

MINUTES FOR THE HUMBOLDT TRANSIT AUTHORITY

REGULAR BOARD MEETING

September 6, 2023

PRESENT

Board Members

Tami Trent, City of Fortuna
Alex Stillman, City of Arcata
Leslie Castellano, City of Eureka
Steve Ladwig, City of Trinidad
Debra L. Garnes, City of Rio Dell (Alt)
Natalie Arroyo, County of Humboldt

ABSENT

Julie Woodall, City of Rio Dell
Mike Wilson, County of Humboldt

Staff

Greg Pratt, General Manager
Consuelo Espinosa, Human Resources Manager
Katie Collender, Finance Manager
Carolann Aggeler, Administration and Finance Assistant
Andi Evans, Bookkeeper
Brian Connors, Operations Manager
Jerome Qiriazzi, Transit Planner
Sherry Dunlap, Safety & ADA Coordinator
Jim Wilson, Director of Maintenance

Also in attendance was Nancy Diamond, HTA's Legal Counsel; Oona Smith, HCAOG; Colin Fiske, Coalition for Responsible Transportation Priorities; Shellie Anderson, Bryce Consulting, Inc.; and Althea Christensen, Member of the Public.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Ladwig called the meeting to order at 9:01 am.

ROLL CALL & Introductions

Introductions were made.

COMMUNITY MEMBERS COMMUNICATION

Members and the community were invited to participate in the first annual National Week Without Driving this October 2-8, 2023.

SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

None

CONSENT CALENDAR

By motion, recommend the approval of the following items considered to be routine and enacted in one motion. Items may be removed from the consent calendar upon request and will be heard separately.

Motion by Councilmember Stillman, second by Councilmember Trent to approve the Consent Calendar. Motion carried unanimously.

1. Minutes from August 2, 2023, Regular Board Meeting and August 21, 2023, Special Board Meeting

Items Removed from Consent Calendar

None

New Business

1. Classification and Compensation Study

General Manager Greg Pratt announced that a study for unrepresented staff wages had been completed by Bryce Consulting, Inc., and that a study had not been performed in over 20 years.

Bryce Consulting representative Shellie Anderson presented the findings to the board and stated that HTA was around 25% below market for total compensation compared to the median values of other surveyed agencies. Shellie added that to remain competitive in a tight labor market and continue to accomplish ambitious upcoming projects, HTA's ability to recruit and retain high performing staff was critical. Going forward, she recommended refreshing this data on an annual or bi-annual basis to avoid falling this far below market again.

Councilmember Stillman shared that the study was a good thing and relevant to keeping good employees.

Councilmember Trent opposed and expressed that other counties and local city wages were comparable to HTA's current wages. Councilmember Ladwig added that wage studies should be done on a regular basis equivalent to the market. Councilmember Castellano stated that she was comfortable moving forward with the data presented and as shown, in comparison with other cities across local government and organizations of the same size.

Councilmember Arroyo stated that Mendocino County is comparable to HTA and that she was not surprised to see the large gaps in between which accounted for the increases.

Additionally, Greg requested that the board approve the allocation of an additional part-time Vehicle Service Worker Position in the Maintenance Shop. He added that adding another part-time Vehicle Service Worker will allow HTA mechanics to be paired together and complete more maintenance/re-maintenance jobs.

Motion by Councilmember Castellano, second by Councilmember Garnes to Approve the Unrepresented Salary Schedule and Represented Allocation Plan by adopting Resolution 23-13.

Motion passed by the following vote:

AYES: Castellano, Garnes, Ladwig, Arroyo, Stillman

NOES: Trent

ABSENT: Wilson

2. Mendocino Forest Products (MFP) Letter of Support

Greg Pratt shared that MFP are in the process of developing plans for a wood waste-to-hydrogen plant at their sawmill in Ukiah, California. Greg also shared that they are seeking grant funds from CALFIRE's Wood Products and Bioenergy Business and Workforce Development Grant program to help fund front-end loading engineering work on this project, and that they requested a letter of support from HTA.

Motion by Councilmember Stillman, second by Councilmember Castellano to Approve the Letter of Support for Mendocino Forest Products and Authorize the General Manager to Sign. Motion carried unanimously.

3. Reconnecting Arcata Letter of Support

Greg Pratt shared that for the last couple of months HTA Staff has been meeting with Caltrans District 1 and Co-Applicants Cal Poly Humboldt, City of Arcata, and Humboldt Area Association of Governments Caltrans District 1, and they are requesting a letter of support on the State and Federal side, for reconnecting Communities; Highways to Boulevards Program 2023.

Motion by Councilmember Stillman, second by Councilmember Castellano to Approve the Letters of Support for Caltrans and Authorize the General Manager to Sign. Motion carried unanimously.

4. Free Rides Request from the Humboldt Equity Consortium

Greg Pratt announced that the Spanish language fair, Festejando Nuestra Comunidad will be at Cal Poly on Saturday, September 16, 2023, and that HTA has been asked to provide free rides to and from event.

Councilmember Castellano expressed that she would like see free rides for the North County Fair that is on the same day.

Motion by Councilmember Arroyo, second by Councilmember Castellano to Approve Free Rides for Members of the Public on Saturday, September 16, 2023. Motion carried unanimously.

5. HTA Projects Update

HTA's Transit Planner Jerome Qirhazi gave the board an update on the following projects:

1. The Hydrogen Fueling Stations Request for Qualifications is at its first step in the design build procurement process, nearly ready for release.
2. The City of Eureka, Linc Housing, and HTA were successfully funded operational funds for two electric microtransit vehicles.
3. Leslie Castellano announced that the credit card validators were installed in the Arcata City buses and that they are working well.

Reports

1. Draft May 2023 statistics and financial statements for all systems operated by HTA

Finance Manger Katie Collender announced that the end of the FY 2022/23 had ended with a few journal entries to review. She also added that there was a 24% increase in total ridership, 47% increase in Month Pass purchases, and that farebox was at 15%, which exceeded even though it was not required. She also added that HTA was seeing standing room only for some of the am routes.

BOARD COMMUNICATIONS

Councilmember Leslie Castellano shared that the City of Eureka would be making a public announcement on the Link Housing Project at the next City Council Meeting.

STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

General Manager Greg Pratt thanked the board for supporting Staff with the classification and compensation study with wage increases. Operations Manager Brian Connors also thanked the board for the increase in wages for HTA's Transit Operators and indicated that morale is much improved.

CLOSED SESSION

The Board will meet in closed session pursuant to Government Code Section 54957(b)(1) (employee performance evaluation): General Manager, and Government Code Section 54957.6 (meeting with designated representative, unrepresented employee General Manager): Designated representative Board Chair.

No public comment.

Nothing was reported out.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 10:14 a.m.