
**MINUTES OF PVTA'S
ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
May 20, 2020**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Advisory Board Meeting of the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority was held on Wednesday, May 20, 2020 at 12:00 P.M. remotely in accordance with the Governor's State of Emergency Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, Section 20, relieving from the requirement of section 20 of chapter 30A that it conduct its meetings in a public place that is open and physically accessible to the public, permitting a public body to allow remote participation by all members.

	<u>Present (49.42 votes)</u>	<u>Not Present (12.66 votes)</u>
Agawam	Michael Squindo	
Amherst	Douglas Slaughter	
Belchertown	Brian O'Leary	
Chicopee	Steve Huntley	
East Longmeadow	Carolyn Brennan	
Easthampton		Brendan Rogers
Granby		Glen Sexton
Hadley	David Moskin	
Hampden	Becky Moriarty	
Holyoke	Mayor Alex Morse	
Leverett		Peter D'Errico
Longmeadow	Mark Gold	
Ludlow		Derek DeBarge
Northampton	Mayor David Narkewicz	
Palmer		Barbara Barry
Pelham		Karen Willard-Ribeiro
South Hadley		Michael Sullivan
Springfield	Tasheena Davis	
Sunderland		Geoff Kravitz
Ware	John Carroll	
West Springfield	Jim Czach	
Westfield	Peter Miller	
Wilbraham	Paula Dubord	
Williamsburg	J.M. Sorrell	
ADA Representative		Vacant
Rider Representative		Patrick Burke

A quorum of 31.05 vote being present, Chairman of the Advisory Board, Mayor David Narkewicz, called the remote meeting of PVTA's Advisory Board to order at 12:05 PM; majority vote of 49.42 present.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairman Mayor Narkewicz asked if any members of the public would like to make a public comment. No public comments were made.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairman Mayor Narkewicz asked for a motion from the Advisory Board to approve the meeting minutes from the March 25, 2020 Regular Advisory Board Meeting.

Motion: Moved and seconded (O’Leary/Gold) to approve the meeting minutes from the March 25, 2020 Regular Advisory Board Meeting.

Chairman Mayor Narkewicz asked if the Board had any discussion. Hearing none; asked for a roll call vote to approve the minutes.

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Agawam	Michael Squindo	
Amherst	Douglas Slaughter	
Belchertown	Brian O’Leary	
Chicopee	Steve Huntley	
East Longmeadow	Carolyn Brennan	
Easthampton		
Granby		
Hadley	David Moskin	
Hampden	Becky Moriarty	
Holyoke	Mayor Alex Morse	
Leverett		
Longmeadow	Mark Gold	
Ludlow		
Northampton	Mayor David Narkewicz	
Palmer		
Pelham		
South Hadley		
Springfield	Tasheena Davis	
Sunderland		
Ware	John Carroll	
West Springfield	Jim Czach	
Westfield	Peter Miller	
Wilbraham	Paula Dubord	
Williamsburg	J.M. Sorrell	
ADA Representative		
Rider Representative		

All present were in favor. Motion passed by a vote of 16-0.

4. REPORT OF THE FINANCE & AUDIT SUB-COMMITTEE

Doug Slaughter, Chairman of the Finance & Audit Sub-Committee reported that the Finance & Audit Committee met on Monday, May 18th. The Committee voted to approve the meeting minutes of March 24, 2020. The committee received a report on PVTA's FY21 Budget which will be presented today by the CFO. PVTA needs to have an adopted budget before June 1st. The Board can vote to amend the budget as more information becomes available. The Finance & Audit Committee voted to approve and adopt PVTA's FY21 Budget.

Chairman Mayor Narkewicz asked for a motion from the Advisory Board to accept the report of the Finance & Audit Sub-Committee.

Motion: Moved and seconded (O'Leary/Squindo) to accept the report of the Finance & Audit Sub-Committee.

Chairman Mayor Narkewicz asked if the Board had any discussion. Hearing none; asked for a roll call vote.

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Agawam	Michael Squindo	
Amherst	Douglas Slaughter	
Belchertown	Brian O'Leary	
Chicopee	Steve Huntley	
East Longmeadow	Carolyn Brennan	
Easthampton		
Granby		
Hadley	David Moskin	
Hampden	Becky Moriarty	
Holyoke	Mayor Alex Morse	
Leverett		
Longmeadow	Mark Gold	
Ludlow		
Northampton	Mayor David Narkewicz	
Palmer		
Pelham		
South Hadley		
Springfield	Tasheena Davis	
Sunderland		
Ware	John Carroll	
West Springfield	Jim Czach	
Westfield	Peter Miller	
Wilbraham	Paula Dubord	
Williamsburg	J.M. Sorrell	
ADA Representative		
Rider Representative		

All present were in favor. Motion passed by a vote of 16-0.

5. FY21 PVTA BUDGET

Chief Financial Officer, Lisa Seymour, reported on the FY21 Budget:

For the FY21 budget, no changes have been made to the draft budget presented to the Board in March. Currently, not all the April bills have been received, so the true impact of Covid cannot be measured. Due to Covid, the budget will have to be revisited a few times for amendments as things progress and PVTA resumes full service.

PVTA was awarded a federal CARES grant to help offset some of the Covid expenses. The CARES Grant is for \$36 million and can be used for the next three years. This is money to keep providing service. We are waiting for MassDOT to approve moving our remaining discretionary funds to FY21. This will give us \$114,000 more to help balance the deficit. We also believe CMAQ funding carryover may be closer to \$100,000 which will help to balance the deficit. We will withdraw more on the federal operating grant to balance the budget. Revenue for MGM, the schools and colleges are still up in the air depending on when they reopen. Our budget assumptions are made on the anticipated Governors Budget of \$90 million. Covid has delayed that budget until at least July and payments from MassDOT for operating assistance are being discussed as paying 1/12 of last year's budget but may be considered too high.

FY21 Budget, included in Board Packet (same as presented at March Meeting):

Revenues

- Federal Operating Assistance – The same amount in federal operating assistance as in FY20 is budgeted. MassDOT's preliminary RTCAP program is currently under review.
- State Contract Assistance – Increased from FY20 due to the preliminary Governor's RTA budget of \$90.5 Million. This may change due to final budgets released by the House and the Senate. In addition, the State Budget maybe delayed.
- SATCO is reporting a decrease projection in fare revenue of 13.3% for the year. Ridership reports show ridership on those routes down by 10.6%. Passes are also down significantly.
- Shuttle revenue to Palmer/Ware is showing a decline in revenue possibly due to a budgeting error since ridership has increased this year prior to COVID.
- Paratransit revenue is down due to declined ridership.
- Other revenue is down for Admin and Info systems due to them being classed differently. These will be fixed by final budget and put in the appropriate accounts.
- The Local Assessments show the allowable increase of 2.5% but the COVID virus impact of declined ridership and decreased mileage will affect this amount by decreasing the local assessments.
- The Other Operating Subsidy increased due to new funding opportunities that we were granted but please note that the CMAQ is in this amount which may not be funded.

- Although the Administrator agrees in principle to the formula for the RTA's for Operating Assistance proposed by MARTA, PVTA is working with MARTA to allocated discretionary funding to PVTA to account for its service size as compared to the other RTAs.

Expenses

- The retirees Insurance is increased from FY20 to FY21 due to the addition of a retiree added to the pool.
- FY 21 Security Services for Customer Services at Union Station and Holyoke Transit Center increased due to a rate increase in the security guards per contract.
- Paratransit for the COA's appears to be over budget slightly for FY20. This may be due to the budget layout difference.
- The Management contract for First Transit is expiring July of 2020. The FY21 budget reflects an increase in the management services contract.
- The Administration staff wages reflect a 3% increase for staff for FY21 to coincide with previous cost of living raises in past years.
- SATCO/VATCO Equipment/Maintenance and Miscellaneous are under budget due to budget differences between the previous budget and this one.
- SATCO/VATCO Telephone budget is over and Utilities budget is under due to certain expenses being reclassified into the appropriate category to reflect a more complete picture.
- Fuel cost for FY21 is decreased due to SATCO/VATCO's Comptroller securing a cost for Diesel at \$1.78 a gallon down from \$2.06 this year. This savings is also reflected in UMass Transit fuel cost.
- The UMass Transit subsidy is showing a decrease of 2.13% due to their FY20 budget coming in under budget. The FY21 budget assumptions are based on the estimated FY 20 budget assumption with a 2% increase. For FY20 the college portion/reimbursement is decreased by their savings since the college costs factor in after PVTA pays their \$3.5 million.
- UMass Transit Telephone and Utilities differentials are due to reclassing. This will be fixed by final budget.
- UMass Transit claim payments were not budgeted in the previous budget. Due to a recent major accident adjustment were made to reflect possible outcome of damages.

Chairman Mayor Narkewicz asked for a motion from the Advisory Board to approve PVTA's FY21 Budget as presented with provisions that the Board will review the budget in 90-days when more information is available.

Motion: Moved and seconded (Slaughter/Gold) to approve PVTA's FY21 Budget as presented with provisions that the Board will review the budget in 90-days when more information is available.

Chairman Mayor Narkewicz asked if the Board had any discussion. Hearing none; asked for a roll call vote.

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Agawam		Michael Squindo
Amherst		Douglas Slaughter
Belchertown		Brian O’Leary
Chicopee		Steve Huntley
East Longmeadow		Carolyn Brennan
Easthampton		
Granby		
Hadley		David Moskin
Hampden		Becky Moriarty
Holyoke		Mayor Alex Morse
Leverett		
Longmeadow		Mark Gold
Ludlow		
Northampton		Mayor David Narkewicz
Palmer		
Pelham		
South Hadley		
Springfield		Tasheena Davis
Sunderland		
Ware		John Carroll
West Springfield		Jim Czach
Westfield		Peter Miller
Wilbraham		Paula Dubord
Williamsburg		J.M. Sorrell
ADA Representative		
Rider Representative		

All present were in favor. Motion passed by a vote of 16-0.

6. ELECTION OF PVTA ADVISORY BOARD OFFICERS

Chairman Mayor Narkewicz stated that the following nominees have expressed interest in a PVTA Advisory Board Officer position and asked if there was any other interest before calling for a roll call vote to appoint officer positions:

- Mayor David Narkewicz for re-election of Chairman
- Doug Slaughter for Vice Chairman
- Michael Squindo for Advisory Board Clerk
- Brandy Pelletier for PVTA Clerk of the Board

Advisory Board Officers will be appointed for a three-year term starting July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2023.

Motion: Moved and seconded (O’Leary/Miller) to appoint to a three-year term the PVTA Advisory Board Officer nominations of:

- Mayor David Narkewicz: Chairman.
- Doug Slaughter: Vice Chairman
- Michael Squindo: Advisory Board Clerk
- Brandy Pelletier: PVTA Clerk of the Board

Chairman Mayor Narkewicz asked if the Board had any discussion. Hearing none; asked for a roll call vote.

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Agawam	Michael Squindo	
Amherst	Douglas Slaughter	
Belchertown	Brian O’Leary	
Chicopee	Steve Huntley	
East Longmeadow	Carolyn Brennan	
Easthampton		
Granby		
Hadley	David Moskin	
Hampden	Becky Moriarty	
Holyoke	Mayor Alex Morse	
Leverett		
Longmeadow	Mark Gold	
Ludlow		
Northampton	Mayor David Narkewicz	
Palmer		
Pelham		
South Hadley		
Springfield	Tasheena Davis	
Sunderland		
Ware	John Carroll	
West Springfield	Jim Czach	
Westfield	Peter Miller	
Wilbraham	Paula Dubord	
Williamsburg	J.M. Sorrell	
ADA Representative		
Rider Representative		

All present were in favor. Motion passed by a vote of 16-0.

7. DIRECTOR OF TRANSIT OPERATIONS REPORT

Director of Transit Operations, Paul Burns, reported the following:

Unfortunately, due to Covid-19, fixed route ridership in March fell by 35.7%. The pandemic led to mobility and employment restrictions, which resulted in reduced travel demand roughly beginning on March 15, 2020. PVTA started operating reduced weekday service on Monday, March 23 using Saturday schedules with modified service hours of 6:00 A.M. to 9:00 P.M, and regular Saturday and Sunday service with the modified service hours.

Due to Covid-19, systemwide ridership fell to about 25% of typical ridership levels, from a weekly average of 220,000 to about 50,000 and has continued to hover in that range. The ridership decline was most pronounced for the UMass garage, which fell to 6% of typical levels, ridership in SATCo fell to 37% and VATCo to 25% of typical levels.

Impacts of the pandemic have resulted in significant paratransit ridership declines. March has seen a reduction in ridership of more than 36%. Preliminary ridership data indicates that April paratransit ridership is down more than 80%.

The Paratransit Riders Council (PRC) missed one meeting due to Covid-19, however they were able to resume meeting online in April. The PRC has adopted a set of bylaws (attached) and elected officers at their April meeting.

We continue to work to meet the challenges presented by the pandemic. PVRTA has implemented numerous strategies to address the impacts. These include

- A modified operational schedule across the entire system with buses running on most routes from 6:00am to 9:00pm.
- The B7S, and Express 10S, Owl Shuttle, P11 and P20E routes are not operating during the pandemic.
- Other routes have seen modifications to their routes or schedules to accommodate demand or changing conditions.
- Instituted daily cleaning and disinfecting of vehicles.
- Acquired new cleaning technologies that allow us to disinfect vehicles quickly and reach difficult to access surfaces.
- Increased the amount of time and attention our maintenance departments spend cleaning vehicles.
- Drivers are provided with disinfectant wipes and sanitizer to clean and disinfect the driver's area throughout the day. As occupancy permits, drivers clean and disinfect passenger areas periodically throughout the day.
- Suspended fare collection to limit contact.
- Social distancing is encouraged on all vehicles. Buses and vans have notices posted for recommended passenger practices for social distancing.
- Seating is limited in the front section of the bus with wheelchair accessible seats reserved only for the elderly and disabled.
- Passengers are encouraged to board through the back door and those with disabilities can continue to use the front door as needed.
- The Customer Service window at Union Station and the Holyoke Transit Center have reduced hours operating from 11am to 2pm.
- ADA in person eligibility determination is being conducted via the phone.
- PVRTA continues to strongly discourage all non-essential travel.
- All riders are required to exit the bus at the end of its route and may not re-board the same vehicle immediately for a return trip.
- Multiple or consecutive round trips are not permitted.
- Riders who appear to be loitering on the bus will be asked to deboard.
- Drivers and passengers are now required to wear a mask or cloth covering for their nose and mouth in accordance with Governor Baker's Executive Order.
- Regularly distribute masks, bandanna's and similar products to ensure passengers have an effective means to cover their nose and mouth when using the PVRTA.

PVRTA has begun to plan for the resumption of normal operations. As we work to address the challenges of operating in an environment impacted by Covid-19 we are examining our operations

systemically and working to develop effective strategies that ensure we continue to provide appropriate levels of service to our passengers while also ensuring the safety of our riders and employees.

Each area of operations, from transit provision to customer service, maintenance and administration will have unique impacts and challenges that need to be addressed. We are working to solicit feedback from employees at all levels to determine effective strategies that will allow us to address the concerns of all stakeholders as we continue to provide service to help the region rebound.

8. ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Administrator Sheehan reported the following:

Currently, there is no reconciliation of the state budget. The House usually must have a budget by the end of April, the Senate at the end of May and then conference is conducted in June to have a final state budget by the end of June. The new rules due the pandemic indicate the House Ways and Means Committee must have a budget in by July 1st. The budget process will start at the time the budget is released. If a 1/12th budget is implemented, it will be based on last year's budget. That number is likely to be too high because approximately \$2 Billion in revenue has been reported as lost since March.

PVTA was awarded \$36 Million in funds through the CARES Act. Funding has been provided at a 100-percent federal share, with no local match required, and is available to support capital, operating, and other expenses generally eligible under the 5337-grant program to prevent, prepare for, and respond to COVID-19. Eligible expenses include operating expenses incurred beginning on January 20th, to maintain transit services as well as paying for administrative leave for transit personnel due to reduced operations during an emergency.

The health and safety of our employees has been our main priority. For their protection during this pandemic, we implemented changes to work schedules and practices to reduce the risk of exposure. To protect our passengers, while providing transportation for essential trips, we decreased service to align with stay-at-home policies and suppressed ridership by reducing bus service to modified Saturday levels Monday through Saturday from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. We also launched a public information campaign to encourage use of PVTA services for essential travel only. As a result, since PVTA implemented its reduced service plan, ridership has fallen to 25% of the typical ridership on the bus system and to 15% on the paratransit system.

The information campaign included, providing details of the steps taken to limit the spread of the virus including reducing service to essential trips only, recommending all passengers wear a mask, having passengers board using the rear doors and cleaning and disinfecting vehicles daily before being placed into service.

We have been sharing best practices and monitoring the actions of all the RTAs and other transit agencies throughout the country. PVTA is preparing for a phased recovery. For the next few months, demand is going to be very difficult to estimate, our goal is to increase service levels to meet the transportation needs of our passengers as stay at home policies are relaxed and businesses begin to reopen. We are very cognizant of fact that maintaining social distancing for our passengers will be very difficult. Most of our passengers have no other transportation options available to them. In addition, the very nature of their jobs may not lend themselves to the policies being considered including remote work, staggered shifts, or weekend hours. As of today, PVTA plans to provide summer schedule service starting June 28th. However, measures have been taken to allow PVTA to operate reduce service levels if necessary.

I want to acknowledge the efforts of our operators, both fixed route and paratransit, who have shown so much courage during these challenging times. Their dedication to their jobs to do it while in the mist of all the adversity and the teamwork of the maintenance staff to make sure the drivers and passengers have the safest vehicles possible continues to amaze me.

9. NEW BUSINESS

Chairman Mayor Narkewicz reported that there is no new business to discuss.

10. OLD BUSINESS

Chairman Mayor Narkewicz reported that there is no old business to discuss.

11. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Mayor Narkewicz asked for a motion to adjourn.

Motion: Moved and seconded (Huntley/Squindo) to adjourn.

Chairman Mayor Narkewicz asked if the Board had any discussion. Hearing none; asked for a roll call vote.

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Agawam	Michael Squindo	
Amherst	Douglas Slaughter	
Belchertown	Brian O’Leary	
Chicopee	Steve Huntley	
East Longmeadow	Carolyn Brennan	
Easthampton		
Granby		
Hadley	David Moskin	
Hampden	Becky Moriarty	
Holyoke	Mayor Alex Morse	
Leverett		
Longmeadow	Mark Gold	
Ludlow		
Northampton	Mayor David Narkewicz	
Palmer		
Pelham		
South Hadley		
Springfield	Tasheena Davis	
Sunderland		
Ware	John Carroll	
West Springfield	Jim Czach	
Westfield	Peter Miller	
Wilbraham	Paula Dubord	
Williamsburg	J.M. Sorrell	

ADA Representative
Rider Representative

All present were in favor. Motion passed by a vote of 16-0.

The meeting of the Advisory Board adjourned at 1:03 P.M.

A TRUE RECORD

ATTEST:


BRANDY PELLETIER

Documents filed with Board Meeting packet:

- Roll Call Votes
- Regular Advisory Board Minutes of 3-25-2020
- FY21 Budget

MINUTES APPROVED ON: June 24, 2020