

Schuylkill River Passenger Rail Authority Meeting

Approved Minutes

May 22, 2023

3:00 p.m.

The following members were in attendance:

Authority Members in Attendance:

Christian Leinbach, Berks County Board of Commissioners, Chair
Marian Moskowitz, Chester County Commissioner, Vice 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
Eddie Moran, Mayor, City of Reading

Authority Members Absent:

Brian O'Leary, Executive Director, Chester County Planning Commission
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 April 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 April 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. Report: Congressionally Mandated \$750k Grant – Tom Frawley, Executive Director

Tom Frawley, Executive Director of the SRPRA, reported that a meeting was held on May 10th with the Federal Railroad Administration FRA and their consultants relating to the congressionally mandated \$750k grant awarded to Berks County, to discuss the project and how the funds would be used. He reminded the Board that this grant application preceded the FRA Corridor program application, so integration and coordination will need to be discussed. He also reminded the Board that this grant originated with our Congressional Delegation, and expressed the Authority's appreciation for their commitment to the project.

Tom reported that FRA staff urged SRPRA to begin work on a service development plan (SDP) while awaiting results of the SRPRA's FRA application. He was advised this could give the project a "head start" that could amount to as much as a half year.

Christian Leinbach, Chair, added that before SRPRA obligates funds, FRA clearance to use funds would be needed, and that the cost will exceed \$750k, and that the estimated cost to prepare the service development plan is \$2 million. He said the FRA staff said they are there now to work with the SRPRA on this.

Tom concurred with Christian and added that the FRA staff suggested ongoing monthly conversations to move along the process and provide guidance.

6. Subcommittee Reports

a. Finance – Commissioner Kenneth Lawrence Jr., Chair

i. Motion to Pay Bills –Action

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

Commissioner Lawrence motioned, and Vice Chair Marian Moskowitz, seconded, all voted unanimously, and the motion was carried to approve the payments of two bills presented in the SRPRA's May 22, 2023 Board meeting packet.

b. Marketing & Public Relations– Peter Urscheler, Assistant Treasurer

i. Recommendation to Award Social Media Consultant Contract–Action

Peter Urscheler reported that the committee met on May 3rd and based on their review, they recommend the SRPRA Board award the social media consultant contract for the project to Virtual Farm.

Assistant Treasurer Peter Urscheler, motioned, and Commissioner Ken Lawrence, seconded, all voted unanimously, and the motion was carried to award and execute a 3 year term, \$2,500.00 monthly, at-will contract for SRPRA's social media management to Virtual Farm.

Christian Leinbach, Chair, thanked Stephanie Weaver of Berks County for her work on the subcommittee, and announced that she would be departing from the committee and that Jonathan Heitzman of Berks County would be the new Berks County representative.

c. Planning – Scott France, Chair

i. Committee Update

Scott France reported that Amtrak will be partnering with SRPRA on the project as they have data and materials in-house to support our efforts. He said he had nothing new to report on the consultant side of the process yet as he does not have the SDP guidelines yet. He received the paperwork last Friday for the \$250k state grant for a feasibility study, but this will be held until the FRA grant results comes through.

Scott France explained that PA House General Assembly Bill 902 which relates to local transportation funding could be an important tool in generating revenue for passenger rail service projects.

Christian Leinbach shared his thoughts on potential for participation by 2nd class counties and authorities in which 1st and 2nd class counties participate and asked for Board members to consider and share their thoughts prior to the Board's next meeting.

Jim Gerlach, Assistant Secretary, asked that implementation at the county level tied to the authority, specifically in support of transportation, might be recommended.

d. Personnel – Comm. Moskowitz, Chair

i. Committee Update

Marian Moskowitz, Vice Chair, said she had no news to report.

e. Community Engagement – Jim Gerlach, Chair

i. Committee Update

Jim Gerlach reported that his committee hasn't met since the SRPRA's last Board meeting, and that his committee is awaiting the FRA results re further action.

7. Executive Director's Report

Tom Frawley, Executive Director, said that a Washington D.C. visit is being arranged for the first week of June, with a delegation of SRPRA representatives to meet members of our Congressional Delegation, and chairs and ranking members of key House and Senate committees. He is also planning a June 8th meeting with two Amtrak officials, Dennis Newman, Executive Vice President of Planning and Strategy, and Nicole Bucich, Vice President of Network Development. Tom said he is also at work developing the statement of work, budget and schedule to be used as attachments for the grant agreement associated with the \$750,000 Congressionally Mandated Grant.

8. Other Business

Chair Christian Leinbach said that although the public link through the SRPRA website seems to be working, there seemed to be some confusion over the non-public attendees' Zoom link. He asked Tom to provide the SRPA Board meeting Zoom information again and include it in upcoming Board packets. Tom agreed and asked that anyone who had trouble to get in touch with him.

9. General Public Comment

Christian Leinbach, Chair, announced that there was no public comment.

Adjourn

Christian Leinbach called to adjourn the meeting.

Assistant Treasurer Peter Urscheler, motioned, and Scott France, Secretary, seconded, all voted unanimously, to adjourn the May 2023 meeting of the SRPRA Board.

Next Board Meeting

June 26, 2023 at 3:00 p.m. via Zoom

Respectfully submitted,



Ann Marie Meehan

FINAL