

Schuylkill River Passenger Rail Authority Meeting Approved Minutes

September 23, 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

Peter Urscheler, Phoenixville Borough Mayor, Treasurer

Scott France, Executive Director, Montgomery County Planning Commission, Secretary

Brian O’Leary, Executive Director, Chester County Planning Commission, Assistant Secretary

David Hunter, Executive Director, Berks County Planning Commission

Eddie Moran, Mayor of Reading

Stephanie Henrick, Mayor of Pottstown

Authority Members Absent:

Tom DiBello, Montgomery County Commissioner, Assistant Treasurer

1. Call to Order

Christian Leinbach, Chair of the SRPRA, called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

2. Adoption of August 26, 2024 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 SRPRA’s August, 26, 2024 meeting minutes stand approved as presented.

3. Board Member Comments

There were no Board member comments.

4. Public Comment on Agenda Items

Dan Becker of Kozloff Stoudt Attorneys, legal counsel for the Authority, read the guidelines for making public comments.

There were no public comments on agenda items.

5. Committee Reports

a. Finance – Mayor Peter Urscheler, Chair

i. Committee Update

Mayor Peter Urscheler reported that the Finance Committee met last week and reminded attendees that their meetings are open to the public.

He said that a PA DCED LSA grant application would be submitted shortly by the SRPRA, which would provide matching funds needed for Step 3.

Peter informed the Board that the Committee is evaluating bookkeeping and accounting software suitable for the Authority's needs.

Peter added that the Finance Committee will be working with Tom Frawley to develop and put in place a staff expense policy for the Authority. Peter reminded the Board that the next committee meeting would be held on October 16th at 4 p.m.

ii. Motion to Pay Bills – *Action*

Peter indicated the Finance Committee recommends that the Board ratify the SRPRA's three prepaid bills received between August 26th 2024 and September 22nd 2024 totaling \$122.88. Additionally, a fourth bill for \$2,085.00 was received and prepaid for KMRD Partners for the SRPRA's annual D&O insurance premium, to insure continuity of coverage. The Finance Committee recommends the approval of four prepaid bills totaling \$2,207.88, and the approval of the payment for three outstanding bills from the same time period in the amount of \$53,077.98.

Peter Urscheler motioned, Marian Moskowitz seconded, all voted unanimously, and the motion was carried to approve the payments of prepaid and outstanding bills presented in the SRPRA's September 23, 2024 Board meeting packet.

b. Personnel – Comm. Moskowitz, Chair

i. Committee Update

Marian Moskowitz, Chair, presented the Personnel Committee's recommendation to the Board on the renewal of the SRPRA's contract with its Executive Director. The Committee met on September 18th to discuss the renewal. She announced that upon negotiating the terms, the contract will provide for a rate per hour of \$150, which is a \$20 increase on the current rate, to an increased maximum of 30 hours per week. The two-year contract will take effect September 1, 2024.

ii. Motion to Renew Executive Director's Contract-*Action*

Marian Moskowitz, Vice Chair, said that the Personnel Committee recommends that the SRPRA Board vote to renew the two-year renewal contract with Tom Frawley with the terms presented in the Board's September meeting packet. Board members expressed their gratitude and support for Tom's ability, knowledge and willingness to serve in the role as Executive Director.

Marian Moskowitz motioned, and Mayor Eddie Moran seconded, all voted unanimously, and the motion was carried to approve the SRPRA renewal of the consulting agreement for the Executive Director, based on the terms presented in the packet.

6. Executive Director's Report

a. CIDP Status

Tom Frawley, Executive Director, reported on progress for the Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) Corridor Identification and Development Program (CIDP). He said the budget was submitted earlier the same day, which is the last element of work on Step 1. Once submission is approved, transition to Step 2 can begin. He may have more information on the status of FRA's review of the budget upon attending the next FRA meeting on October 1st.

b. Other Activities

Tom said that he will be seeking letters of support from the 3 counties (Berks, Montgomery and

Chester), as well as from state and federal delegations on behalf of SRPRA for the LSA grant application. Christian Leinbach asked Tom to prepare an email formally requesting the information from the counties.

Tom said he will be attending the AASHTO CORT (American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials, Council on Rail Transportation) Annual Meeting in Norfolk, Virginia on September 23 and 24. FRA will be making multiple presentations and the meeting presents opportunities for multiple in-person interactions with the FRA project team.

Tom will be participating in the Regional Day session of the Philadelphia Mpack Conference that will be held October 21-23, 2024 in Philadelphia. Scott France will also be attending with a large contingent from the Pottstown Health and Wellness Foundation.

7. Marketing Team Report–Brian O’Leary

Brian O’Leary reported that the Communications Committee met recently and discussed social media outreach. He said that he created and produced two 12-minute YouTube videos on SRPRA stations and one on the project benefits. He asked attendees to go to the SRPRA website landing page to view and share.

8. Planning Team Report–Scott France

Scott France reported that the team continues to meet monthly with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). He will be inviting PennDOT to the Reading in-person October Board meeting. He is coordinating with DVRPC to register SRPRA events in the region. The Planning Team is also coordinating with PennDOT. Scott said that tickets to the Regional Day session at the October Mpack Conference are \$20 if anyone would like to attend. (Conference registration is significantly more expensive.) Focus will be on the Southeastern PA Schuylkill corridor. Scott gave a shout-out to the Pottstown Health and Wellness Foundation and said they’ve been great partners. Up to 20 members will participate in the event, thanks to their funding outreach efforts.

9. October In-Person Board Meeting Plans –David Hunter

David reminded attendees that next month’s in-person SRPRA Board meeting and reception will be held on October 28th at Saucony Creek Brewery, 692 Franklin St. in Reading. He asked attendees to encourage community partners and stakeholders to attend. The event, hosted by Berks County, the City of Reading, and the Greater Reading Chamber Alliance will open at 2:30 p.m., with the meeting at 3 p.m. and reception following at 4 p.m. Tom Frawley plans to provide a “deep dive” into the project’s process, and Aaron Gantz plans to provide an overview of Reading’s downtown strategic plan.

10. Other Business

There was no other business discussed.

11. General Public Comment

Karen Shuey of the Reading Eagle asked whether the SRPRA’s submittals to the FRA will be available for publication. Tom Frawley said that once the documents have been approved they will be made available to the public.

Jeff Witman of Exeter Township commented with a question on how much does an Executive Director make in PA. Tom Frawley explained that he serves as a consultant on a part-time basis, not an employee, and provides 25% discount from his normal rate. Brian O’Leary added that the cost per hour is a fully burdened rate and includes overhead costs, such as benefits, meaning that the rate paid is not limited to direct labor.

12. Adjourn

Christian Leinbach called to adjourn the meeting.

Marian Moskowitz motioned, Peter Urscheler seconded, and all voted unanimously, to adjourn the September 2024 meeting of the SRPRA Board.

Next Board Meeting

October 28, 2024 at 3:00 p.m. **IN PERSON in READING and via Zoom**

Respectfully submitted,



Ann Marie Meehan