

Schuylkill River Passenger Rail Authority Meeting

APPROVED Minutes

January 22, 2024

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
Peter Urscheler, Phoenixville Borough Mayor, Assistant Treasurer
Brian O’Leary, Executive Director, Chester County Planning Commission
Eddie Moran, Mayor of Reading
Stephanie Henrick, Mayor of Pottstown
David Hunter, Executive Director, Berks County Planning Commission

Authority Members Absent:

None

1. Call to Order

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 December 18, 2023 Minutes

Christian Leinbach called for any corrections to the minutes. There were no corrections to the minutes.

As there were no corrections to the minutes, Christian Leinbach announced that the minutes were approved unanimously.

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. Election of Officers – Action

Mr. Scott France, SRPRA’s Secretary, proposed to postpone the election both of SRPRA officers and committee assignments until February, when there will be a full roster and the process can be conducted collaboratively. In February, the positions that will be voted upon will be Treasurer, Deputy Treasurer, Secretary, Deputy Secretary, and Deputy Chair.

Mr. Scott France moved to postpone the election of both SRPRA officers and committee assignments until the February SRPRA Board meeting; Mayor Eddie Moran seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

6. Committee Membership and Chairs – Action

See item 5; Mr. Scott France moved to postpone both the election of SRPRA officers and committee assignments until the February SRPRA Board meeting; Mayor Eddie Moran seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

7. Report on Progress Regarding FRA CIDP

Tom Frawley reported that SRPRA representatives met twice with representatives of the Federal Rail Administration (FRA) since acceptance of SRPRA into the FRA's Corridor Identification and Development Program (CIDP). Documentation necessary to for use as an attachment to the Grant agreement was completed on January 11, 2024 and is under review by FRA. It should be finalized within the next week or two, enabling the FRA to obligate funds for the grant, which will in turn enable SRPRA to execute the contract with AECOM, the SRPRA's selected consultant on the project. Another meeting with FRA will take place tomorrow, which should yield an update on the status of the review and provide guidance on specific next steps required.

Mr. Frawley welcomed Mr. David Hunter, who joins the SRPRA as a new Board member. David was one of the original three planners who played a key role in developing this rail project. David thanked the Board and told them he is looking forward to working as a team on the project and bringing passenger rail back to the corridor.

8. Committee Reports**a. Finance – Mayor Peter Urscheler, Acting Chair**

- i. Committee Update
- ii. Motion to Pay Bills – *Action*

Mayor Urscheler reported that the committee will address some annual banking “housekeeping” items, including updating banking signatories, once the new member from Montgomery County is appointed. In anticipation of incoming grant funding, the committee will determine whether it is appropriate to open separate accounts so that funds aren't comingled.

Mayor Urscheler said there were three bills paid and five bills due and presented for payment, subject to the Board's approval.

Mayor Urscheler motioned, Mr. Brian O'Leary seconded, all voted unanimously, and the motion was carried to approve the payments of eight bills presented in the SRPRA's January 22, 2024 Board meeting packet.

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

- i. Committee Update

Brian O'Leary reported that the committee met earlier in January and members are working with the SRPRA's consultant on redesigning the Authority's website to be more user-friendly and to appeal to both the general public and various organizations with which they will be working.

c. Planning – Scott France, Chair

- i. Committee Update

Scott France reported that as a result of the SRPRA's acceptance into the Corridor ID Program, his committee will be launching into next phases of discussions with major stakeholders including host railroads. They'll meet with PennDOT on February 6th and with Norfolk Southern on February 7th; a

meeting with SEPTA is also in the works to discuss early-stage service plan development. To bring Montgomery County's two new Commissioners up to speed on the project, an info session will be held on January 30th. In March, DVRPC asked for a presentation on an overview of the project. Scott informed the Board that the Impact (formerly *Railvolution*) National Conference will be coming to Philadelphia this October, noted that their impact as a nationwide organization concerned with public transit and development issues, and encouraged the Board to look into connecting with them regarding potential participation in the conference.

d. Personnel – Comm. Moskowitz, Chair

i. Committee Update

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

e. Community Engagement – Mayor Urscheler, Acting Chair

i. Committee Update

Mayor Urscheler reported that public stakeholder meetings would be scheduled in the coming months, now that the SRPRA project has been accepted into the CIDP, and that these would be publicized well in advance. Mayor Urscheler noted that although not strictly part of the community engagement effort, the Board meeting for April 2024 will be an in-person meeting to be held in Phoenixville.

f. By-Laws – Scott France, Chair

i. Revision of Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation– Action

Scott France said the Bylaws have been updated and are available on the SRPRA's website. The Articles of Amendment (to the Articles of Incorporation) are expected to soon be filed with the State; resolutions have been obtained from all three counties (Berks, Chester and Montgomery counties), as well as affidavits or proofs of publication. Tom Frawley and SRPRA's Solicitor are working on getting the Articles filed after they are advertised, which must be three days in advance of the filing; this should be wrapped up by next month's meeting.

9. Executive Director's Report – 2023 Year in Review and 2024 Look Ahead

Tom Frawley, Executive Director, provided a review of what occurred re the SRPRA project in the past year and what he anticipates will be tackled in 2024. Tom reported on the grant application and the various grants received. The Authority continues to build upon working relationships forged with Congressional and State delegations who supported the grant application. Work continues on the local level with partners in the anchor communities in Pottstown, Reading and Phoenixville and with stakeholder organizations to broaden awareness up and down the corridor. Social presence was established on social media. Finally, the project was accepted into the Federal Corridor ID Program on December 8th, and AECOM was selected as consultant.

Tom said looking forward in the immediate term we will see finalization of the grant agreement with FRA and finalization of the consultant agreement with AECOM. He hoped that by end of 2024, the Service Development Plan will be close to complete, with the project well defined and ready to advance into preliminary design and engineering, and preparation of environmental documentation. Christian Leinbach commended Tom on his summary and suggested Tom compile a printed report that could be posted to the website for folks who were unable to attend.

David Hunter added that it might be helpful to add a list of all conferences SRPRA representatives have attended to promote the return of passenger rail to build credibility and get the word out. Christian asked that the Marketing Committee handle this, as they are tasked with managing the website.

Brian O’Leary, Chair of the Marketing Committee, said he would share this idea with them and said he would await Tom’s written report. Tom said he would get that to Brian within the next day or two.

Tom reminded the Board that completed statements of financial interest for 2023 will soon be due from all Board members as well as from himself and Dan Becker in the beginning of March. Christian acknowledged that the Authority would need to keep a set on file. He asked that the statements be emailed to Tom or sent via hard copy, and copy Dan Becker. Deadline is March 1st, but please submit by Monday, February 26th.

Marian Moskowitz commented that during the first CIDP meeting with FRA, the attendees were very positive and anxious to move forward with the SRPRA project.

10. Other Business

There was no other business.

11. General Public Comment

Howard Brown from Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation asked that it be mentioned in the Year in review document (See Item 9) that Pottstown was awarded a DOT thriving communities grant, which is a 2-year technical assistance grant that will lay the groundwork for Pottstown’s residents to equitably benefit from transit-oriented development.

12. Adjourn

Christian Leinbach called to adjourn the meeting.

Christian Leinbach motioned, Peter Urscheler seconded, and all voted unanimously, to adjourn the January 2024 meeting of the SRPRA Board.

Next Board Meeting

February 26, 2024 at 3:00 p.m. via Zoom

Respectfully submitted,



Ann Marie Meehan