

BERRIEN COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes
May 16, 2019

CHAIRMAN TO CALL THE MEETING TO ORDER:

Vice Chairperson Teri Freehling called the regular meeting to order at 8:36 A.M. in the Board of Commissioners' room at the Berrien County Administration Center, 701 Main Street, St. Joseph, Michigan.

ROLL CALL:

The Vice Chair instructed the Clerk to take a roll call with the following results:

11 PRESENT: William Chickering, Jim Curran, Teri Freehling, Robert Harrison, Christopher Heugel, Michael Majerek, Don Meeks, Ezra Scott, Dave Vollrath, Mamie Yarbrough and R. McKinley Elliott (Arrived at 9:05 A.M.).

1 ABSENT: Jon Hinkelman.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE MAY 9, 2019 MEETING:

Commissioner Vollrath moved, seconded by Commissioner Scott, to approve the regular minutes of May 9, 2019. Motion carried, no nays.

REQUISITION REVIEW:

Annette Christie presented the requisitions to the Board for their review and discussion.

PUBLIC COMMENTS – Per the Berrien County Board of Commissioners' Bylaws, those speaking during public comments may do so no longer than two minutes and shall identify themselves by name and city, township, or village. (Article III, 3.9B-C):

The following individuals spoke about the Berrien County public transportation:

- Richard Vavra-Musser, Lincoln Charter Township
- Melissa Clapper, St. Joseph Charter Township
- Tony Benhart, Sodus Township
- Darrin Schaer, Pipestone Township

SCHEDULED DISCUSSION:

Transportation and Planning Coordinator Evan Smith and Community Development Director Dan Fette gave a follow-up PowerPoint presentation on the Berrien County Transportation Pilot Program and discussed the following:

- Comments/Questions Received by Staff:
 - Budget
 - Operation
 - Governance
- Budget: Why do State and Federal dollars go up?
 - FY18 Revenue:
 - State: \$336,293
 - Federal: \$157,117
 - Contract Fares: \$243,916
 - Public Fares: \$45,229
 - Proposed FY2020 Revenue:
 - State: \$411,290
 - Federal: \$189,826

- Contract Fares: \$144,000
 - Public Fares: \$145,080
- Budget: General Fund vs. Berrien Bus Fund Balance:
 - Berrien Bus fund balance of roughly \$200,000 was retained using the Federal/State funded transportation program and must be either spent on transportation service or returned.
 - County General Fund appropriation is essentially matching the use of fund balance to provide increased public service (which requires increased local funding).
- Budget: General Public vs. Contract Service:
 - Contract Service:
 - Cost: \$60/hr.
 - Reimbursement: \$34/hr.
 - Contract Fares: \$30/hr.
 - Net: +\$4/hr.
 - General Public:
 - Cost: \$60/hr.
 - Reimbursement: \$34/hr.
 - Public Fares: \$5/\$2.50/hr.
 - 3 Passengers/hr.: \$15/hr.
 - Net: -\$11/hr.
- Operation: Will the Pilot Program require additional Capital Investment?
 - Since we will be operating “Flex Routes” and not “Fixed Routes” we are not planning any new structures like Bus Shelters.
 - We would likely need to purchase signs, brochures, update our website, host public meetings, etc. This is budgeted under “Marketing”.
 - We will not need to expand our fleet to operate the Pilot Program.
- Operation: Fares? Frequency of Service? Scheduling?
 - We are planning to stick with our existing fare structure of \$5.00/\$2.50 for demand response trips.
 - Flex Route service will be \$2.50/\$1.25 and will operate four “round trips” per day from 7:00 A.M. – 5:00 P.M.
 - Demand Response trips will be scheduled on a “priority system” with “advanced reservation” getting first priority followed by same day service.
- Operation: Connect to TCATA/Niles/Buchanan
 - Flex Routes into Niles and Benton Harbor will end/begin at TCATA and Niles DART “base”. Passengers can then use local service to get to their final destination.
 - Buchanan DART has scheduled service between Niles and Buchanan.
 - If approved, there remains work to be done with the other providers in terms of coordination of service.
- Operation: How did staff arrive at ridership estimates for the Pilot Program?
 - We took the ridership estimates provided in the service plan and reduced them to reflect the reduction in service levels.
 - Ridership is based on three (3) passengers per hour, which is a baseline benchmark used for rural transit service.
 - We wanted to budget “low” for ridership numbers as to not over estimate fare revenue.
 - Fact is, we do not know what the level of demand will be until we provide the service.
- Governance: What will be the role of the Berrien County Advisory Transportation Committee?
 - Monitor the Pilot Program and make necessary adjustments.
 - Commissioners on BCATC will hopefully provide status updates to the BOC. County staff can assist.
 - Engage in conversations aimed at setting up the “next phase” of countywide transportation.
 - Invite other stakeholders (Senior Centers, SWMPC, SLC Municipalities, Service Agencies, Non-Emergency Medical Providers, etc.) to attend meetings and/or present.

- Governance: Given their level of involvement up to this point, what will be the role of SWMPC and SLC?
 - County staff met with both groups this week and they are both in support of the County moving ahead.
 - SWMPC will assist in providing technical planning assistance to County staff and the BCATC.
 - SLC will continue to provide marketing/outreach.
 - Both groups will be invited to attend BCATC meetings.

Discussion was held.

Chairperson Elliott will go to each Committee today to discuss Resolution #F1905235 – Berrien County Transportation Pilot Program. He suggested placing the Resolution #F1905235 on the Agenda next week.

OTHER BUSINESS: None.

ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting was adjourned at 9:24 A.M.

R. McKinley Elliott, Chairperson

Sharon J. Tyler, County Clerk

Minutes are to be approved at the full board meeting on May 23, 2019.