

**CONNECT TRANSIT
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
PROCEEDINGS OF APRIL 25, 2017**

The regular meeting of the Board of Trustees of Connect Transit was held at the Connect Transit Board Room #135, 351 Wylie Drive, Normal, Illinois 61761 on April 25, 2017 at 4:30 p.m.

TRUSTEES PRESENT: Mike McCurdy, Vice-Chairman
 Ryan Whitehouse, Secretary
 John Bowman
 John Thomas

TRUSTEES ABSENT: Judy Buchanan
 Lauren Lacey
 Jennifer McDade

CITY MANAGERS: Mark Peterson, Town of Normal Manager
 Steve Rasmussen, City of Bloomington Assistant City Manager

STAFF PRESENT: Isaac Thorne, Interim General Manager
 Julie Beer, Executive Assistant
 Pat Kuebrich, Finance Director
 Debra Wilson, Receptionist

The meeting was called to order by the Chairman at 4:32 p.m. Roll call was taken.

Motion by Trustee John Bowman, seconded by Trustee John Thomas to allow City of Bloomington Assistant City Manager, Steve Rasmussen to participate in the Board meeting.

AYE: All

NAY: None

Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Glen Ludwig addressed the Board. He had attended the Board's previous Strategic Planning session to observe. He thanked the Board for the opportunity. He believed that Connect Transit's top priority should be survival. He questioned the organizational structure. Efficiency was important. Isaac Thorne has been named Interim General Manager. The Board could save money by not hiring a search firm for a replacement General Manager. He encouraged the Board to hire Mr. Thorne as the General Manager as he is already familiar with the system and was the best option. A critical need of the system was to put all of the existing talent to work.

John Brandt addressed the Board. He had visited with Interim General Manager, Isaac Thorne. He understood that Connect Transit does not have taxing authority. It was his belief that there was

no one better than Mr. Thorne to run the system. He encouraged the Board to select him as the General Manager.

Trustee Jennifer McDade arrived at 4:38 p.m.

Vice Chairman Mike McCurdy thanked Mr. Ludwig and Mr. Brandt for their comments. He stated there were some awards to present at this evening's meeting.

Vice Chairman McCurdy requested that Debra Wilson, Receptionist, come forward. He presented her with her Five Years of Service Award and thanked her for her service.

Vice Chairman McCurdy stated Connect Transit had been awarded the Government Finance Officers Association, (GFOA) Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the fiscal year ended 2016. This is the GFOA's highest honor. He requested that Pat Kuebrich, Finance Director come forward. He presented him with the award and thanked him for his hard work. He noted this award is a testament to Connect Transit's transparency. Mr. Kuebrich thanked Vice Chairman McCurdy. He stated all GFOA criteria must be met in order to receive this award and that records dating back 10 years are reviewed.

Mark Peterson, Town of Normal Manager congratulated Mr. Kuebrich and Connect Transit. This is a really big deal.

CONSENT AGENDA

Motion by Trustee John Thomas, seconded by Trustee Jennifer McDade that the Consent Agenda be approved.

AYE: All

NAY: None

Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

Recommendation for Lobbying Service

Isaac Thorne, Interim General Manager introduced this item. Two proposals had been received. This service will ensure that Connect Transit is communicating its message to Congress for continued support of public transportation. Upon review of the proposals, Cardinal Infrastructure was selected based on experience and the ability to meet the scope of work. It was his belief that contracting with Cardinal Infrastructure for lobbying services puts Connect Transit in the best position for receiving discretionary grant funds. Connect Transit has a dire need to replace many

buses. This service will also ensure that Connect Transit's needs are represented, and relationships fostered on both the State and Federal levels. He recommended Board approval.

Secretary Ryan Whitehouse stated he was in agreement. Connect Transit staff had put a great plan together. The Cardinal Infrastructure staff are well known lobbyists that have established relationships. He was confident in their ability to represent Connect Transit.

Trustee John Bowman questioned the return on this investment. He noted Connect Transit could pay for 700 hours of service with the cost for this contract. Connect Transit has a lobbying presence through its membership with the American Public Transportation Association, (APTA). He doubted that another firm would carry more lobbying weight.

Secretary Ryan Whitehouse responded that APTA represents *every* public transportation system. This lobbying firm would represent Connect Transit only, and have it as its primary focus. He noted that if this lobbying firm won 1 grant, it would pay for the entire contract. This work takes time. These individuals are top notch lobbyists.

Isaac Thorne, Interim General Manager agreed. This lobbying firm would act in the best interests of Connect Transit only.

Mark Peterson, Town of Normal Manager agreed and echoed Secretary Whitehouse. Staff from this firm have been under contract with the Town of Normal in the past, and the firm is currently under contract for another funding project. They are very responsive. He noted in order to obtain Federal monies, a presence is needed. Congressional delegates rely on and appreciate the lobbyists. He believed this was a small investment with a potential big payout. It takes patience. He recommended approval.

Trustee John Bowman noted the firm would assist Connect Transit facilitate relationships with the delegation. He questioned the Board's role. Mr. Thorne responded Connect Transit would need to make its presence known on the Hill. That would include Connect Transit staff and Board.

Secretary Ryan Whitehouse agreed. Mr. Peterson agreed. He stated the firm would que the Board when they needed to engage. The Board will have more involvement than in the past. It is critically important to remain engaged.

Vice Chairman Mike McCurdy thanked Trustee John Bowman for his comments and Secretary Ryan Whitehouse for his research into this matter.

Motion by Secretary Ryan Whitehouse, seconded by Trustee Jennifer McDade that a firm fixed price contract in the amount of \$72,000 a year be awarded to Cardinal Infrastructure to provide Connect Transit Federal Lobbying Services. The period of the contract will have a base period of three (3) years.

AYE: Vice Chairman Mike McCurdy, Secretary Ryan Whitehouse, Trustee Jennifer McDade and Trustee John Thomas.

NAY: Trustee John Bowman

Motion carried.

Trustee John Bowman stated he believed the lobbying firm would be a great asset, however, until Connect Transit solidified its operating funds, he believed that it needed to preserve its funds to use for service for the longest.

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

Isaac Thorne, Interim General Manager, addressed the Board. The Illinois State University (ISU) Universal Access Agreement was currently being reviewed by ISU's legal team. It should be returned to Connect Transit soon. He intended to include it in the May Board meeting packet.

He had received an email from Eastland Mall indicating they would be conducting an expansive redevelopment project and for Connect Transit to exit its property no later than June 1. Staff is working on a face to face meeting, as well as logistics for where an alternate bus stop would be located.

Mr. Thorne advised that staff had been meeting with the YWCA McLean County leadership regarding its Medivan Service. The YWCA is discussing whether it will keep the service going into its next fiscal year. The discussions centered on what Connect Transit would do to handle the additional Connect Mobility users if Medivan is discontinued. Connect Transit could potentially gain an additional 526 Connect Mobility users.

Mr. Thorne advised that the Illinois Department of Transportation had not made its April payment to the Down State Operating Assistance Program fund. He had been informed that a payment should be received by mid-May. Connect Transit will run out of money by mid-July.

Mr. Thorne introduced Mr. Jeff Holtke, Connect Transit's new Marketing Manager. Mr. Holtke provided the Board with an update on what he has been working on since coming to work for Connect Transit. He stated he was happy to be with the organization.

Steve Rasmussen, Bloomington Assistant City Manager addressed the Board. He stated he had also attended the meeting with the YWCA regarding the Medivan service. It was very informative. It was probable that Connect Transit would absorb these users. Connect Transit would be looking for additional sources of revenue to make up for the additional costs. One potential area was the potential LED display signs from Uber Systems, an up and coming LED display sign company. The City of Bloomington would be looking at amending its City Code to allow for such advertising displays. He would keep the Board updated regarding same.

TRUSTEE'S COMMENTS

Trustee Jennifer McDade questioned details about the Budget Work session on May 2. Isaac Thorne, Interim General Manager responded there would be some scenarios provided prior to the meeting.

Trustee McDade questioned the meeting length. Mr. Thorne responded he expected the meeting to last two hours. Vice Chairman Mike McCurdy agreed, noting the main goal of the Budget Work Session was to give staff direction for the upcoming budget planning process. A budget proposal would be presented and approved in May.

Trustee John Thomas requested the Board be provided with coverage area maps, frequency reports, etc. Trustee McDade agreed, and requested current ridership numbers also be provided.

Vice Chairman McCurdy stated the Political Advocacy Committee would begin new activities. He and Secretary Ryan Whitehouse would co-chair. He invited any other Trustees to send an email to himself or Secretary Whitehouse if interested in participating.

Vice Chairman McCurdy announced the General Manager recruitment process would be discussed at the May meeting. The full Board would serve on the search committee. He was inclined to have a public input session with candidates. Mark Peterson, Town of Normal Manager cautioned against involving the public in the interview process. Many candidates would not want their names publicly released. They may be reluctant to apply and/or remain in the running. He suggested that outside groups provide input, but to refrain from a ranking style system. A pros/cons system would work best. Subjective scoring should be a Board only option.

Trustee Jennifer McDade stated some of the best candidate interviews that she had seen included a presentation from the candidate. She was happy that a firm is being utilized for the search, however, she noted that the Board should be mindful of the budget problems. She noted the Board should consider timing as well. Summer is approaching. Vice Chairman McCurdy responded he has been working backward from a January date for a start or offer date.

Vice Chairman McCurdy informed the Board he and Mr. Thorne would be attending a conference held by the Center for Transportation Excellence in May and would need to push the May 25, 2017 Board meeting back to May 30, 2017. He requested that Julie Beer, Executive Assistant reach out to Trustees Judy Buchanan and Lauren Lacey regarding their availability since they were absent from the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Trustee John Thomas , Seconded by Trustee Jennifer McDade to adjourn.

AYE: All

NAY: None

Motion carried.

Time: 5:38 p.m.

Julie Beer, Executive Assistant