urscheler, Assistant Treasurer, said that the Committee had no news to report.

**e. Community Engagement – Jim Gerlach, Chair**

i. Committee Update

Jim Gerlach reported that his Committee issued a written informational memo to state and federal legislators in the corridor region, updating them as to what's been happening both at the Authority and in local communities. From now until November, the Committee will be discussing what other community activities they can target to keep the project in the public eye.

**8. Executive Director's Report**

Tom Frawley, Executive Director, said that he would be formally communicating with the counties regarding the 2023 contributions. He also announced that the October SRPRA board meeting would be held as a hybrid/in person meeting in Pottstown. Tom reported that Congresswoman Madeleine Dean visited Reading to tour candidate sites for a station facility, and that she continues to show support for the project. As well, Tom said that the RFP for the SRPRA's consulting services is almost complete. He is finalizing the scope of work and, subject to finalizing the grant agreement with FRA, should have the RFP posted on the website in a matter of weeks.

Christian asked Tom about the FRA's assertion a few months ago that the Authority should start working on its Service Development Plan. He wondered if the SRPRA needs to do anything on this now, and whether approval needs to be obtained before funds are expended.

Tom replied that since it is a reimbursement grant, reimbursement eligibility begins when the grant agreement is executed and a particular activity has been approved.

**9. Other Business**

*There was no other business discussed.*

**10. General Public Comment**

There was a question posed from an anonymous attendee asking if the Amtrak bus operation has been made known to Albright, Berks and Reading Area Community College, and Alvernia, Penn State and Kutztown Universities in the interest of boosting ridership. Tom Frawley said he would pass this concern along to Amtrak.

**11. Adjourn**

Christian Leinbach called to adjourn the meeting.

*Jim Gerlach motioned, and Scott France seconded, all voted unanimously, to adjourn the August 2023 meeting of the SRPRA Board.*

**Next Board Meeting**

September 18, 2023 at 3:00 p.m. will be held as a hybrid meeting in Pottstown and via Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,



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Ann Marie Meehan