

Seth Boyd called the meeting to order at 10:11 am following the Annual Meeting. Those in attendance and constituting a quorum were as follows:

Board Members:

Jason Rasmussen
Randy Capitani
Sue Fillion
Dan Thoemke
Seth Boyd
Joel Bluming
Brendan McNamara

Members of the Public: None

Staff Present:

Christine Howe, General Manager, SEVT
Keith Johnson, Finance Manager, SEVT
Randy Schoonmaker, CEO, SEVT

Invited Guests:

Ross MacDonald, VTrans

Public Input: None

Amendments to the Agenda: None

Review January 16, 2024, Meeting Minutes: Randy C. noted that under Board Priorities, it should read FY25, instead of FY5.

Nominating Committee Report: Randy S. introduce Brendan McNamara a Board candidate and Town Manager in Ludlow. He has been vetted and approved by the SEVT Nominating Committee and the Chair of the Ludlow Select Board, filling the eighth slot of the SEVT Board. **Motion 1: Joel motioned to approve Brendan McNamara to the SEVT Board of Directors, seconded by Jason Motion Passed 6-0.** Randy S. noted that the Nominating Committee will reconvene in March for the possibility of the ninth and final Board member, hopefully from the town of Springfield. Randy S. will send a Doodle poll for the Nominating Committee meeting.

Ridership Review: Christine presented ridership as of February 11th. Brattleboro continues to increase, Springfield has increased, as well as Bellows Falls In Town and Route 53. Route 57 is still showing a drop in ridership, however with one full year with the new route we can now analyze stop by stop and understand the negative ridership better. The 70's Routes are increasing, mainly on the 71 with more riders going back to the office to work. The 101 Shopper from Chester and the MicroMoo are doing great. Total Fixed routes in Rockingham increased 14% over last year. With Demand Response and volunteer rides added the total Rockingham division increased 70%.

The Wilmington-West Dover route 24% behind last year. Although this is better than last month, it is still behind for the year. The hope is this holiday week adds to the ridership on that route. The Readsboro and West Dover routes have increased, while the Brattleboro and Bennington routes are negative. On the Winter routes side, parking lots increased, and two routes are almost flat, while others are negative. Wilmington ridership is down 10%. Total SEVT is down 2%. Seth expressed concerns that the MOOver route has not come back as much as first thought. Randy S. explained

that with such a slow summer on the MOOver route to start the winter it may be hard to gain enough to finish that on a positive ridership note. With the snowiest months coming up, there is still hoped to make good gains.

Review Finance Committee Summary: Keith presented the finance summary. The line of credit balance is zero. The capital match dollars are in the savings account. Year to date the budget is \$3,900 behind budget mainly due to underpaid Medicaid income. The draft document for the 990 filing was presented because it lists the 2020 Board member roster. The 990 was discussed and reviewed at the Finance Committee Meeting. Keith presented notes on the Budget to Actual report. Overall income is behind due to Medicaid income, however we have also seen some expense savings from Medicaid as well. Randy S. reviewed the loss of Medicaid revenue and how it will hopefully be adjusted based on true ups and contract negotiations. However, the timing of the income payment is still not finalized. Seth asked that the Board be kept up to date on the Medicaid income.

VTrans Update: Ross MacDonald presented the Agency of Transportation budget presentation. Ross first reviewed the transit funding sources which he will send to Randy to distribute to the Board after the meeting. If any Board member has questions, please reach out to Ross. The majority of funding comes from Federal Flex funds, Medicaid, State Ops and the other sources. Vermont spends \$12.87 per capita on transportation with the next closest rural state being Maine at \$2.70. Ross noted that the 2025 budget might be hard to increase from 2024 funding amounts. New in 2025 is Carbon Reduction Funds to be included for fleet needs that reduce carbon reduction. VTrans would like to invest in rider amenities and will help whenever possible. Some challenges continue to be the volunteer driver pool and higher demand for non-emergency medical services. Ross presented the actual budget, again noting generally flat funding from 2024 to 2025. Jason asked about the Community Driver Pilot efforts and how the program is going. Ross explained the Community Driver is a different level not a full CDL driver, not a volunteer driver that is only mileage reimbursement, but a lower hourly wage driver in sedan style vehicles. The hope is this program might help fill the gap. Randy C. asked Ross to clarify the level fund budget request. Ross explained that when the providers began budget preparation for the grant, they need to look to see what the local share dollars are, and the funding received in FY24 from VTrans, and can the providers sustain service with those level funds. If not, VTrans needs to know what that delta is to work with the providers for funding. The budget cuts will go to facility, fleet replacement first before cutting service, but it will be a tough year. Seth asked if any local funding success stories are out there? Ross said the most successful programs are ongoing communication plans.

Charter Discussion: Randy S. gave a brief presentation on the concept of a charter service run by a private company started separate from SEVT that would then donate any profits to SEVT as the mission of that company. Randy S. explained that SEVT gets many charter requests but are restricted because of FTA rules. The idea of the private company would be to generate additional local income for SEVT. He explained the other ideas for local share income SEVT has started. We would need money to purchase the capital and if the money was not secured within a couple of months we would walk away from the concept. Randy S. asked for Board and VTrans for their opinion. Joel asked if this would take away the energy of the Board toward public service. Randy S said one question we have is who will run this private company, and with legal advice how this would be structured. This would not detract from our main mission at SEVT; on the contrary this would help support SEVT. Joel noted it would have to be heavily monitored, and not taken away from public service. Randy S. noted that he and senior staff have free time we are willing to donate to this cause. Randy S. would not sacrifice what we do here at SEVT. Sue asked if this model was used elsewhere. She said there are many components that are very close to SEVT and concerned it is not arm's length enough. Randy S explained the company would have a different name, be a privately run company and would be set up completely independently. It is not known of another company trying this plan. We would want to stay local. Discussion ensued surrounding the sample income expense assumptions. Ross said that he spoke to managers at VTrans and there are many concerns. Using drivers in the off time from SEVT, and other pieces that could necessitate moving

through the charter rules even though you have a for profit company at arm's length of this organization. There are vehicles being purchased off the auction site of old SEVT vehicles, storage of the vehicles at a staff's residence, all these things are a tremendous amount of effort for the money it might net. Ross felt all that effort should go to other opportunities for local funding within the umbrella of SEVT. Ross noted RCT, the transit provider in the northeast kingdom, tried this and after two years, dissolved it because it did not produce what they thought it would. Seth did note also that his experience with the local school board and resorts that there is a need and opportunity out there. Seth noted that the Board should think about this more and keep this on the agenda for the next Board meeting.

Board Funding Priorities: This was updated from the last meeting, and it is agreed this would stay on the agenda moving forward. Sue just asked if the hydrogen and electric infrastructure funding stay at the top of the list, Jason agreed.

Sen. Harrison's Bill: Randy S. presented the Bill that Sen. Harrison presented and noted that we are being told this is probably not going to be considered by the Senate this year.

Executive Session if Necessary: None

Randy S welcomed Brendan, and he had one quick Board training with more to follow.

Motion to adjourn by Joel motioned seconded Seth by adjourned at 11:29