

The annual meeting of the Board of Directors of the Rhode Island Turnpike and Bridge Authority (“Authority”) was held at the Authority’s offices in Jamestown on May 17, 2023.

The meeting was called to order at 8:31 A.M. by Chair, James K. Salome.

Members Present

James K. Salome, Chair
Darrell Waldron, Vice Chair
Peter M. Janaros, P.E.
Karen D. Pinch
Peter Alviti, Jr., P.E., Ex Officio

Members Absent:

None

Invited Guests:

Lori Caron Silveira, Executive Director
Eric Seabury, Director of Engineering
Kathryn Coleman, Director of Tolling Operations
Jamie Swanberg, Manager of Tolling Operations
Jeffrey Goulart, Chief Financial Officer
Stephen Cahill, Manager of Safety and Security
Jeffrey Wiggin, Assistant Project Manager
Remmy Villacis, Network Technician
William O’Gara, Pannone Lopes Devereaux & O’Gara, Legal Counsel
Marianne Durgin, Executive Assistant to the Director
David Schultz, Legislative Fiscal Analyst

Item No. 2

Public Comment – There were no public comments.

Item No. 3

A motion made by Peter M. Janaros, seconded by Karen D. Pinch, passed unanimously to approve the minutes of the April 12, 2023 Board meeting.

Item No. 4

Motion by Darrell Waldron, seconded by Peter Alviti, Jr., passed unanimously to reappoint the current officers for the coming twelve months: James K. Salome as Chair, Darrell Waldron as Vice Chair, Jeffrey Goulart as Treasurer, and Lori Caron Silveira as Secretary. Chair Salome congratulated the slate of officers, recognizing how well the team works together. Director Alviti concurred, and all acknowledged the good working relationship that exists among the officers.

Item No. 5

Motion by Peter M. Janaros, seconded by Darrell Waldron, passed unanimously to approve of a purchase order for Sole Source Construction, LLC to perform roof replacement at the Mount Hope Bridge administration building at a cost not to exceed \$29,480.00. Included in the bid is a project contingency of \$5,000 in the event of additional unforeseen damage, only to be used if necessary. The work includes removal of all hazardous material, its disposal, and installation of new roofing, flashing, and associated gutters. Roger Williams University (RWU) leases the property from the Authority. RITBA staff was notified

of water leakage interior to the building. Inspection by RITBA maintenance staff, along with a qualified roofing company, showed failure of a flat roof section on a rear portion of the building involving multiple layers of roofing from previous repairs. Test samples taken also revealed Asbestos Containing Material (ACM). After a public bid opportunity, two bids were received, Sole Source Construction, LLC in the amount of \$29,480.00 and Apollo Roofing & Sheet Metal, LLC in the amount of \$74,900.00. Chair Salome asked Mr. Seabury why he thought there was such a substantial difference in the bid amounts. Mr. Seabury indicated that Sole Source has come in with particularly good pricing for other projects at the Authority and their work has been very good. Director Janaros asked if the rent structure supports what's needed to properly maintain the building. Mr. Goulart indicated there is a 10-year lease with RWU and it will be coming up for renewal in 2025. The current lease does not have an escalator. At renewal time, an appraisal will be performed, and the new rent structure will be set at market rate and will include an annual escalator. Director Pinch inquired about the location of the building. Mr. Seabury confirmed that it is located shortly beyond the Mount Hope Bridge on the left, heading into Bristol. RWU houses its finance department in the building.

Item No. 6

Motion by Peter M. Janaros, seconded by Darrell Waldron, passed unanimously to approve of two task order amendments associated with the Newport Pell Pier 5W rocker bearings project: 1) Construction Support Services (CSS) for the contract work for WSP in an amount not to exceed \$22,000.00 and 2) Construction Inspection Services (CIS) for Keville Enterprises, Inc. in an amount not to exceed \$12,500.00. Cardi Corporation began the bearing replacement project in June 2022, which includes temporary shoring, jacking, and replacement of two rocker bearings to Pier 5W. Due to the project taking longer than originally anticipated due to difficulties detailing and installing shoring, extensive shop drawing iterations, contractor equipment issues, weather issues, and supply chain issues, both WSP and Keville requested amendments to their original task orders. RITBA staff reviewed their requests and found them both to be reasonable. Cardi Corporation has not asked for an amendment to its contract. Mr. Seabury noted that a \$25K allowance was built into Cardi's contract and has not been used to date.

Item No. 7

Motion by Peter Alвити, Jr., seconded by Darrell Waldron, passed unanimously to approve of a construction contract and two task orders in the amount not to exceed \$130,000.00 for the Newport Pell Bridge compression link evaluation, jacking installation, construction support services and construction inspection services as follows: 1) Construction Contract with AETNA, Phase I, on a time and materials basis in the amount not to exceed \$100,000.00, 2) Construction Support Services with WSP in the amount not to exceed \$15,000.00, and 3) Construction Inspection Services with Keville Enterprises, Inc. in the amount not to exceed \$15,000.00. On March 24, 2023, RITBA Maintenance Manager Frank Flowers, while performing routine work on the bridge, noticed a noise at the top pin of the east tower, southeast compression link. RITBA staff notified WSP, one of the On-Call Infrastructure Professional Services consultants, and they performed an inspection the same day. It was confirmed the noise was due to accelerated wear of the truss gusset and reinforcing plates at the pin since the 2022 inspection. WSP recommended a qualified contractor be procured to perform the work on a time and materials basis. AETNA was the sole respondent to a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for the initial assessment work and repair, and RITBA staff and WSP both determined AETNA to be qualified to perform the work. Director Janaros complimented the team on the response to this issue. Beginning with Frank Flowers, and then the follow-up team, all performed their jobs well.

Item No. 8

Motion by Peter Alviti, Jr., seconded by Karen D. Pinch, passed unanimously to approve of a purchase order with Partners Technology for phone system upgrades in an amount not to exceed \$55,920.00. The current phone system for the Authority's administration offices and E-ZPass customer service center is provided by Mitel. The system, hosted on site, is two versions behind in software upgrades and updates. The Authority's E-ZPass and IT departments have worked with RITBA's new phone service consultant, Partners Technology, to develop a plan to upgrade and secure the current phone system. The plan will virtualize the system at RITBA's Jamestown office and at its co-location in Warwick, which will provide a higher level of redundancy and resiliency. Partners Technology will build out the entire system in a "sand box" environment, providing all licensing, software updates, testing, integration, updated carrier service, and staff training. The benefits to customers will include new menus and prompts, an estimated on-hold wait time, new on-hold music, messaging, and multilingual options. RITBA's E-ZPass customer service department will benefit with new soft phone technology, remote work capability, better reporting, upgraded hardware, and reduced toll-free rates. In addition, in the event of a significant weather event, the Authority will have the capability to operate the system remotely. Chair Salome asked if RITBA currently has that ability, and Mr. Wiggin indicated the Authority does not. Director Alviti asked if this is an annual contract. Mr. Wiggin responded it is a one-time cost for the upgrades, and it includes a one-year warranty with full support. Mr. Wiggin also noted that the in-bound toll-free rates currently set at 0.29 per minute will be reduced to 0.19 per minute, which will provide monthly savings to the Authority.

Director of Engineering Eric Seabury - Capital Projects Status Report:

- Newport Pell Bridge Pier 5W Girder Temporary Shoring and Bearing Removal and Replacement: This project is complete.
- Phase II – AET Final Design Newport Pell Bridge: A 100% design submission has been received from WSP for the structural component of the new gantry. RITBA staff will review the submission, make comments, and have a follow-up meeting with WSP. WSP will then put together a bid package. The architectural design for the new gantry is still in development.
- Mt. Hope Bridge Suspension Cables & Anchorages Investigation and Dehumidification: The project is in design, working towards a 30% progress submission.
- ATMS Bridge Safety & Video Analytics – Pell & Mt. Hope: Additional testing has been conducted by the consultant, Parsons. RITBA staff is currently discussing the results of the testing. The system is mostly operational, but there are some remaining issues to be addressed.
- Safety Barrier Feasibility Study: The feasibility study is in design. RITBA has bi-weekly meetings with the consultant, Atkins. It is on schedule.
- Load Ratings & Inspections: The Jamestown Verrazzano Bridge crack monitoring plan has begun. AI Engineers is on site and performing its inspection and will report on its findings.

CFO Jeff Goulart – Financial Summary Report: Overall revenue was higher than budget by \$6.8M, or 24%. Toll revenue was higher by \$7.5M but was partially offset by lower gas tax proceeds of \$0.7M. Year to date operating expenses were lower than budget by \$0.8M, resulting in operating profit exceeding budget by \$7.6M. The operating expenses that were higher than budget have been a direct result of higher revenue, specifically the bill-by-mail transactions. These expenses include postage, supplies (envelopes and paper) and credit card fees. The consolidated invoice structure, recently approved by the Board, should reduce these costs moving forward. The significant operating expense line item that is lower than budget is bridge inspections. This is due to both the timing of the expenses and the overall lower cost of task orders as a result of seeking multiple bids for specific inspections. Preliminary April numbers also look to be positive when compared to budget. For the first 15 days of May, traffic has trended at 106% of 2022 levels and 102% of pre-pandemic levels. Next month Mr. Goulart will be presenting the fiscal year 2024

budget to the Board for its review and consideration of approval. The preliminary budget has revenue exceeding \$40M, which is approximately \$1M higher than pre-pandemic levels. This would be the first time the Authority's revenues would exceed \$40M in a fiscal year.

Executive Director's Report:

- **Federal Funding** – While the Authority was not awarded funds under the Bridge Investment Program, RITBA still has a RAISE grant submission pending and expects to apply for funding through other federal programs. \$10M in funding has been earmarked by Congress for the Authority to use for the Mount Hope Bridge dehumidification project, and the design phase of this project is underway. RITBA will continue to look for additional funding. Director Alviti asked what an alternate plan is if no federal funding is awarded. Director Caron Silveira indicated the Authority's capital plan is tied to a plan of finance. If no other federal funding is secured, projects will need to be reprioritized so that additional funds will be available for the project when needed. Mr. Goulart noted the funding in the capital plan for the dehumidification project only assumes \$10M in federal funding. Chair Salome asked when and how federal funding will be received. For the \$82.5M in INFRA federal funding awarded for the bundled projects for the Pell Bridge, the first step is for the terms of agreement to be prepared with Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The next step is for FHWA to obligate the funds, which is expected to occur this summer. The \$10M earmarked for the Mount Hope Bridge will be received as the work takes place. Those funds will come to the Authority through RIDOT. The Authority will enter into a sub agreement with RIDOT and as invoices are approved and paid, RITBA will be reimbursed by RIDOT. Director Alviti complimented the team on the nearly \$100M in federal funding the Authority is being awarded. Traditionally the monies for such projects would come from Agency bond funding, which creates debt. This has been replaced with \$100M in federal funding. Chair Salome further noted that federal funding of this size has never occurred in the Authority's history. Director Alviti noted that this will consistently reduce the debt service and will have a compounding effect. Director Caron Silveira noted that part of what may have made RITBA's submissions successful was RITBA's commitment to engage in meaningful workforce development programs. The Authority has been successful in putting together a team of young people, six students from CCRI, all from the Department of Engineering, who are participating in RITBA's Introducing Youth to American Infrastructure's (iyai+) Innovation Challenge. Sessions are conducted virtually and RITBA staff, along with RITBA consultants, are presenting on what it takes to maintain a cable and suspension bridge. The students are hearing about the need for the dehumidification of the cables and anchorages of RITBA's suspension bridges. The students are engaged, asking questions and learning. Director Caron Silveira noted that interim CCRI President Dr. Rosemary Costigan was most helpful in finding interested students to participate in the program. Chair Salome asked Director Alviti if DOT runs a similar program. Director Alviti spoke about the internship program that has been in place for many years at DOT. There was discussion about how there is a decline in participation, and an overall decline in young people enrolled in engineering programs and in the trades.
- **General Assembly – 2023 Session - Pending Legislative Bills**
 - **House Bill 5464A** – This bill, sponsored by Representative Finkelman of Jamestown, now has a Sub A. It has made its way through the House and is now pending in the Senate Judiciary. The bill will extend tolling notice times, providing customers more time to pay the first notice received in the mail, and more time to respond to a second

notice. RITBA anticipates hearing good news on the outcome of this bill by the end of June.

House Bill No. 6002 – This is the bill requiring safety barriers to be installed on the bridges. As currently written, it requires RITBA to install safety barriers on the bridges by June 2024. The Authority has filed neutral testimony with House Finance. RITBA has its consultant, Atkins, conducting a feasibility study for installing barriers on the Mount Hope and Jamestown Verrazzano Bridges. The Authority has also partnered with the NY State Bridge Authority, assisting them in preparing for a summit titled, Transportation for Life, which will focus on all aspects of public suicide. Director Alviti asked when the RITBA feasibility study will be complete. Mr. Seabury indicated the final report is due May 2024. Director Alviti asked, assuming there is a feasible option, and funding were in place, and design and construction would follow, how long after that, realistically would it take to complete installation of barriers? Mr. Seabury responded the project would unlikely break ground in under two years' time from May 2024. It would then take another year and a half to build. The bill, as currently written, requires the barriers to be built by June 2024. The neutral testimony submitted by Director Caron Silveira notes it is unrealistic to meet the timeline of June 2024. Director Alviti indicated RIDOT will submit testimony amplifying the same sentiment about the timeline.

Senate Finance Committee – Director Caron Silveira stated that she, along with Mr. Goulart and Mr. Seabury, recently presented to the Senate Finance Committee on the RITBA 2023 budget. Next month the 2024 budget will come before the RITBA Board. Also reported was that Director Caron Silveira, along with Director Alviti, recently attended a presentation by Syracuse University students, hosted by the Senate Finance Committee. The students addressed issues relating to how to replace diminishing gas tax revenue, and how to prepare for there being more electric vehicles on the roads. Electric vehicles weigh more and are expected to do more damage to roadways. There is also the issue of supplying electricity for those vehicles. Director Janaros asked Director Alviti how he sees the future of road use charging. Director Alviti indicated the Syracuse students identified several options in their presentation. This was a kick-off study, spearheaded by Senator DiPalma. The presentation provided some basic data that shows the trajectory of the decline of revenue from the gas tax. It makes it apparent that decisions need to be made now, rather than waiting and getting behind in revenues, causing infrastructure to fail, as it did in the past due to lack of funding. He indicated the Governor, Speaker, and Senate President are all on board to begin discussions this year so that legislation can be put in place next year to address the issue of replacing diminishing gas tax revenue with a new revenue stream. Director Caron Silveira stated the public will begin to hear the use of two acronyms, RUC and VMT, Road Usage Charging and Vehicle Miles Traveled, relating to this topic. Director Caron Silveira will be attending the upcoming International Bridge, Tunnel and Turnpike Association's RUC conference and will report back with the latest information next month.

- **Tolling Department** – The tolling department has three major undertakings occurring simultaneously: 1) The old back office system's contract will expire in June and a new back office system is expected to go live in October, 2) a new gantry and lane integration system is being developed, and 3) RITBA will go live in July in joining the launch of the E-ZPass Group's new Hub, which will allow all participating agencies to share data. These are all complicated projects requiring detailed oversight and coordination by the tolling department.

A motion by Darrell Waldron, seconded by Peter Alviti, Jr., passed unanimously to adjourn the public meeting at 9:19 a.m.

Lori Caron Silveira
Secretary