



Commissioners: David L. Jaeger, Jr., Alice McQuaid, Esq.
Chief Executive Officer: Matt Pentz, CPA
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**NORWALK TRANSIT DISTRICT COMMISSION - MEETING MINUTES
OCTOBER 26, 2023, AT 6:00 PM – NORWALK TRANSIT DISTRICT
CONDUCTED VIA ZOOM AND IN-PERSON MEETING**

ATTENDING

Norwalk Transit District Commissioners:

David Jaeger, Jr., Zoom Participant
Alice McQuaid, Esq., Zoom Participant

Norwalk Transit District Staff:

Matt Pentz, CEO
Lori Hammill, Chief Compliance Officer
Andrea Zarate, Human Resources Manager
Joe Scappatura, Director of Operations
Besim Krasniqi, Data and Planning
Analyst, Zoom Participant (arrived at
6:09)
Diana Palmentiero, transcriptionist

Public:

No Attendees

I. CALL TO ORDER – CEO

Matt Pentz called the meeting to order at 6 PM via ZOOM.

II. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Members of the public were given the opportunity to provide comments. There were no members from the public present.

III. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA FOR THE OCTOBER 26, 2023 COMMISSIONERS MEETING

- ** Commissioner McQuaid made a motion to approve the agenda.
- ** Commissioner Jaeger seconded the motion.
- ** Motion to approve the agenda passed unanimously.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF JULY 27, 2023 COMMISSIONERS MEETING

- ** Commissioner Jaeger made a motion to approve the minutes.
- ** Commissioner McQuaid seconded the motion.
- ** Motion to approve the minutes passed unanimously.

V. REPORTS

1. Procurement Update

Ms. Hammill reported on the following solicitations that are funded with capital grant expenditures:

i. Award recommendation for Small Procurement for Salas O'Brien to provide Commissioning Services to support the Major Facility Renovation Project for \$52,035.

ii. Award recommendation for Large Procurement for Matthews Buses to Purchase 10 Paratransit Buses for \$1,462,540.

Mr. Pentz gave a brief overview of the two expenditures which were time-sensitive. They had already been formally approved and the commissioners acknowledged such.

2. Finance Update

i. FY 23 Audit Update

Mr. Pentz said it was 90% complete. There are some items not completed such as the workers' comp audit. They are a little behind schedule. Mr. Pentz said he would be finding time to help finalize.

ii. September Financial Update - Mr. Pentz said that NTD has been recruiting for a Director of Finance but has had difficulty filling the position. NTD presented an offer to a candidate but she dropped out because she had wanted a hybrid schedule, so they have outsourced functions of the accounting and FP&A services to Embarc Advisors. The intent is for Embarc to be a solution for at least one year. He stated the outsourced model actually presented some savings for the department. Mr. Pentz expressed a desire for continuity because turnover is difficult.

Mr. Pentz then explained the operating deficit for the quarter and the year. He said that NTD had some grants to help cover the deficits and the goal is to continue making progress in managing the agency's debt.

3. Operations

September 2023 Ridership Report

Mr. Pentz presented ridership slides as a comparison of September 2023, 2022 and 2019. Ridership is down because there are no longer free fares. The decline is in line with what other agencies are seeing. Although fixed route ridership is below prior year, the overall ridership is healthy. Paratransit ridership remains below pre-pandemic levels but is up compared to last year.

Mr. Scappatura said that NTD is reviewing trips per day for CES, TAG and Norwalk Transit to better understand productivity.

4. Human Resources

There was no discussion on this item.

5. Safety and Security

There was no discussion on this item.

i. Quarterly Worker's Compensation / Accident Review Report

Mr. Pentz said there were no major worker's comp or accidents at this time. The quarterly review has been tabled.

6. Maintenance

Mr. Pentz said there were no major issues for maintenance.

7. Chief Executive Officer

i. Request for Approval, Annual Administration Wage Adjustments

Mr. Pentz said that administrative personnel compensation follows raises that are consistent with the union. He then moved to request approval to process administrative wage adjustments. Ms. McQuaid said she was fine with the raises. Mr. Jaeger asked if raises should be higher for the administrative personnel. Mr. Pentz said that they historically follow the union raises but that NTD would be evaluating methods to incorporate a merit component. He said there would be discussions in the future on how to incentivize performance with a merit model.

ii. Facility Renovation Update

Mr. Pentz mentioned that the management team believes there is a flaw with the current design in the maintenance area and presented an aerial shot of the facility space between the maintenance bays and bus storage barn. He explained the design plans include a new enclosure supported by 20 new columns which would be disruptive to operations. There is concern about having too many columns, which could affect turning radiuses and deliveries. After continuous dialogue with the A&E firm, Wendel, Mr. Pentz and team remained perplexed about why a better alternative using trusses was never presented. Mr. Pentz stated that Ms. Hammill has no recollection of trusses being presented as a design alternative in the planning, she concurred. Mr. Pentz mentioned that he contacted his predecessor Ms. Morton to ask if trusses were ever presented in the planning, and she stated a firm no. Wendel has stated on multiple occasions that a truss alternative was not in the budget. NTD remains perplexed as they are the ones who control the budget, not Wendel, and Mr. Pentz believes that if Ms. Morton were aware of a better building alternative, she would have pursued the funding. There was some discussion about electric buses relative to the purpose of the enclosure.

It was recognized that since nothing has been built yet, it was good that this phase of the project had been paused. NTD is discussing potential credits with Wendel if NTD were to forego the enclosure portion of the project altogether. Mr. Pentz stated that NTD felt Wendel should absorb some of the costs or help with a better solution since it was their design that created this predicament.

Although she did not have expertise with this, Ms. McQuaid did not think they had any other options but stop the build. Mr. Pentz said they could build it and have long term problems or take a hit now. The columns would slow the buses down as they came in at night, a process that needs to run efficiently to prevent traffic back-logs on Wilson Ave in the evening. It was also noted that maintenance staff would likely hit columns which would put strain on the workforce and damage buses. It presents an operational flaw. Ms. McQuaid agreed they should stop it now, rather than after it was done. Mr. Jaeger agreed.

iii. COA Update

Mr. Pentz said this is a big project which included several meetings with key stakeholders in the city including Jim Travers at TMP. He noted that early findings in the study indicate that transit is reaching areas where it is most needed in the city, but there is likely a need for more frequency and some route changes. He discussed the project website, NTDahead.com. He also said there was a passenger advisory committee meeting the previous evening that the COA project team had attended and presented an overview and update to the public. Mr. Jaeger discussed the study. Besim Krasniqi said one of the objectives is to bolster high impact areas. Mr. Pentz said that if more service is added, there would be more ridership.

iii. Service Changes

ASML, a large employer in Wilton, has requested more service to their offices. The Governor's office has also asked NTD to help ASML offer more public transit solutions to assist with their workforce growth, commuting and parking constraints. In response, NTD has extended the route of the Merritt 7 commuter shuttle to reach ASML and has also added an additional run to the 10/20 Westport Shuttle. NTD has monitored the changes, they worked through some growing pains and have received positive feedback. NTD will continue to monitor and work with ASML in their partnership. NTD is also working on assisting with a new bus shelter around 77 Danbury Rd.

Separately, NTD has expanded their micro-transit zone and hours for W2U Norwalk. The service is there and NTD intends to do more marketing and outreach to spread awareness.

NTD is also working on plans to add more frequent night and weekend service for the Main and CT Avenue shuttles, as part of additional state funds awarded as part of the Governors service initiative.

v. Miscellaneous Items

Mr. Pentz and Ms. Hammill initiated and attended a formal WTD board meeting in Westport earlier in the week. They were happy to help get these meetings back on track now that there are two board members again. At the meeting there was discussion about the COA and potential consolidation. Westport would be talking to Bridgeport as well to explore the best consolidation scenario that will work for the town.

NTD is working with Jim Travers, TMP, regarding plans and best-case scenario's for Burnell Boulevard where NTD currently has its transit hub and drivers lounge. Mr. Travers assisted NTD with leasing a small customer service space in the Yankee Doodle Garage where NTD and the community will soon benefit from having a supervisor on-site and also a new central location for riders to purchase fares. Mr. Pentz mentioned that supervisors will assist with monitoring the pulse pull-out to assist drivers and enhance on-time performance.

Mr. Pentz noted that construction of the new facility has been very difficult for the NTD staff. Non-essential administrative employees have been offered some flexibility to work from home a couple of days a week. He asked the commissioners if they had any objections, which they did not.

Mr. Pentz shared a story about an unexpected need for a 1-day lease of a bathroom across the street because their only bathroom stopped working. He was proud of how resilient the NTD staff has been working around the construction as work continued to get done despite the obstacles.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business.

VIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no executive session.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

** Commissioner McQuaid made a motion to adjourn.

** Commissioner Jaeger seconded the motion.

** Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 6:42 PM