

Schuylkill River Passenger Rail Authority Meeting

APPROVED Minutes

July 24, 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
Brian O’Leary, Executive Director, Chester County Planning Commission
Eddie Moran, Mayor, City of Reading
David Zellers, Montgomery County Director of Commerce

Authority Members Absent:

None

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 June 26, 2023 Minutes

Christian Leinbach called for any corrections to the minutes.

As there were no corrections or objections to the draft minutes of the June 26, 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. Committee Reports

a. Finance – Commissioner Kenneth Lawrence Jr., Chair

i. 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 Marian Moskowitz, Vice Chair, seconded, all voted unanimously, and the motion was carried to approve the payments of three bills presented in the SRPRA's July 24, 2023 Board meeting packet.

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

i. Report: Social Media Consultant On-Board

Brian O’Leary reported that the committee met earlier this month with the SRPRA’s new social media consultant, Virtual Farm Creative, who has developed a draft social media strategic plan. The Committee is working to finalize the plan and get it into implementation immediately.

c. Planning – Scott France, Chair

i. Committee Update

Scott France reported that members of the Committee met with PennDOT last week, including the new Deputy Secretary for Multimodal Transportation, Meredith Biggica and her staff. An additional meeting has been scheduled for October, presumably after the FRA announcement regarding projects accepted in to the Corridor Identification and Development Program (CIDP), to discuss longer term goals and details of working with PennDOT on the project. Members of the Committee also met with FRA staff in Reading to advance the Statement-of-Work (SOW), schedule and budget for the grant agreement to implement the Congressionally Mandated Grant awarded to Berks County. Members of the Committee will meet with members of SEPTA’s planning team to talk about alternative routes to be considered as part of the study to be funded with the Congressionally Mandated Grant.

Scott reminded the Board that liability insurance coverage for the SRPRA Board expires on September 1, 2023, is up for renewal, and indicated that they should anticipate having a vote on renewing it at next month’s Board meeting. He said that Tom Frawley has initiated the process to obtain a quote, which will be presented to the Executive and Finance Committees prior to the August Board meeting.

Scott reported that the Committee continues to develop an updated 2023-2025 budget. He also reported that the \$250K Pennsylvania local share account (LSA) grant awarded to Montgomery County has been signed and finalized and can potentially be used as a local match for future federal grants, including for the CIDP.

d. Personnel – Comm. Moskowitz, Chair

i. Committee Update

Commissioner Moskowitz, Chair, said that she had no news to report.

e. Community Engagement – Jim Gerlach, Chair

i. Committee Update

Jim Gerlach reported that his Committee met two weeks ago to discuss outreach to state and federal legislators in the corridor region in the form of a written memo updating them as to what’s been happening both at the Authority and in local communities. A similar memo will also be sent out to other stakeholders they’ve identified. A meeting is scheduled with legislative representatives after Labor Day, including the Governor’s office, so that they are actively engaged in the progress of the Authority and the rail project.

Jim announced that the Greater Reading Chamber Alliance (GRCA) was awarded an LSA category 4 grant, which will fund a train station location analysis (to be performed by Stantech) and a TOD

planning initiative (to be performed by Simone Collins) to look at current land development in the city.

6. Executive Director's Report

Tom Frawley, Executive Director, said that his participation on the June 28 Women's Transportation Seminar panel in Philadelphia, stimulated interest in the consultant community to respond to the SRPRA's upcoming RFP for consulting services. He also reported that he, Commissioner Moskowitz, Mayor Urscheler, Brian O'Leary and others met on June 27th with members of Senator Fetterman's staff and showed them the prospective Phoenixville station site and provided a brief presentation at Phoenixville Borough Hall to describe development taking place there.

7. Other Business

Christian Leinbach suggested holding three annual in-person SRPRA Board meetings in Reading, Pottstown and Phoenixville would bring added attention and focus to the project and said it would be good for the communities. Ken Lawrence agreed but added that he preferred in-person to hybrid meetings.

Mayor Moran suggested that the SRPRA hold a mobile tour to visit the three communities proposed to be served by the SRPRA passenger rail, possibly to be held in the fall after the results of the Corridor application is announced. Christian asked Tom to lead an effort to see if the Board could be prepared to put something on the August agenda. And he proposed starting with Pottstown.

8. General Public Comment

Christian Leinbach, Chair, said that there was a comment from Adrian Jadic of Wyomissing, who is part of the Berks County Technical Committee for SRPRA. Adrian voiced his support for holding in-person meetings for SRPRA.

Christian said there was another public comment from Thomas Hickey of Malvern, PA, who wanted to commend the three counties for banding together to form the SRPRA and collectively undertake this renewed effort to restore rail service.

Christian said there was a public comment from Peggy Lee Clark, Executive Director of Pottstown Area Economic Development, thanking the Commissioner and said that Pottstown will be happy to be the first to hold an in-person meeting.

Adjourn

Christian Leinbach called to adjourn the meeting.

Assistant Treasurer Peter Urscheler, motioned, and Commissioner Ken Lawrence, seconded, all voted unanimously, to adjourn the July 2023 meeting of the SRPRA Board.

Next Board Meeting

August 28, 2023 at 3:00 p.m. via Zoom

Respectfully submitted,



Ann Marie Meehan