
**DRAFT
MINUTES OF PVTA'S
ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
May 17, 2023**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Regular Advisory Board Meeting of the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority was held on Wednesday, May 17, 2023, at 12:00 P.M. remotely in accordance with Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023, supplemental state budget provisions for Fiscal Year 2023, authorizing public bodies to continue to hold entirely remote meetings, or so-called “hybrid” meetings, upon the provision of “adequate, alternative means” of public access, until March 31, 2025.

	<u>Present (36.55 votes)</u>	<u>Not Present (25.45 votes)</u>
Agawam	Michael Squindo	
Amherst	Douglas Slaughter	
Belchertown	Brian O’Leary	
Chicopee		Steve Huntley
East Longmeadow	Erin Koebler	
Easthampton	Cindy Tarail	
Granby		Glen Sexton
Hadley		David Moskin
Hampden		Becky Moriarty
Holyoke	Gloria Caballero-Roca	
Leverett		Peter D’Errico
Longmeadow	Mark Gold	
Ludlow		Derek DeBarge
Northampton		Mayor Gina-Louise Sciarra
Palmer	Benjamin Hood	
Pelham		David Shanabrook
South Hadley		Jeff Cyr
Springfield	Tim Sheehan	
Sunderland		Geoff Kravitz
Ware		John Carroll
West Springfield		Allyson Manuel
Westfield	Peter Miller	
Wilbraham		Paula Dubord
Williamsburg	J.M. Sorrell	
ADA Representative		Vacant
Rider Representative		Jake Hasson

A quorum of 31.01 votes being present, Chairman of the Advisory Board, Douglas Slaughter, called the remote meeting of PVTA's Advisory Board to order at 12:14 PM; majority vote of 36.55 present.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Chairman Slaughter asked if there was anyone that would like to make a public comment. No public comments were made.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairman Slaughter asked for a motion from the Advisory Board to approve the meeting minutes from the March 22, 2023 Advisory Board Meeting.

Motion: Moved and seconded (Gold/O’Leary) to approve the meeting minutes from the March 22, 2023 Advisory Board Meeting.

Chairman Slaughter 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			
East Longmeadow	Erin Koebler		
Easthampton	Cindy Tarail		
Granby			
Hadley			
Hampden			
Holyoke	Gloria Caballero-Roca		
Leverett			
Longmeadow	Mark Gold		
Ludlow			
Northampton			
Palmer	Benjamin Hood		
Pelham			
South Hadley			
Springfield	Tim Sheehan		
Sunderland			
Ware			
West Springfield			
Westfield	Peter Miller		
Wilbraham			
Williamsburg	J.M. Sorrell		
ADA Representative			
Rider Representative			

Motion passed by a vote of 36.55.

4. REPORT OF PVTA'S SUB-COMMITTEES

Doug Slaughter reported that the Finance & Audit Sub-Committee met remotely on Monday, May 15th. The committee received an update from PVTA's Chief Financial Officer on the FY24 Final Budget and voted to recommend approval by the Advisory Board. The Committee voted to approve the minutes of the March 16, 2023 meeting. The Committee also voted by majority vote of 4-1, to recommend approval of the Compensation Committee recommendation that Administrator Sheehan receive a 3% salary increase retroactive to July 1, 2022 as well as a \$10,000 one-time bonus payment during the current fiscal year for her high level of performance over the past year as PVTA Administrator.

Mark Gold, Chairman of the Administrator's Compensation Committee, reported that the Committee met on Thursday, May 4th as well as Wednesday, May 10th. The Committee voted to approve the minutes from their March 21, 2022 and May 4, 2023 meetings. The Committee also voted to recommend to the Advisory Board approving Administrator Sheehan to receive a 3% salary increase retroactive to July 1, 2022 as well as a \$10,000 one-time bonus payment during the current fiscal year for her high level of performance over the past year as PVTA Administrator. It is also our recommendation that the compensation committee work with Ms. Sheehan over the next 6 months to identify a mutually agreeable deferred compensation plan or program that would be available should future performance appraisals lend themselves to including a deferred compensation component to the Administrator's overall compensation package.

The Committee also voted to recommend to the Advisory Board that at the June Board Meeting, the Board be presented with the recommendation that the Administrator's contract be extended by one year, through June 30, 2026.

Administrator evaluation forms will also be emailed out to the Advisory Board for completion after this meeting.

Chairman Slaughter asked the Board for a motion to accept the report of PVTA's Sub-Committees.

Motion: Moved and seconded (O'Leary/Squindo) to accept the report of PVTA's Sub-Committees.

Chairman Slaughter asked if the Board had any discussion.

Peter Miller: What is the current raise percentage that is offered to PVTA staff as well as the collective bargaining for the Union?

Doug Slaughter: 1-3% for PVTA staff and if the CFO could respond regarding the Union.

CFO Seymour: 3% increase with the life of the Union Contract.

Peter Miller: Have we presented an offer for a bonus to the Administrator before.

Doug Slaughter: Yes. Ms. Sheehan received a \$10,000 bonus last year.

Chairman Slaughter asked if the Board had any further discussion. Hearing none; asked for a roll call vote to accept the report of PVTA's Sub-Committees.

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Abstained</u>
Agawam	Michael Squindo		
Amherst	Douglas Slaughter		
Belchertown	Brian O’Leary		
Chicopee			
East Longmeadow	Erin Koebler		
Easthampton	Cindy Tarail		
Granby			
Hadley			
Hampden			
Holyoke	Gloria Caballero-Roca		
Leverett			
Longmeadow	Mark Gold		
Ludlow			
Northampton			
Palmer	Benjamin Hood		
Pelham			
South Hadley			
Springfield	Tim Sheehan		
Sunderland			
Ware			
West Springfield			
Westfield	Peter Miller		
Wilbraham			
Williamsburg	J.M. Sorrell		
ADA Representative			
Rider Representative			

Motion passed by a vote of 36.55.

5. APPROVAL OF PVTA’S FY24 FINAL BUDGET

Chief Financial Officer, Lisa Seymour, reported the following:

The pension for PVTA has been funded in this updated budget of \$200,000. The Actuary and Auditor both agree that \$200,000 is a reasonable number for this line item and recommend the addition to the budget.

The largest savings in the budget are utilities, due to a contract entered into with PowerOptions. PowerOptions is a nonprofit consortium that assists nonprofit companies in utility savings. PVTA has 7 electric accounts with the current rate on the largest account at \$.44146/Kwh. The electricity rate with PowerOptions is \$.1193 with a potential cost savings of \$73,652.87 monthly. PVTA has 2 natural gas heating accounts with the current rate of \$.981/Kwh. The national gas rate with PowerOptions is \$.851 with a potential cost savings of \$2,520.41 monthly. This results in a potential savings of \$914,079 yearly.

The Fixed Route Contractor Subsidy was reduced by almost \$600,000 due to the utility savings from this new program. PVTA does pay a portion of the contractor’s utilities, so each applicable line item was adjusted slightly.

Our contractor was able to lock in the fuel price at \$2.10 per gallon for diesel fuel. This should result in a saving of approximately \$530,000. \$450,000 was adjusted from the fuel line for SATCo/VATCo. UMass will also show fuel savings, but the budget presented to the Board is the submission to PVTA. There will be a decrease in fuel savings for UMass to be reflected at the end of fiscal year.

The other operating subsidy decrease is due to the Brennan Express no longer being grant funded. This was incorporated into PVTA’s operating budget. The UMass subsidy is also lower than last year.

Even with the increase of the pension plan, the cost savings measures that PVTA has taken are expected to decrease the budget by \$800,000 therefore using less of the Federal Funds to balance the budget.

Pioneer Valley Transit Authority	Budget FY23	DRAFT FY24 Budget		PROPOSED FY24 Budget	
			Variance From FY23		Variance From FY23
EXPENSES					
Administration Wages/Fringe	\$ 2,225,651	\$ 2,278,056	2.4%	\$ 2,492,743	12.0%
Administration Services/Utilities	\$ 1,240,231	\$ 1,584,890	27.8%	\$ 1,565,493	26.2%
Fixed Route Service	\$ 40,794,792	\$ 41,426,573	1.5%	\$ 40,506,573	-0.7%
Paratransit Service	\$ 9,033,358	\$ 9,562,072	5.9%	\$ 9,510,584	5.3%
Allocated Insurance	\$ 840,643	\$ 865,862	3.0%	\$ 865,862	3.0%
Allocated IT Support, Towers	\$ 384,800	\$ 396,344	3.0%	\$ 396,344	3.0%
Total Expenses	\$ 54,519,475	\$ 56,113,797	2.9%	\$ 55,337,599	1.5%
REVENUES					
Farebox	\$ 5,500,000	\$ 7,179,003	30.5%	\$ 7,179,003	30.5%
Advertising	\$ 230,000	\$ 230,000	0.0%	\$ 230,000	0.0%
Interest and Insurance Recoveries, Misc.	\$ 386,500	\$ 538,000	39.2%	\$ 538,000	39.2%
Operating Subsidy, Other	\$ 1,153,001	\$ 988,190	-14.3%	\$ 988,190	-14.3%
Federal Operating Grants	\$ 6,032,401	\$ 4,000,000	-33.7%	\$ 4,000,000	-33.7%
State Contract Assistance	\$ 26,887,785	\$ 29,198,348	8.6%	\$ 29,198,348	8.6%
Local Assessments	\$ 9,876,792	\$ 10,123,712	2.5%	\$ 10,123,712	2.5%
Total Revenue	\$ 50,066,479	\$ 52,257,253	4.4%	\$ 52,257,253	4.4%
Net Profit (Loss)	\$ (4,452,996)	\$ (3,856,544)	-11.0%	\$ (3,080,346)	-31.0%
Additional Federal Operating Grant	\$ (4,452,996)	\$ (3,856,544)	-11.0%	\$ (3,080,346)	-31.0%
Adjusted Budget Deficit	-	0		0	

Administrator Sheehan stated that PVTA’s budget deficit has been offset by the CARES and AARPA Funds making up the net loss with relief funding.

Brian O’Leary: Can you explain why the farebox revenue for next year shows a 30% increase.

Administrator Sheehan: That increase is based on the ridership increase from current trends and additional pass sales and school contracts. There has also been an increase in pass distributions, and we expect this to continue. It's not just the farebox, other factors contribute to that number.

Motion: Moved and seconded (O'Leary/Squindo) to accept and approve PVTA's FY24 Budget.

Chairman Slaughter asked if the Board had any further 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			
East Longmeadow	Erin Koebler		
Easthampton	Cindy Tarail		
Granby			
Hadley			
Hampden			
Holyoke	Gloria Caballero-Roca		
Leverett			
Longmeadow	Mark Gold		
Ludlow			
Northampton			
Palmer	Benjamin Hood		
Pelham			
South Hadley			
Springfield	Tim Sheehan		
Sunderland			
Ware			
West Springfield			
Westfield	Peter Miller		
Wilbraham			
Williamsburg	J.M. Sorrell		
ADA Representative			
Rider Representative			

Motion passed by a vote of 36.55.

6. APPROVAL OF ADMINISTRATOR'S COMPENSATION

Chairman Slaughter stated that we have a recommendation from the Compensation Committee as well as the Finance & Audit Committee for a 3% salary increase and a \$10,000 bonus for Administration Sheehan for FY23.

Motion: Moved and seconded (Sorrell/Gold) to approve Administrator Sheehan receiving a 3% salary increase retroactive to July 1, 2022 as well as a \$10,000 bonus payment. The

compensation committee will work with Administrator Sheehan over the next 6 months to identify a mutually agreeable deferred compensation plan or program that would be available should future performance appraisals lend themselves to including a deferred compensation component to the Administrator's overall compensation package.

Chairman Slaughter asked if the Board had any discussion.

Michael Squindo: I would like to note that my opposition is relative to the bonus only.

Chairman Slaughter asked if there was any further 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			
East Longmeadow	Erin Koebler		
Easthampton	Cindy Tarail		
Granby			
Hadley			
Hampden			
Holyoke	Gloria Caballero-Roca		
Leverett			
Longmeadow	Mark Gold		
Ludlow			
Northampton			
Palmer	Benjamin Hood		
Pelham			
South Hadley			
Springfield	Tim Sheehan		
Sunderland			
Ware			
West Springfield			
Westfield	Peter Miller		
Wilbraham			
Williamsburg	J.M. Sorrell		
ADA Representative			
Rider Representative			

Motion passed by a vote of 34.94 in favor, 1.61 vote opposed.

Chairman Slaughter stated at the June Board Meeting, the Board will be presented with the Compensation Committee’s recommendation that the Administrator's contract be extended by one year, through June 30, 2026.

7. DIRECTOR OF TRANSIT OPERATIONS REPORT

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

Fixed route ridership systemwide in March was at 664K, up 6% from 627K in March of 2022. Ridership for all garages was higher than in March 2022, with a 10% increase at SATCo, an 8% increase at VATCo, and a 6% increase at UMass.

Paratransit ridership continues to increase steadily when compared to the previous year. Ridership for all of FY23 to date is up 19%. We anticipate paratransit ridership to be approximately 70% of prepandemic levels for all FY 2023.

Routes:

39: MV continues to operate this route which connects Smith and Hampshire Colleges. Route frequency was adjusted in March to eliminate route delays due to heavy traffic. This seems to have addressed on-time performance issues that had been occurring.

B7 and B17: With the imminent closure of Eastfield Mall, we are examining options for alternate endpoints for each of these routes. Options include extending either or both routes to the Wilbraham Big Y, traveling along Fernbank and Kent roads to return to Boston Road ending at stop 797 near Liquors 44, terminating the B17 at Wal-Mart.

The Safety Committee recently conducted a survey of PVRTA employees to better understand how frontline employees view their environment.

The survey was distributed to employees of each operator as well as administrative staff with front line responsibilities. Below are some of the findings:

- 10% of employees completed the survey.
- 55% of respondents indicated that they had been verbally assaulted at some point in their careers.
- 5% of respondents indicated that they had been physically assaulted at some point in their careers.
- 3.2% of respondents indicated that they had been both physically and verbally assaulted at some point in their careers.
- 37% of front-line employees report observing assaults of some type between passengers at least once per month.
- front line employees often unaware of efforts by PVRTA to reduce assaults.
 - 33% of employees were aware of such efforts
 - 49% were not
 - 18% were unsure

To enhance front line employee awareness of steps being taken to reduce the prevalence of assaults, the following steps have been taken:

- direct outreach to front line employees from the Director of Operations / Chief Safety Officer and staff
- Heightened enforcement of PVRTA's Passenger Code of Conduct with appropriate disciplinary actions

For context regarding the need for these updates the definition of an assault on a transit worker as defined in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law is included below as are sample descriptions of physical and non-physical assaults.

Bipartisan Infrastructure Law definition of assault on a transit worker: *“A circumstance in which an individual knowingly, and without lawful authority or permission, and with intent to endanger the safety of any individual, or with a reckless disregard for the safety of a human life, interferes with, disables, or incapacitates a transit worker while the transit worker is performing the duties of the transit worker.”*

8. ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Administrator, Sandra Sheehan, reported the following:

The MA Budget for 2023:

	GOVERNOR	HOUSE	SENATE
TRANSPORTATION FUND	\$96.8M	\$94M	\$94M
FAIR SHARE AMENDMENT	\$25M	\$70M	\$100M
RTA Distribution	\$6M		
Discretionary/Innovation Grants	\$15M	\$15M	\$25M
Community Transit Grant Program	\$4M	\$4M	\$4M
Six Month Fare Free Pilot			\$15M
Trans. Improvements to RTAs		\$51M	\$56M

Michael Squindo: Is the Discretionary Grant formula or application based.

Administrator Sheehan: Application based. The 15 RTA’s last year submitted one application.

Michael Squindo: My understanding is the money could be used to provide an increase to drivers and mechanics.

Administrator Sheehan: We are working with MARTA to make sure that’s included in the workforce development.

Bytemark: March figures show the highest level of use since the system was implemented with 71,000 activations. One-Ride tickets are the most popular followed by the weekly passes. HCC has a lot of usage which is good as we are issuing summer session passes.

Onboard validators are being installed. All vehicles in the Northampton Service Garage are now equipped and some at SATCo. Installation will continue until the entire fleet has an onboard mobile validator.

The IT department is working on integrating the Transit App to the BusPlus mobile payment platform.

We are working on updating PVRTA’s website.

We have received and are in the process of accepting 20 vehicles which are now equipped with a new farebox.

The paratransit system is getting a new trunked voice radio system to enhance radio coverage in the service area and to facilitate the use of tablet computers.

Underground diesel storage tanks at 2840 Main Street are being removed. This project should be completed by June 30th.

9. NEW BUSINESS

Chairman Slaughter reported that there is no new business to discuss.

10. OLD BUSINESS

Administrator Sheehan stated that virtual meetings have been extended through March of 2025. We are looking into a hybrid method for both virtual and in-person meetings. We are looking into holding meetings at Cottage Street as well as at the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission since the 3rd floor conference room acoustics are not ideal.

JM Sorrell: Hybrid meetings allow people with a disability to participate, and I appreciate PVRTA looking into this.

11. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Slaughter asked for a motion to adjourn.

Motion: Moved and seconded (Sorrell/O’Leary) to adjourn.

Chairman Slaughter 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			
East Longmeadow	Erin Koebler		
Easthampton	Cindy Tarail		
Granby			
Hadley			
Hampden			
Holyoke	Gloria Caballero-Roca		
Leverett			
Longmeadow	Mark Gold		
Ludlow			
Northampton			
Palmer	Benjamin Hood		
Pelham			
South Hadley			
Springfield	Tim Sheehan		
Sunderland			

Ware
West Springfield
Westfield Peter Miller
Wilbraham
Williamsburg J.M. Sorrell
ADA Representative
Rider Representative

Motion passed by a vote of 36.55

The meeting of the Advisory Board adjourned at 1:06 P.M.

A TRUE RECORD

ATTEST: _____
BRANDY PELLETIER

Documents filed with Board Meeting packet:

- Roll Call Votes
- Advisory Board Minutes of 3-22-23
- FY24 Budget