

Board Meeting Minutes: January 18, 2024

Call to order @ 6pm by Pete LaRue Chairperson

Roll Call:

Present: Karen Kasper, William De Groot, Taylor Klipp, Scott Krah, Dawn Schuhknecht, Ed Anderson, Barb Owdziej, Jason Wallner, Pete LaRue, Tim Overmyer, Sean Hobbins

Others Present: Bill Geller-Executive Director, Kevin Hodges-Operations Manager, Mike Richer-Operations Manager, Kristine McDonnell-Finance Officer, Janet Cobb-Administrative Assistant

New members Hobbins and Overmyer welcomed by Pete LaRue

Minutes of December 21, 2023 Regular Meeting:

Motion made by Owdziej to amend minutes by eliminating the 2nd line in her public comment. Motion supported by Hobbins, failed, requiring a roll call vote.

Discussion of amending minutes from 12/21/23:

McDonnell states that the sentence in question was on the recording of the meeting. **Owdziej** said that the minutes printed from last month are selective, and subjective based on choice of the transcriptionist, and that there were many other comments from board members that were not included. **Hobbins** noted that the sentence to be eliminated was not relevant to any action and could be eliminated without affecting overall intent of the minutes from the board. **Wallner** commented that the minutes have been amended before and verbalized that these minutes should not be selected based on the wishes of a member, though he agrees that there have been minutes in the past that seemed "shorthand and annotated".

Motion failed by roll call, requiring a Voice Vote

NAY-Wallner, Overmyer, Schuhknecht, Krah, LaRue,
Anderson YAY-Owdziej, Hobbins, Kasper, Klipp, De Groot

Motion to amend minutes was denied

Motion made by De Groot to accept the minutes as originally submitted, amended to reflect correct date of upcoming meeting of January 18th 2024. 2nd by Krah, motion carried

Consent Agenda:

Motion to approve consent agenda by Schuhknecht, 2nd by Wallner-Motion carried.

Agenda for meeting 1/18/24:

Motion made by Hobbins to approve agenda with addition to discuss strategic plan as well as board and committee assignments. Motion carried and added under Action Items #4.

Public Comment:

None.

Action Items:

1. Nomination and Election of Officers for 2024

Motion made by LaRue to nominate De Groot as Chairperson, supported by Schuhknecht.

De Groot expressed being happy to fulfill this role and motion carried with De Groot abstaining

Bill De Groot, as newly elected Chairperson assumed the role of meeting facilitator at this time.

Motion made by Krah and supported by Wallner to nominate LaRue as Vice-Chair, motion carried

Motion made Schuhknecht to nominate Klipp for treasure (Klipp is unable to fulfill this role), then nominated herself, supported by Wallner, motion carried

Motion made by Hobbins, supported by Klipp to nominate Owdziej as secretary, motion carried.

2. FY 2025 Annual Application and Resolution of Intent

Geller reports this is part of a required annual application and includes budget and funding sources, for the State. Copy of application included in packet.

Motion made by Klipp to accept and approve the 2025 Resolution of Intent as presented, supported by LaRue, motion carried.

3. Title VI Update and Approval

Geller reports this plan is updated every few years and part of the annual application to the State. Document enclosed in board packet for review.

Motion made by Anderson and supported by Krah to accept Title VI update for the State. Motion carried.

4. Strategic Planning and Committees

De Groot addressed the assignment of board members in order to give a historic perspective on committee assignments. He recognizes the current process of selecting committee members at the beginning of a new calendar year. He explains that committee assignment are made by the Chair, Vice-Chair and ED. He states he is "personally invested" and is better situated as a chairperson to facilitate movement toward and through the process of planning and community structure.

Hobbins asks about previous discussion around strategic planning, and how these task are assigned to committees. He asks if this is appropriate for committee work , emphasizing his feeling that the creation of a plan serves as guiding document that provide structure for boards of public bodies He asks about process, how committees are selected and whether there is any plan for outside assistance.

Klipp states that the board had been operating under the opinion that the operations committee could handle any "smaller structure" in respect to strategic planning. He states the "board in general" is hesitant to bring in outside consultation. He points out that most of the "strategic planning has revolved around mandates to the executive director, in terms of what we are trying to accomplish".

De Groot states the board has a vast committee structure but the board has not coalesced around the meaning of strategic planning. He differentiates the types of strategic planning as financial, governing, organizational and operational. He reports the board has been on a mission of Governing Strategic Planning since his admission to the board, citing a session facilitated by an outside organization, MPTA. The aim of this "visioning session" was to determine if the board wanted to be a "Policy Board or a Management Board". He reports that the current framework is a Governing "strategy, which assigns tasks to various committees. At this time, the board needs to agree on a type of framework; encompassing, operations, financial or governance. He states that historically, since hiring new director, the board had agreed NOT to be a management board, as it "has in the past". DeGroot recognizes that

preliminary decisions around type of plan need to be addressed first, and decisions around documenting “ends statements or “ends documents” then utilizing a committee structure to address these issues.

De Groot states this will be put on the agenda to determine the direction and type of plan. He voiced confidence that the current board could handle this task without any outside assistance. He states he knows all the outside consultants and believes that the result would be a “rubber stamp”, with limited success.

When pressed for a specific timeline by **Hobbins**, **De Groot** agrees to put this on February’s agenda to define and agree on TYPE of plan.

LaRue points out it’s important to get input from the staff of Marq-tran

De Groot asks all board members to start thinking about plan direction and focus, as well as self-appraisal, in order to facilitate this process. He recognizes that the first priority is to determine the type of board.

Hobbins asks for documentation done previously in a vision session motioned earlier (MPTA) by **De Groot**. **De Groot** clarified this explaining it was a discussion aimed at giving this newly formed board an operating framework. **Wallner** states it was not a board meeting, but a training session. Apparently, there is no documentation of this session on the record.

Schuhknecht asks what model the board been using, and states that everything was “working really well”. She remarked, “and then Barb comes on, beating this to death and now we have Sean from Marquette beating this, and I don’t understand what was wrong”. She also asks “once we vote on it, can it be dead?” **De Groot** replies that “it is the discussion we are going to have” **Schuhknecht**, referencing the current strategy to address planning states “whoever doesn’t like it will just have to accept it”. **Hobbins** points out that (even with a completed strategic plan) a board member can continue to make motions. He notes that formally documenting board values, priorities and action items are fundamental to public agencies. He states that a document will provide intent and structure for concerns and questions from the inquiring public. He reports he has received questions from the community questioning Marq-tran’s operational processes, and that a document provides clarification and direction.

Geller requests that questions from the public get directed directly to Marq-tran.

Wallner states that he advocates for transparency and calls the timing of Barb’s appointment to the board as ironic as it coordinated with the timing of Marquette City updating their strategic plan. He reminds the board that this is a county authority, not specifically for Marquette, and remarks that the addition of the Assistant City Manager to be a “slow erosion” of the board. He specifically cited Barb’s comments at the previous board meeting, “accusations around our lack of ability to function”. He states the Authority has gone through “quite a bit”, (successfully) including going through Covid and change in leadership.

Hobbins states that he wants a regional approach and questions the accusation that he is there to only represent the City of Marquette

Owdziej responds that her intent was never to be “Marquette centric”, that her issue has always been around identifying goals of the Authority. She states her comments concerning her lack of faith in the board’s ability to generate a strategic plan are based on the evidence that no plan currently exists.

De Groot voiced concerns over generalized function of board and hopes it can operate cohesively and cooperatively and wants to spend time examining opportunities, strengths and opinions at the next meeting. He acknowledges that the board is not currently structured in a style of management. The current operating structure charges the board with managing one individual (the Executive Director).

LaRue mentions that previously the board has been approached by city representatives asking for specific routes, namely 3rd street, which are logistically difficult. He recognizes the need for services county wide. He encourages customer complaints to be directed to the ED.

New or Old Business:

Bill Geller reminds all board members to check their contact information. He asks for board input for committee assignments. He also reviewed handout regarding proper channels of communication and asks that employees direct complaints directly to the management. He invites board members to question him for any clarifications or questions in the monthly packets.

Board Member Comments:

Owdziej pointed out some discrepancy in bylaws and asks about updating. She also asks why packets are snail mailed. **Geller** states board members need copies at the meeting and there is not computer availability to everyone at the board meetings. She wonders if board members should be notified when there are significant operational changes as she was asked by a resident during latest storm if she was aware that the routes were canceled. **Hodges** states the logistics of sharing operational decision with the board would be difficult. **De Groot** echoed earlier statements regarding the goal of determining board direction and management style and that notifying board members of day to day operations was not in the board structure.

Anderson states he does not want to get into day to day operations and has confidence that management is doing a great job. He believes there could be better communication in the community regarding ridership, specifically the elderly population at the senior centers. He states "are we going to change mass transit, no, are we going to change the numbers of people that ride the bus, the bus can come by my house every 15 minutes and take me wherever I want to go, but I'm not getting on a bus and neither are most of you guys". He states that outside evaluators will not provide any helpful information, will not change or increase ridership, and thinks the organization is better suited for the task. He thinks the board could make it easier by "getting the message out".

Hobbins looks forward to working on the Board

Klipp made a minor type correction in the Labor agreement distributed at the meeting today. He also asked Geller for an update on the wallet installation process. **Geller** states there are issues, routes are not correct on the App but the App is live.

Krah- anticipates that after going through a strategic plan process there will be no changes to the functioning of the board. He acknowledges this might just be an exercise in documentation

Schuhknecht- no further comments

Kasper-Reports that that Marq-tran was "brought up" at the last city council meeting in Ishpeming, reporting some confusion at the high rise among the residents. **Geller** reports that had previously made presentations there but receptive to another. **Hodges** will make contact and assume the responsibility of a public education session.

Overmyer states he is looking forward to his position.

LaRue suggests that TV 6 be contacted for some local coverage and notes paper copies of schedule availability in the entry way of the central office.

De Groot- thanked the board for electing him as chair and defers to staff for further comments/ concerns

Richer clarified history of Marquette's request for services. He reports that city officials on multiple separate occasions have approached the Authority requesting services. He states never denied a city request, that there was lack of follow-up by the City of Marquette. He said this happened on several occasions, spaced by years with similar results.

Meeting Adjourned at 18:58

Next meeting February 15, 2024

Respectfully submitted,

Barb Owdziej
Secretary