

COMMISSION MINUTES
TUESDAY, JUNE 23, 2020 10:00 AM

COMMISSIONER PRESENT: Chairman Flozell Daniels, Commissioner Fred Neal, Jr, Commissioner Mark Raymond, Commissioner Walter Tillery, Commissioner Mostofa Sarwar, Commissioner Laura Bryan, Commission Art Walton, and Commissioner Sharon Wegner

COMMISSIONER ABSENT: None.

1. **Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 10:15 am.
2. **Roll Call:** A quorum was confirmed.
3. **RTA Chairman's Report**
No report was given.
4. **Jefferson Parish Report**
No report was given.
5. **RTA General Counsel's Report**
No Report was given.
6. **RTA Chief Executive Officer's Report**
Mr. Wiggins gave a brief update on transit service during COVID-19 pandemic.
7. **ADA Hurricane Briefing**
Robert Hickman invited Commissioners to a 12th Annual Senior Hurricane Preparedness Workshop on June 30th at 10:00 am via Zoom to assist the elderly and disabled with storm preparedness. Representatives from the City's Health Dept and the Office of Homeland Security will participate, and RTA will explain our role in the City's evacuation plan.
8. **Ferry Update**
Mr. Wiggins introduced the new Chief of Maritime Operations, Mr. Jose Garcia who ran the ferry system in Puerto Rico. Mr. Garcia provided individual updates on the Margaret Lab, the Levy, the Armiger, the Thomas Jefferson, RTA 1 and RTA 2. Based on communications with Metal Shark, RTA 2 will be the first vessel to be transported to the facility for repairs. Mr. Wiggins stated he is more comfortable with our maritime operations. Commissioner Daniels inquired about funding and if the current budget is appropriate. Mr. Wiggins stated maritime could always use more funding but for now the level is appropriate and that the agency is looking at federal funding to address maintenance issues.

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9. Election Day Free Transportation

A Resolution was introduced stating that the RTA will provide free transportation services, all day to residents in Orleans Parish to get to their designated voting place. Mr. Wiggins explained to the Commission the public benefit for providing mobility options to residents and the agency benefit of increased ridership after the election for providing this service. A motion was made by Commissioner Tillery, seconded Commissioner Wegner and adopted.

10. Financial Statements – April 2020

The CFO gave a report of revenues and expenses for the first full month of operations under COVID 19. For passenger revenue, RTA budgeted \$1.6 million for the full month of April we had a No Fare Policy resulting in a negative variance.

Mr. Major explained that year-to-date fares collected was \$3.3 million and the budgeted \$6 million for a negative variance. Collections for General Use Sales Tax (Budgeted \$25.3M/Actual \$19.7M), Hotel/Motel (Budgeted \$3.3M/Actual \$1.9M) and Motor Vehicle collections (Budgeted \$1.7M/Actual \$1.5M) were all down resulting in negative variances by 23% overall. Mr. Major further explained that the funding received from the Cares Act has allowed the agency to operate at 80%.

Regarding operating expenses, costs pertaining to labor, services, materials & supplies were steady resulting in positive variances (savings). Mr. Major explained that during the pandemic diesel fuel dropped to \$1.10 per gallon resulting in a savings due to reduced consumption. Mr. Major thanked Mr. Wiggins for his lobbying efforts and the \$43.8M received in Cares Act Funding. As of today, the RTA has drawn down \$14.5M in eligible expenses.

11. Sales Tax Revenue Refunding Bonds – Series 2020

Mr. Major gave a brief background on the Resolution up for consideration. In 2019, staff presented the idea of refinancing and a new money issue of approximately \$80M to fund new agency projects. Today's presentation will focus on the refinance component. The decision to refinance was based on marketplace opportunities. Staff looked at the agency's 5 outstanding debt service commitments totaling \$110M and historical interest rates and saw an opportunity to refinance the agency's debt obligations for lower payments.

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Mr. Major explained that the bond refinancing received unanimous approval from the Louisiana State Bond Commission and the RTA selected a diverse underwriting team (Wells Fargo and Blue Capital) through the competitive process. Overall, net present value savings from refinancing will range between \$5-\$8 million dollars. A motion was made by Commissioner Raymond and seconded by Commissioner Wegner and adopted.

Consent Agenda: The following items appeared on the consent agenda. Commissioner Raymond moved and Commissioner Walton seconded to adopt the Consent Agenda. Resolution No. 20-051 adopted unanimously.

A. Authorizations to Solicit & Award:

1. Replacement of the 10-Ton Unit Air Condition for the IT Computer Room.
Resolution No. 20-053 was adopted unanimously.

B. Cooperative Endeavor Agreements (CEA)

1. RTA and the New Orleans Public Belt – Permit Third Parties Access
Resolution No. 20-054 was adopted unanimously.
2. RTA and the City of New Orleans – Demolish Sections of the North Arcade Wall
Resolution No. 20-055 was adopted unanimously.

C. Amendment – Cooperative Endeavor Agreement (CEA) RTA and the Port of New Orleans
Resolution No. 20-056 was adopted unanimously.

D. Amendment RTA and the DOTD Ferry Cooperative Endeavor Agreement

1. Exhibit D – Inventory of Spare Parts
2. Exhibit K 0 Statement of Annual Ferry Operating Subsidy

The motion was approved unanimously.

12. New Business
None.

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13. Audience Questions & Comments

PLEASE NOTE: Persons wishing to submit public comments must either enter their full name in the chat section of the Zoom meeting or email your comments to Marcom@rtafoward.org to have your comment read aloud at the meeting.

SPEAKER #1: Mr. David Shepperd, Director of Policy for Youth Force NOLA Spoke today to offer support for the New Links Project.

SPEAKER #2: Valerie Jefferson

Spoke about high ridership routes on NOE and Westbank during peak time and would like to know what is being done to relieve crowdedness. She also asked about the transition of Transdev employees to RTA. Currently there are 700 employees and RTA's current organizational structure only allows 70 employees per State law. Ms. Jefferson also inquired about the communication plan during hurricane season. She stated that operators usually get instructions at the last minute and would like more notice. Ms. Jefferson also reminded Commissioners about the \$77 million dollars in the pension plan and that will need to be properly administered. Ms. Jefferson also stated that the Commission's attorney has a conflict of interest and he wears too many hats sitting as Chair Tinsel, trustee on the pension board, and an attorney for RTA. Regarding Share Ride, paratransit might be contracted out and wanted to get clarification. CM Daniels mentioned it will be best for Mr. Wiggins to draft a written response for Ms. Jefferson addressing all her questions.

Mr. Wiggins said that Labor Management meetings are happening every week and to keep from having the same conversation at two different meetings. He suggested that the we keep the transition questions with the Labor Meeting.

SPEAKER #3: Autumn White with RIDE NO

Her organization started a new program that include public knowledge and engagement of RTA Board Meetings. On their social media platform, the public asked when can riders hear more about transfer center? COVID-19 slowed us down from doing our outreach meetings. Will work on rescheduling the public meetings. Will the bus stop at N. Rampart remain? Alex will check and follow-up.

SPEAKER #4: Jim Goodwin Appreciated the positive, detailed information on the ferry update and requests to make these updates on a regular basis. Asked about a new terminal at Chalmette location. Mr. Wiggins indicated the RTA applied for a grant to update the terminal but there are no plans to building

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anything new. He also asked about the demographics of staff at the RTA. Mr. Wiggins didn't have that info and

SPEAKER #5: Alex Posorske

Looking forward to conversation of bring back a capital plan. Ask for transparency in how projects are picked and suggested that projects should be based on the Strategic Mobility Plan. Encouraged the RTA to pick up regular updates to keep the plan relevant and to keep it as a living, guiding document for RTA.

Also hope to hear the benchmarks for the transition that the public should be aware of.

SPEAKER #6: Mr. Robinson

Response to public safety during the beginning of COVID is very refreshing make the rides free but did express a concern of a lack of mask wearing and staging. When the question was raised with customer service, he was told it was optional and not mandatory and asked for clarification from Mr. Wiggins. CM Daniels asked what is being done. Mr. Wiggins spent time during the weekend making personal observations of operators and passengers not wearing mask. Going forward he will reinforce that operator masks are mandatory and for passengers the same and will make a mask available. What he doesn't want is to escalate the mask wearing situation. In the event if it does happen, they will deny access or be asked to leave. CM Daniels said this is should be enforced vigorously and if operators refuse then can't work for RTA and for passengers no mask then they can't ride.

14. Adjournment

Commissioner Wegner moved and Commissioner Tillery seconded to adjourn the Board Meeting of June 23, 2020. The motion was approved unanimously.