

A meeting of the Board of Directors of the Rhode Island Turnpike and Bridge Authority ("Authority") was held via Zoom on Wednesday, May 5, 2021.

The meeting was called to order at 8:33 A.M. by Acting Chair, Judith M. Morse.

Members Present:

Judith M. Morse, Acting Chair
Darrell Waldron
Peter Alviti, Jr. P.E., Ex Officio

Members Absent:

None

Invited Guests:

Lori Caron Silveira, Executive Director
Eric Seabury, P.E., Director of Engineering
Kathryn Coleman, Manager of Tolling and Operations
Jeff Goulart, Chief Financial Officer
Toni Gubata, Controller
Stephen Cahill, Manager of Safety and Security
Marianne Durgin, Executive Assistant to the Director
Raphe Sciola, Senior Administrative Assistant
Remmy Villacis, Network Technician
Frank Flowers, Manager of Maintenance
Bill O'Gara, Legal Counsel

Item No. 2

Public Comment – There were no public comments.

Item No. 3

Motion by Darrell Waldron, seconded by Peter Alviti, Jr., passed unanimously to approve the minutes of the April 7, 2021 Board meeting.

Item No. 4

Motion by Darrell Waldron, seconded by Peter Alviti, Jr., passed unanimously to approve of a resolution thanking Stephen C. Waluk and R. David Cruise for their service to the Rhode Island Turnpike and Bridge Authority. Judith M. Morse read the Resolution: **WHEREAS**, Stephen C. Waluk and R. David Cruise worked tirelessly and earnestly to advance the interests of the Rhode Island Turnpike and Bridge Authority during their respective tenures as members of the board; and **WHEREAS**, Stephen C. Waluk and R. David Cruise provided outstanding leadership and guidance to the Rhode Island Turnpike and Bridge Authority; and **WHEREAS**, Stephen C. Waluk served with integrity and distinction on the RITBA Board for 16 years, 7 of those as Chairman of the Board, and during his tenure oversaw many initiatives which improved RITBA's service to its customers, including E-ZPass, Open Road Tolling, and the installation of a median barrier on the Newport Pell Bridge, along with numerous maintenance and construction projects on all four major RITBA bridges; and **WHEREAS**, R. David Cruise served with integrity and distinction for several years, bringing his years of experience in public service to RITBA before being appointed as an associate justice of the Rhode Island Superior Court; and **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the RITBA Board of Directors formally acknowledges and extends its sincere appreciation to Stephen C. Waluk and R. David Cruise for their distinguished years of service to RITBA and those who traveled over RITBA's bridges, and

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wishes them continued success in all their future endeavors; and be it further **RESOLVED**, that a copy of this resolution be transmitted to Messrs. Waluk and Cruise. This Resolution has been adopted by the Rhode Island Turnpike and Bridge Authority Board members at a meeting of the Board of Directors on May 5, 2021.

Item No. 5

Annual Election of Officers - Motion by Darrell Waldron, seconded by Peter Alviti, Jr., passed unanimously to appoint Judith M. Morse as Chair. Motion by Judith M. Morse and passed unanimously to appoint Darrell Waldron as Vice Chair. Motion by Judith M. Morse, seconded by Darrell Waldron, passed unanimously to reappoint Lori Caron Silveira as Secretary. Motion by Darrell Waldron, seconded by Peter Alviti, Jr., passed unanimously to appoint Jeffrey Goulart as Treasurer.

Item No. 6

Motion by Peter Alviti, Jr., seconded by Darrell Waldron, passed unanimously to approve Pannone Lopes Devereaux & O'Gara LLC, invoices for professional services dated April 2021 in the amount of \$26,323.77. This amount includes \$12,465.75 for expert fees and e-discovery management related to litigation. Executive Director Lori Caron Silveira noted that next month's agenda will include an Executive Session to further discuss the litigation matter.

Item No. 7

Motion by Peter Alviti, Jr., seconded by Darrell Waldron, passed unanimously to award Contract 21-01 – External Audit Services to Marcum at an average annual cost of \$33,000. The award is for three (3) years with RITBA maintaining the sole option to renew for two (2) additional one (1) year terms. On March 1, 2021, an RFP was issued for external audit services and an outreach to potential firms was conducted. On March 29, 2021, the Authority received two (2) proposals, one from Marcum and one from O'Connor & Drew. A selection team consisting of Jeff Goulart (CFO), Toni Gubata (Accounting Manager), and Amanda Pelletier (Staff Accountant) independently reviewed the proposals based on the evaluation criteria specified in the RFP, resulting in the recommendation to award these services to Marcum. It was noted that Marcum's cost was lower by approximately 25%. The Department of Administration and the Auditor General agree with the recommendation and approve the selection of Marcum.

Item No. 8

Motion by Peter Alviti, Jr., seconded by Darrell Waldron, passed unanimously to award Contract 21-02 – Telehandler to Aerial Titan at a cost of \$48,950. The purchase of this 2015 Genie telehandler will be used for lifting, moving, and setting concrete barrier for maintenance and protection of traffic on the Jamestown Bridge Railing and Guardrail Painting Project. It will also be used for future projects requiring movement of barrier and other duties that can be performed with various attachments to the telehandler. The Bobcat machine we own is not sufficient to handle this work. It will be put up for public surplus sale to recoup some of the new equipment purchase cost. Peter Alviti, Jr. inquired about the cost to rent the equipment. Eric Seabury indicated \$12,000 – \$14,000 for six months which would be approximately \$48k for 2 years. By purchasing the 2015 Genie Telehandler, RITBA will have the benefit of the use of the equipment for 10 plus years.

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Item No. 9

Motion by Peter Alviti, Jr., seconded by Darrell Waldron, passed unanimously to award Contract 21-04 – Load, Relocate, Place, and Install Concrete Barrier to Cardi Corporation in the amount of \$21,360. An additional contingency amount of \$5,000 was approved to be used for any unforeseen conditions that might arise during the work being performed. Approximately 2,500 linear feet of Lindsay concrete barrier, owned by RITBA, will be transported from the lay-down yard on the Newport side of the Claiborne Pell Bridge to the eastbound side of the Jamestown Verrazzano Bridge and be placed at its initial starting point for the Jamestown Bridge Railing and Guardrail Painting Project.

Director of Engineering Eric Seabury - Capital Projects Status Report: A summary of all current projects was included in the Board materials. This month Director Seabury highlighted the following:

- Bridge Electrical and Communications Upgrades (Newport Pell and Mt. Hope): Cable runs are complete, remaining work is having subcontractor perform the termination of the fiber optic cables on Pell at the cameras and at the other devices being installed. The work on Mt. Hope is complete.
- Partial Depth Deck Replacement on Newport Pell: Nearing completion, finished all the deck grinding, waiting for dry weather to seal the deck. This will be a nighttime operation.
- Miscellaneous and On-Call Repairs – Newport Pell and Jamestown Verrazzano Bridges: Repairs to Pell almost complete, need to perform fiber-reinforced polymer strengthening on the undersides of some of the prestressed beams, which will increase the load-carrying capacity of the beams. Jamestown repairs nearing completion, doing some concrete repairs.
- Mt. Hope and Sakonnet River Bridges - Miscellaneous Steel Repairs: Piasecki Steel is performing repairs to the catwalks underneath Mt Hope. They have installed a new composite ladder and catwalk access to the Sakonnet River Bridge which is allowing access to the inside of the tub girders regardless of the tide.
- Jamestown Verrazzano Bridge Guardrail and Railing Painting Project: (In-House) Painters are working on the backside of the south side railing where they can work safely before the concrete barrier move occurs.
- Bridge Inspections: Atane is performing the routine inspection of the Jamestown Verrazzano Bridge and will then perform the load rating of the bridge. Atane is also currently working on the load rating of the Hummocks Avenue Bridge.

A separate line item will be included in future board materials which will detail the soft costs for these projects. This includes all costs relating to the engineering and construction oversight of the projects.

CFO Jeff Goulart – Financial Summary Report - Mr. Goulart noted the following:

The first page of the financial report included in the board materials shows the February month and YTD results vs. budget. The first three columns show the actual/budget/and variance for the month while the last three columns show the actual/budget and variance for YTD.

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- Although toll revenue exceeded budget for February, traffic was impacted by three snow events not assumed in the budget. During those events there were days in which traffic was down from prior year by as much as 68%.
- The Authority's YTD revenue is higher than budget by 10.4%, or approximately \$2.0 million, primarily due to the conservative approach in budgeting as it was unknown what the impact of COVID would be.
- YTD Operating expenses, excluding depreciation, are down by 28.4%, or approximately \$2.8 million, from budget primarily due to open positions, elimination of the third shift, reduced staff in the customer service center, lower healthcare costs, the timing of the expenses associated with the bridge inspections and other reductions in discretionary spending.

The second page of the financial section includes the February month and YTD results vs. prior fiscal year. The first three columns show the actual/prior year and variance for the month while the last three columns show the actual/prior year and variance for YTD.

- The Authority's YTD revenue is lower than prior year by 16.9%, or approximately \$4.4 million, primarily due to the impact from COVID.
- Operating expenses, excluding depreciation, are lower than prior year by 16.4%, or approximately \$1.4 million, due to open positions, reduced staff in the customer service center, elimination of the third shift, and the timing associated with the bridge inspections and other reductions in discretionary spending.
- The Authority continues to look at all discretionary spending and is actively pursuing opportunities to reduce costs by changing terms or switching to more competitive vendors.
- While financials for March are not yet available, a forecasted revenue report for both March and April is included in the Executive Director's report.

Judith M. Morse inquired if more up to date financial reporting could be provided to the Board. Jeffrey Goulart indicated that to close the monthly reports, tolling data from other state agencies must be received and reconciled and this is part of the delay. Moving forward an attempt will be made to provide reporting that is one month behind, rather than two. Additionally, a forecast report for the immediate past month will be provided.

Executive Director's Report:

- **Monthly Financial Reporting** – The Director noted that the IAG (Interoperable Agency Group) commonly known as the E-ZPass system, continues to grow with Georgia and Minnesota recently becoming part of the group. All Florida agencies will be joining the system by the end of May. RITBA will have additional reciprocity agreements and therefore the monthly financial reporting will become more complex because the additional data will have to be reconciled with these agencies each month.
- **Lane Striping on 138** – Notice given yesterday from DOT that lane striping on Rt. 138 and Jamestown Bridge needed to be done which necessitated the closing of the high-speed open road tolling lane westbound last night from 6:30 – 10:30 P.M. We were able to get the message out

on social media. Lane was reopened at 11 P.M. when all electronic tolling resumes until 7 A.M. each day.

- **Traffic and Revenue Data** – A new report was included in this month’s Board materials which shows Traffic and Revenue data (paid crossings) for 2017 – 2021. The traffic and revenue for 2017 – 2019 is comparable. The 2020 traffic and revenue obviously dropped considerably because of COVID. Last month’s traffic and revenue continued to climb with numbers reaching 80% and some days higher as compared to 2019’s figures. The comeback from COVID is strong. Director Alviti inquired if revenue reduction continues, is there a level of confidence that the current 16% reduction in expenses can continue for some time? Director Caron Silveira indicated that the tolling revenue is currently budgeted around 90% and the numbers are currently reaching that amount. Jeffrey Goulart added that it is likely that we can continue to sustain the reduction in expenses as highlighted in the financial report. There is no hardship to the administrative, finance, operations, and maintenance areas due to the reduction in staff and expenses. Some contracts will have permanent reductions to save costs.
- **Pilot Program for (AET) All Electronic Tolling** – During the AET pilot program no cash or credit cards were taken on the eastbound side of the Pell Bridge from February 14th – March 14th, 2021. The program was very successful, traffic adapted quickly and well. It has given the Authority confidence to move forward with AET which has been found to be safer, more efficient, and better for the environment. Preliminary results found an increase of approximately 26,000 license plate images to read, process, invoice and collect (12% of traffic). There was no noted increase in E-ZPass accounts being opened during that time. This may be due to the fact that the customers were still able to pay by cash and credit card in the westbound lanes and were aware this was only a one-month pilot program. The overall collection rate before the pilot program was 80% by all payment means. The preliminary findings indicate the pilot program did not change that figure and, therefore, had no adverse impact on revenue. Planning to go all electronic after Columbus Day weekend. An RFP is out for modification of the existing plaza with plans for construction of a new gantry, closer to approach of Pell Bridge. Meetings with the union have occurred and have been productive. The transition to all-electronic tolling will prompt restructuring of operations. Moving away from the concept of “plaza” operations as it is operations and monitoring of all our assets which include four major bridges, ten small bridges and all connecting roadways. Restructuring of existing positions will occur. The supervisor’s position will change to become more of a traffic management position which will monitor all our assets. There will be other positions available with the restructuring. Hoping to have the terms negotiated by June 1.

Chair, Judith M. Morse asked if there is something we should be doing to promote use of E-ZPass accounts. Director Caron Silveira stated that management has identified a need in our customer service area for additional Spanish speaking customer service representatives. We plan to fill that need and have a campaign in English and Spanish to promote use of E-ZPass. We hope to get more of our customer base to use transponders, which will minimize the work being done on the bill by mail side with invoicing and collecting. It was also noted that a soft reopening of the walk-in center had begun this past week, which has helped to address the need of some customers to do business in person.

Director Alviti inquired if there is a savings to customers by using an E-ZPass and if so, how can that message reach those without E-ZPass accounts. (RI resident account holders pay .83 cents for each

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crossing for eligible vehicles, rather than \$4). Katie Coleman, Manager of Tolling and Operations, noted that cash and credit card transactions are highest on weekends and it is believed this is because Newport is a destination. This trend has continued for some time, and it appears that these motorists are not motivated to convert to E-ZPass in that they do not see an advantage to having an account as they are not daily commuters. To encourage new account holders, flyers about signing up for E-ZPass are handed out to motorists coming through the cash lanes, and E-ZPass applications are also available from the toll collectors. It was agreed that another campaign would be beneficial, especially as plans to go all-electronic in the fall are developing.

Judith M. Morse addressed a question posed by an attendee in the Zoom chat: Has the team/board looked at strategic modeling to better forecast traffic and revenue? Chat note is from Glenn Mains. Jeffrey Goulart indicated he would follow up with Glenn after the meeting.

Motion by Darrell Waldron, seconded by Peter Alviti, Jr., passed unanimously to adjourn the public meeting at 9:37 A.M.



Lori Caron Silveira
Secretary