



**LOWCOUNTRY REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION
AUTHORITY
BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S MEETING**

**Wednesday, March 27, 2024
2:00 P.M.**

**Lowcountry Regional Transportation Authority
25 Benton Field Road
Bluffton, S.C. 29910**

MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER

Vice Chairman, William Robinson called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND INVOCATION

Board member Barbara Childs gave the invocation and Chris Dreisbach led the pledge of allegiance.

III. FOIA

Public notification of this meeting has been published, posted, and distributed in compliance with the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act.

IV. ROLL CALL OF BOARD MEMBERS AND RECOGNITION OF STAFF PRESENT

Board Members Present: Representing Beaufort County: Barbara Childs and Henry Criss; representing Hampton County: Laura Atkinson; representing Allendale County: Vice-Chair William Robinson; and representing Lowcountry Council of Governments: Stephanie Rossi. Colleton County Representative, Latosia Simmons arrived at 2:40 p.m.

Board Chair: Board Chair Charles Mitchell arrived at 2:20 p.m.

Staff Members Present: Mary Lou Franzoni, Executive Director; Kristine Hepburn, Director of Finance & Administration; Tori Mitchell, Director of Operations; Chris Dreisbach, Director of Maintenance; Brian Sullivan, Director of Marketing; Linda Norton, Lead Dispatcher; Jerry Green, Road Supervisor; Diane Lackey, SCDOT Regional Representative, and Thomas Reitz, Beaufort County Council Liaison were present.

V. WELCOME

Vice Chair William Robinson welcomed all Board, staff, and guests.

VI. PUBLIC FORUM

No members of the public request to speak.

VII. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

January 31, 2024 Board Meeting

Board Member Laura Atkinson requested a spelling correction to Stephanie Rossi's name to the meeting minutes from January 31, 2024.

Motion: Board member Barbara Childs moved that the minutes from the January 31, 2024 Board meeting be approved with the correction. The motion was seconded by Beaufort County representative, Henry Criss.

Vote: The motion was carried unanimously.

VIII. RECOGNITION OF DRIVER OF THE MONTH

Executive Director Mary Lou Franzoni recognized **Lorraine Pinkney** as Employee of the Month for January, and **Shantell Wilson** as the Employee of the Month for February.

IX. ACTION ITEMS

- 1. Authorize continuation of fare-free on the Bluffton Breeze routes until September 30, 2024.**

Motion: Beaufort County Representative, Barbar Childs moved that the Bluffton Breeze routes remain fare-free until September 30, 2024 as recommended by Executive Director Mary Lou Franzoni. Laura Atkinson seconded the motion.

Vote: The motion was carried unanimously.

X. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

- a. Executive Director's Report** – Highlights for January and February included:

Executive Director, Mary Lou Franzoni reported that the Triennial Review is in progress. She reported that the Finance Director, Kristine Hepburn, and herself attended triennial training in Atlanta, GA in February and submitted the RIR paperwork on time. She notified the board that reviewers will be on site in May to conduct the Triennial Review. She hopes to have a clean audit free of deficiencies.

The Director welcomed Camika Beaton to the team. She joins Palmetto Breeze's finance department as the new staff accountant.

The Director stated that the 2024 Rider's Guide for the Breeze Trolley has been printed and distributed ahead of the season and recognized Marketing Director, Brian Sullivan, for his hard work.

The Director informed the board that the mobile ticketing app, Masabi, has been replaced by Token Transit. She expects the app to be live in May of 2024 and hopes that the new application will reduce fraud and increase accuracy in ticket sales.

Beaufort County has contracted with Lowcountry Ferry to provide transportation to Daufuskie Island, the director reported. She reported that the county has required all current Palmetto Breeze card holders to recertify eligibility and obtain a Qualify Discount Rider card. She recognized Lead Dispatcher, Linda Norton for her efforts vetting card holders and issuing new cards.

The Director reported some difficulties in receiving match funds from Beaufort County, which she attributed to a transition in personnel for the Beaufort County Administrator. She reported that the previous administrator, Eric Greenway had budgeted local match funds for all outside agencies to stay the same as the amount paid in previous years. The Director reported that upon learning of this, she, along with Finance Director, Kristine Hepburn, met with county staff to present facts illustrating the increased need for matching funds from Beaufort County due to the 2020 census numbers increasing the population growth in unincorporated Beaufort County and an increase in grant funds received. At that time, Ms. Franzoni stated to the Interim Administrator that a reduction in local match funds would result in a reduction in service. The Deputy Administrator assured us that they would "find" the funds and instructed us to apply for ATAX funds. However, she reported that Beaufort County has not distributed the remaining FY24 funds to date. The Director informed the Board that a request has been submitted to Beaufort County that included funds for FY25 year as well as \$161,782 for FY24. Beaufort County Representative and County Liaison, Tom Reitz commented that the presentation by the Executive Director and Finance Director was well received by county council members and feels that Beaufort County will approve the request for funds.

- b. Finance Director's Report** – Highlights for January and February included:
Finance Director, Kristine Hepburn provided a summary of financial reports for the most recent period. The finance team is currently preparing the budget proposal for the 2025 fiscal year. She expects it to be submitted in early April.

The Director noted that the search continues for an additional member of the finance committee.

- c. Board Chair's Report** – Board Chairman, Charles Mitchell stated that his visit to the state capital went well. He was able to meet with many representatives who support public transportation, and that the Authority is recognized as a necessary good for the public. He is hopeful for a future increase in funding from the state for public transportation.

XI. OLD BUSINESS

- a. **LATS Update** – Stephanie Rossi from the Lowcountry Council of Governments provided an update and announced that the next LATS meeting on April 5, 2024 is cancelled. The next meeting will be held Friday, June 7, 2024 at 9:30 a.m. She informed the board that a review of the long-range transportation plan is underway.
- b. **Northern Beaufort Transit Study** — Stephanie Rossie from the Lowcountry Council of Governments reported that 8 RFPs were submitted, and that after a thorough review RS&H has been selected to conduct the study. She stated that SCDOT is conducting a thorough review of the contract before approval.

XII. NEW BUSINESS

- a. **2024 Breeze Trolley** — The Executive Director, Mary Lou Franzoni reported that the trolley season begins April 13 to coincide with the Heritage Golf Tournament.

Marketing Director, Brian Sullivan informed the board of a new coupon sheet available to riders that allows riders receive discounts from local supporters if they mention the trolley to local businesses.

Mr. Sullivan reported the creation of a new pilot program for solar lights at trolley stops. He hopes to see an increase in safety and ridership as a result. He noted that the lights are turtle friendly and safe for the environment.

XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Beaufort County Representative, Barbara Childs made a motion motioned to go into an executive session to discuss personnel matters in relation to the search for a new Executive Director. Board Member William Robinson seconded the motion. The board went into executive session at 2:35 p.m.

XIV. ACTION RESULTING FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion: Beaufort County Representative, Barbara Childs moved to resume regular session. Board Member Laura Atkinson seconded the motion.

Vote: The motion was carried unanimously at 2:50 p.m.

Board Chairman, Charles Mitchell established a search committee to select a recruitment firm to find the next Executive Director. The committee includes Board Vice Chair William Robinson, Hampton County Representative, Laura Atkinson, and Beaufort County Representative, Barbara Childs. The Chairman authorized the search committee to interview and select an executive recruitment firm from those listed on the SC State Contract.

Motion: Beaufort County Representative, Barbara Childs moved to use the state contract listings for search firms for the replacement of Mary Lou Franzoni as Executive Director after her retirement in November 2024. Board member William Robinson seconded the motion.

Vote: The motion was carried unanimously.

XIV. ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

XV. ADJOURNMENT

Board Chair Charles Mitchell made a motion to adjourn which was seconded by Board Member Childs. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 3:25 p.m.

NEXT LRTA Board Meeting: Wednesday, May 29, 2024, at 2:00 p.m. In person at our facility at 25 Benton Field Rd with Committee Meetings prior to Meeting. Deadline for Agenda Items: May 17, 2024.