
**MINUTES OF PVTA'S
ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
September 23, 2020**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Advisory Board Meeting of the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority was held on Wednesday, September 23, 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 (32.57 votes)</u>	<u>Not Present (29.51 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 12:01 PM; majority vote of 32.57 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 August 19, 2020 Regular Advisory Board Meeting.

Motion: Moved and seconded (Moskin/O’Leary) to approve the meeting minutes from the August 19, 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>	<u>Abstained</u>
Agawam		Michael Squindo	
Amherst		Douglas Slaughter	
Belchertown		Brian O’Leary	
Chicopee		Steve Huntley	
East Longmeadow			
Easthampton		Brendan Rogers	
Granby			
Hadley		David Moskin	
Hampden		Becky Moriarty	
Holyoke			
Leverett			
Longmeadow		Mark Gold	
Ludlow			
Northampton		Mayor David Narkewicz	
Palmer			
Pelham			
South Hadley		Michael Sullivan	
Springfield			
Sunderland			
Ware		John Carroll	
West Springfield		Jim Czach	
Westfield		Peter Miller	
Wilbraham		Paula Dubord	
Williamsburg		J.M. Sorrell	
ADA Representative			
Rider Representative			

Motion passed by a vote of 15-0.

4. REPORT OF THE ROUTE COMMITTEE

Brian O’Leary, Chairman of the Route Committee, reported that the Route Committee met remotely yesterday, September 22nd and voted to approve the meeting minutes of September 25, 2019. The committee received an update on service adjustments made to the R14, G1 and R10. The committee also received an update on the Northampton Senior Shuttle Microtransit Pilot. During the pandemic, PVRTA is providing transportation to replace the service provided by the Council on Aging.

Chairman Mayor Narkewicz asked for a motion from the Advisory Board to accept the report of the Route Committee.

Motion: Moved and seconded (O’Leary/Huntley) to accept the report of the Route 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>	<u>Abstained</u>
Agawam	Michael Squindo		
Amherst	Douglas Slaughter		
Belchertown	Brian O’Leary		
Chicopee	Steve Huntley		
East Longmeadow			
Easthampton	Brendan Rogers		
Granby			
Hadley	David Moskin		
Hampden	Becky Moriarty		
Holyoke			
Leverett			
Longmeadow	Mark Gold		
Ludlow			
Northampton	Mayor David Narkewicz		
Palmer			
Pelham			
South Hadley	Michael Sullivan		
Springfield			
Sunderland			
Ware	John Carroll		
West Springfield	Jim Czach		
Westfield	Peter Miller		
Wilbraham	Paula Dubord		
Williamsburg	J.M. Sorrell		
ADA Representative			
Rider Representative			

Motion passed by a vote of 15-0.

5. REPORT OF THE FINANCE & AUDIT COMMITTEE

Doug Slaughter, Chairman of the Finance & Audit Committee, reported that the Committee met remotely on Monday, September 21st. The committee voted to approve the minutes of May 18, 2020 and received a detailed presentation on PVTA’s FY20 Audit from David Irwin of Adelson & Company, PC. The auditor’s issued an unmodified opinion. PVTA’s audit showed no material deficiencies. A couple of recommendations were made but this audit has no findings and all financial components of the PVTA are in place. The Finance and Audit committee voted to adopt PVTA’s FY20 Audit.

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

Motion: Moved and seconded (O’Leary/Huntley) to accept and adopt the report of the Finance and Audit 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>	<u>Abstained</u>
Agawam		Michael Squindo	
Amherst		Douglas Slaughter	
Belchertown		Brian O’Leary	
Chicopee		Steve Huntley	
East Longmeadow			
Easthampton		Brendan Rogers	
Granby			
Hadley		David Moskin	
Hampden		Becky Moriarty	
Holyoke			
Leverett			
Longmeadow		Mark Gold	
Ludlow			
Northampton		Mayor David Narkewicz	
Palmer			
Pelham			
South Hadley		Michael Sullivan	
Springfield			
Sunderland			
Ware		John Carroll	
West Springfield		Jim Czach	
Westfield		Peter Miller	
Wilbraham		Paula Dubord	
Williamsburg		J.M. Sorrell	
ADA Representative			
Rider Representative			

Motion passed by a vote of 15-0.

6. PVTA FY20 AUDIT

Auditor David Irwin of Adelson & Company PC reported on PVTA's FY20 Audit for the year ended June 30, 2020. Auditor Irwin stated the following:

PVTA met all the requirements for the audit and all the information and documentation that was needed was provided. There were no material weaknesses. This was a clean audit and PVTA's books are being kept well. We did make two recommendations:

1. During FY20, the Authority converted to a new fixed asset software module. The conversion project was ongoing during fiscal year 2020, and reports from the module were not available until September 2020, after the audit fieldwork was in process. Upon review of the reports generated from the module, the beginning balances did not agree to the general ledger. This was a result of not importing fully depreciated in-service assets as of June 30, 2019 into the module. We also noted that small tools and equipment, which did not meet the definition of a fixed asset, were being recorded on the balance sheet and depreciated.

Recommendation: The Authority should continue to familiarize themselves with the new fixed asset module and ensure that all active assets are imported into the system, and that reports generated from the module agree to the general ledger. The new fixed asset module should be reconciled to the accounting general ledger monthly. For purchases that do not meet the definition of a fixed asset, they should be expensed to a non-capital equipment and supplies account.

Action Taken: The Finance Department recently was trained on the new asset software to familiarize themselves with the program. The rest of the assets will be properly imported into the module and verified against the general ledger balances. The new fixed asset module has been added to the monthly reconciliation process and a non-capital equipment and supplies account was created in the general ledger to be used to record the assets that do not meet the definition of a fixed asset.

2. During our review of the Authority's preliminary internal financial statements, we noted that the intercompany accounts reconciling the activity with the fixed route operator and the inter-agency accounts reconciling the activity between the operating and capital general ledgers were out of balance. This was partially caused by incorrect journal entries posted in November 2019, which were not corrected until after year end.

Recommendation: The Finance Department should ensure that all balance sheet accounts, including intercompany accounts, are reconciled with supporting documentation and schedules. The internal balance sheet and income statement provided to the Administrator and Finance Committee should be in sufficient detail to identify potential accounts with incorrect balances.

Action Taken: The Authority has changed its internal controls to address the intercompany accounts. New procedures including reconciling detailed balance sheet accounts monthly have been implemented. Detailed balance sheets and income statements will be presented to the Administrator monthly and discussed with the Finance Committee at their meetings as part of the new process.

A full copy of PVTA's FY20 Audit report has been filed with the minutes of this meeting.

Chairman Mayor Narkewicz asked for a motion from the Advisory Board to accept and adopt PVTA's FY20 Audit.

Motion: Moved and seconded (Huntley/Gold) to accept and adopt PVTA's FY20 Audit.

Chairman Mayor Narkewicz asked if the Board had any discussion.

Mark Gold: Did the Finance & Audit Committee have an opportunity to speak with the committee without management staff present.

Auditor David Irwin: Yes, for about twenty minutes.

Hearing no further discussion; Chairman Narkewicz asked for a roll call vote.

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Abstained</u>
Agawam	Michael Squindo		
Amherst	Douglas Slaughter		
Belchertown	Brian O'Leary		
Chicopee	Steve Huntley		
East Longmeadow			
Easthampton	Brendan Rogers		
Granby			
Hadley	David Moskin		
Hampden	Becky Moriarty		
Holyoke			
Leverett			
Longmeadow	Mark Gold		
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Ware	John Carroll		
West Springfield	Jim Czach		
Westfield	Peter Miller		
Wilbraham	Paula Dubord		
Williamsburg	J.M. Sorrell		
ADA Representative			
Rider Representative			

Motion passed by a vote of 15-0.

7. CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER REPORT

Chief Financial Officer, Lisa Seymour, reported on PVTA's budget to actual through June 30, 2020. Overall, PVTA is under budget by 6.6% due to operating reduced hours/miles as a result of Covid-19.

There has been a significant loss in fare revenue March through June.

Cancellation of the Holyoke and Springfield public school tripper service and the closing of colleges also created a loss in revenue. All college last semester contracts needed to be adjusted since schools were closed.

Advertising suffered a significant decrease with advertisers pulling their ads and cancelling contracts due to reduced service and businesses closing due to Covid. Now that PVTA has resumed service and businesses have started reopening, advertising is starting to resume, and we are beginning to see new contracts although it will most likely not be where it was in the FY20 Budget.

Claims is over budget for both Paratransit and Fixed Route service. We have begun to address the claims procedure with the contractors, so our claims process is more efficient, and our risk is lowered.

Fuel is significantly lower due to operating reduced service during Covid.

The fiscal year 2021 budget amendment will be presented to the Board at the next meeting. We now have a better idea of how Covid has impacted PVTA and we can make a more reasonable prediction as to where we will be for FY21. The biggest unknown is the Governor's budget. We were granted funding of ¼ of FY20 levels and that will only last through the end of September.

We had to use \$1.7 million of the CARES funding for a few months of FY20 to support operations and another \$179,000 for capital support during the pandemic. Starting FY21, we have significant Covid expenses for PPE's and cleaning and disinfecting of the buses in addition to Covid capital expenses of retrofitting buses with driver barriers, contactless fare media, a less contact restraint system, bus cushion improvements, air quality improvements of the buses and buildings as well as partitions, filters and other Covid improvements in our facilities.

8. DIRECTOR OF TRANSIT OPERATIONS REPORT

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

Fixed route ridership continues to improve steadily from the significant declines experienced during the early days of the pandemic. Systemwide ridership has improved to 71.4% of pre-covid levels through July. While the number of riders continues to improve, the actual numbers as a percentage of previous years ridership will likely not approach the level seen in July in percentage terms for some time. Most area schools, including Springfield and Holyoke as well as many colleges and universities in the area are conducting most classes remotely. Until such time as in person instruction resumes, we are unlikely to see significant increases in ridership.

Performance Based system review: Considering COVID's impacts on our system, a review of systemic performance and need will be conducted moving forward. To fully assess this, we will need to think strategically in terms of what parts of the system demonstrate need and which parts may not. It will be important for PVTA and stakeholders to analyze this while also considering economic/environmental justice concerns while balancing short term challenges with an informed understanding of where we think ridership is likely to rebound in the near term and over time while also considering if there are areas that could potentially need more service as a result of the changing economic environment. This review will include consideration of staffing at all levels to ensure that PVTA's system is running as efficiently as possible to meet to the needs of all stakeholders.

Fare Review: In April of 2018, the Board approved PVTA's first fare increase since 2008. Fares increased from \$1.25 to \$1.50 on July 1, 2018. At that time, the Board also voted to review the fare structure at three-year intervals with a potential fare increase of between 5% to 25%. To support the

Board's decision-making process around a potential fare increase for FY22, with assistance from the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC), we will be conducting a fare equity analysis over the next few months. We also include in our analysis an examination of the benefits and disadvantages of offering student fares, the impacts of offering a low-income fare as well as examining the impacts of fare reduction/fare elimination.

9. ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Administrator Sandra Sheehan reported the following:

Funding uncertainty continues to be a concern. Although the Governor signed an interim budget to keep the state operational until the end of October, PVTA was only provided with three months of State Contract Assistance at FY20 levels. The state was partly waiting to learn if Congress was to provide additional relief to the states. Now, it appears additional federal funding may be unlikely.

The House passed the \$3 trillion-plus HEROES Act several months ago, including nearly \$16 billion for transit agencies. Senate Republicans are not in agreement with the size of that relief package, and the chambers appear deadlocked ahead of the presidential election. This funding uncertainty is affecting all, APTA has reported that transit systems across the country are looking at drastic reductions in service, increased fares, delayed or deferred procurements and capital projects, staff furloughs and layoffs if additional emergency federal relief funds are not secured.

Fixed route ridership has continued to recover, just about doubling from 221K in March to 442K in July. Even though ridership is slowly increasing, August ridership was still 51% lower than ridership levels last year and for the first week of September, ridership was only 42% of last year's level mainly due to the schools not conducting in person learning. These figures emphasize how much of our system serves the educational institutions and how many of the riders, especially in the southern portion of our system, rely on PVTA as their sole mode of transportation.

PVTA has been awarded \$1,536,000 from FTA's Section 5339 Buses and Bus Facilities Program for the installation of replacement of bus washing equipment at the Northampton and UMass Transit Garages. In addition, PVTA received a \$617,000 grant award from FTA's Accelerating Innovating Mobility (AIM) Challenge Grant for the deployment of on-bus mobile ticket validators to enhance fare payment and data collection through mobile technology. The data collected from the validators in addition to what we currently collect will expand our understanding of origin-destination trips, passenger miles, fare media usage thus assisting us in developing load profiles and crowding models to better understand system wide travel patterns and improve service planning. In addition, PVTA received a \$136,300 grant award from the Urgent COVID-19 Taxicab, Livery, and Hackney Transportation Partnership Grant program to assist with regional transportation needs during the pandemic.

As we look into the future, with so many challenges to tackle including an uncertain financial future, unknown ridership and customer behavior coupled with a potential resurgence of Covid as the weather turns cold and people spend more time indoors, PVTA remains committed to providing the most cost efficient and effective service that meets the transportation needs of the residents of the Pioneer Valley.

10. NEW BUSINESS

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

11. OLD BUSINESS

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

12. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Mayor Narkewicz asked for a motion to adjourn.

Motion: Moved and seconded (O’Leary/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>	<u>Abstained</u>
Agawam	Michael Squindo		
Amherst	Douglas Slaughter		
Belchertown	Brian O’Leary		
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West Springfield	Jim Czach		
Westfield	Peter Miller		
Wilbraham	Paula Dubord		
Williamsburg	J.M. Sorrell		
ADA Representative			
Rider Representative			

Motion passed by a vote of 15-0.

The meeting of the Advisory Board adjourned at 1:19 P.M.

A TRUE RECORD

ATTEST: 
BRANDY PELLETIER

Documents filed with Board Meeting packet:

- Roll Call Votes
- Regular Advisory Board Minutes of 8-19-2020
- Budget to Actual
- FY20 Audit Report

Minutes Approved: November 18, 2020