

A 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 April 24, 2024.

The meeting was called to order at 8:43 A.M. by Vice Chair, Darrell Waldron.

Members Present

Darrell Waldron, Vice Chair
Peter M. Janaros, P.E
Karen D. Pinch

Members Absent:

James K. Salome, Chair
Peter Alviti, Jr., P.E., Ex Officio

Invited Guests:

Lori Caron Silveira, Executive Director
Eric Seabury, Director of Engineering
Kathryn Coleman, Director of Tolling Operations
Jeffrey Goulart, Chief Financial Officer
Stephen Cahill, Manager of Safety and Security
Frank Flowers, Maintenance Manager
Remmy Villacis, Network Technician
Joseph Rodio, Rodio & Ursillo, Legal Counsel
Marianne Durgin, Executive Assistant to the Director
Jeffrey Wiggin, Assistant Project Manager
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 March 20, 2024 Board meeting.

Item No. 4

Motion by Karen D. Pinch, seconded by Peter M. Janaros, passed unanimously to ratify an expenditure of \$3,992.43 for a task order with AECOM, who provided assistance to RITBA in preparing the Benefit Cost Analysis (BCA) for the RAISE 2024 grant application. The services were required before the matter could be brought before the Board for task order approval and AECOM had recently done the BCA for the same project for another grant application. The financial effect was less than \$4,000, which is well within the Executive Director’s authority. Director Caron Silveira has the authority to sign checks for this amount but in the interest of transparency wanted to present this to the Board for ratification. Director Janaros noted it has been great to see all the success the Authority has had recently with the grant work that has been done. Director Pinch asked when it is expected the Authority will hear on the recent RAISE grant application. Director Caron Silveira indicated RITBA will likely hear first about the small Bridge Investment Program submission and then the RAISE 2024 submission. Mr. Rodio added that RAISE grant awards are usually announced in the fall.

Item No. 5

Motion by Peter M. Janaros, seconded by Karen D. Pinch, passed unanimously to approve a task order for HDR, the selected Program Manager (PM) for the Newport Pell INFRA Grant Project bundle, to perform several initial tasks in the amount not to exceed \$63,264.47, pending concurrence of Federal Highway

Administration (FHWA). One of the initial tasks includes participating in the selection of the consultants for the design projects. HDR will begin working with RITBA staff to keep the INFRA Grant projects progressing while a more comprehensive task order and fee is developed and negotiated for the next phases of work. The first task order was found to be a reasonable cost, and it has been sent to FHWA for their concurrence to ensure eligibility for grant reimbursement. Director Janaros asked how the cooperation is with Federal Highway. Mr. Seabury responded it is very good. The Authority is working with John Nickelson out of the Providence office.

Item No. 6

Motion by Karen D. Pinch, seconded by Peter M. Janaros, passed unanimously to approve a purchase order in an amount not to exceed \$41,252.06 for a Ventrac tractor, including attachments, dual wheels, tough cut mower, and stump grinder. RITBA recently sold a Kubota tractor on Public Auction because of its limited usefulness for maintenance staff. It was sold to the Town of Jamestown. RITBA staff evaluated an articulating tractor that would be more useful and versatile because it could accept various accessories. A local distributor brought a Ventrac tractor onsite and gave a live demonstration on its use for safely maintaining hills and slopes. Other manufacturers of this type of tractor were evaluated by RITBA staff, and it was determined that the best option was the Ventrac brand. Sourcewell, a cooperative purchasing agreement, is an allowable method of purchasing equipment under RI procurement regulations. Ventrac belongs to Sourcewell and provided the contract discount for purchase through an authorized dealer, Turf Products. RITBA is a member of Sourcewell. Director Pinch asked what the Authority received for the sale of the Kubota tractor. Mr. Seabury indicated it sold for \$48,000.

Item No. 7

Motion by Peter M. Janaros, seconded by Karen D. Pinch, passed unanimously to approve a purchase order in the amount not to exceed \$38,750.00 to Orga Signal LLC for purchase of a new RACON (radar responder or radar transponder beacon). A RACON is a device used as a navigation aid on the Mount Hope and Newport Pell Bridges, in coordination with the U.S. Coast Guard. The RACON on the Mount Hope Bridge malfunctioned approximately six months ago. RITBA maintenance staff removed the unit and sent it back to the manufacturer for service. Due to the age of the device, the manufacturer was unable to source parts to make the repair. RITBA staff issued an IFB to purchase a new unit to restore the equipment to the Mount Hope Bridge expeditiously. One quote was received by Orga Signal LLC. Director Janaros noted this is a key navigational piece of equipment and it is essential that the Authority have it.

Director of Engineering Eric Seabury - Capital Projects Status Report:

- Phase II – AET Construction - Newport Pell Bridge: The new gantry slabs on both columns are in place along with the toll equipment building. The two decks and their barriers on Structure E have been replaced. The project is moving along well, and the lanes will be transitioned back to two in each direction by May 17th. The contractor Lynch continues to meet expectations.
- Mt. Hope Bridge Suspension Cables & Anchorages Investigation and Dehumidification: Kiewit just completed their work for the cable air flow test, and it was finished early. The condition of the cables was better than expected. In addition, no lead paint was found; it was all zinc, so no decontamination work will need to be performed. AECOM will now take the results of the air flow test and proceed toward 100% design of the dehumidification project. Once complete, the project will go out to bid. Director Janaros asked what the air flow test reveals. Mr. Seabury provided an overview of how the test is conducted. Injection and exhaust sleeves are used, and an air flow device can measure how much air flows through the cables. Director Janaros asked if some of the injection and exhaust sleeves used for the testing will be able to be reused. Mr. Seabury replied that it is not yet known. During the test there were two instances where water came out of the cables. This is an indication that there will be quite a bit of water that will come out of the cables when the dehumidification project takes place. It is an indicator as to why the project is so necessary; there is water sitting in the cables in the form of condensation.

- Rubberized Asphalt Chip Seal Design – Mount Hope Bridge: The design of the project is ongoing, and the work will take place in the fall.
- Compression Link Phase I Work – Newport Pell: A review of the 60% design submission just took place, and the project is now moving toward 100% design. The design is expected to be complete in about four weeks' time, and then the bid documents will go out.
- Safety Barrier Feasibility Study: A draft report for the Mount Hope Bridge and the Jamestown Verrazzano Bridge has been received and is being reviewed in-house. The Pell Bridge and the Sakonnet River Bridge studies are on a separate schedule, and they are in progress.

CFO Jeff Goulart – Financial Summary Report: February YTD financial performance continues to be strong, and it is expected that March will continue to be as good. YTD Financial Statement Notes – Actual vs. Budget material variance analysis: Total revenue YTD was higher than budget by \$5.4M or 20%. Toll revenue was higher by \$5.2M, with the gas tax revenue higher than budget by \$236K. YTD operating expenses were lower than budget by \$600K or 6%. Personnel expenses, utilities, contractual services, insurance, repairs and maintenance, and bridge inspections were all lower than budget. The only two items higher than budget were other supplies and expenses and transponder expenses. Performance versus prior year was even better. Total revenue was higher by \$1.0M, entirely due to toll revenue as the gas tax revenue was flat. Utilities, contractual services, other supplies and expenses, and bridge inspections were all lower. Personnel expenses were higher, as expected, due to hiring new personnel and wage increases per the CBA. Insurance was higher by \$100K, and repairs and maintenance were higher by \$15K. Director Janaros asked about the increase in insurance expenses. Mr. Rodio noted this is strong against a hard market. It is a small increase in comparison to what is being seen in the market. Mr. Goulart explained it is coming through items like workers compensation, auto and general liability, and cyber security. Mr. Goulart noted the bridge insurance policies are flat and are on a two-year lock. The check register included in the Board materials is a listing of any checks over \$75K signed by the Executive Director and Mr. Goulart. The listing is being provided in the interest of transparency. These checks are for capital expenses as well as insurance costs.

Executive Director's Report:

- **Toll Revenue Bonds – Upgrade to A+** - Director Caron Silveira stated that due to the hard work of many staff members, as well as the Authority's partners at Hilltop Securities, and bond counsel, David Ferrara, of Taft & McSally, RITBA's toll revenue bond ratings have been upgraded from A to A+ which, according to bond counsel, is remarkable. Director Caron Silveira noted toll revenue bonds are a very appealing investment in the finance world. For the Authority to go from an outlook of "stable" to "positive" it would likely need a second tolling point. The Authority has only one, at the Newport Pell Bridge. The recent press release included comments S&P made about why the Authority was getting an upgrade. S&P stated: "RITBA's key credit strengths include stable and recovered toll transactions following transitory declines at the onset of the pandemic, financial performance that has trended favorably, and strategic location of the Newport Pell Bridge." Also noted was the Authority went from a rating of A- to A just a few years ago.
- **Plaza Road Design Work** – Director Caron Silveira stated the Authority is anxious to return the single lanes to two lanes in each direction at the "pinch-point" by May 17. The original date was April 30th. The only unforeseen event encountered was the condition of Structure E, the small overpass over East Shore Road which needed more rehabilitation than expected. All stakeholders were advised of the additional time needed. The challenge will be for the civil engineering side to coordinate its work with the tolling side. Testing will have to be done in advance of May 17.
- **Mount Hope Bridge Cable and Anchorages Dehumidification Project** – The communities of Bristol and Portsmouth and those who use the bridge as access to and from Aquidneck Island were informed that the air flow test would be conducted over 55 days and that the work would be complete in time for the Roger Williams University commencement exercises. The work has

been completed early. No work on this project will take place during the summer months. The actual work of the dehumidification project will begin in the fall and continue into the spring of 2025.

- **Federal Funding Opportunities** – On May 30th the Authority will be celebrating with the co-delegation at the Mount Hope Bridge, as RITBA has received \$17M toward the dehumidification project. \$10M had already been received in Congressionally Directed Spending. The redecking of the bridge will be included in the capital budget. The chip seal treatment of the deck will take place as an interim measure before the full rehabilitation of the deck takes place. The redecking is the only work left for which the Authority will be seeking grant funding at this time. RAISE 2024 and the small Bridge Investment Program submissions are pending. The Authority has received over \$100M in grant funding. With this funding comes federal oversight, and the Authority is ready to comply with all the requirements that need to be met.
- **Washington Bridge – Impact on RITBA Operations** – The Authority is seeing an increase in traffic in both directions on the Newport Pell Bridge. There is a significant amount of congestion in the afternoons, between 2:30 to 6:30 pm heading westbound. The Authority is focused on monitoring the crossings on the Mount Hope Bridge to ensure no overweight vehicles cross the bridge. Safety is a priority. Director Caron Silveira has reached out to the Truckers Association and the State Police, and RITBA’s own traffic management technicians continue to monitor the bridge activity.
- **Next Board Meeting** – May 22, 2024 – Annual Meeting
 - The next meeting will include an item to review the plans the Authority has in place in the event of a vessel strike on one of the bridges or if the Authority were faced with any other type of catastrophic incident.

Director Waldron, in relation to the reports of the Director of Engineering, Chief Financial Officer, and Executive Director, expressed his high confidence in the leadership of the Authority and wanted his sentiments to be officially recorded. He has served on the RITBA Board since the Chafee administration and is pleased with the current management and financial position of the Authority. Director Caron Silveira noted she has a great staff supporting her efforts.

Finally, Mr. Seabury asked, returning to his earlier Mount Hope Bridge Capital Project Status report, to share a short video of the air flow testing on the Mount Hope Bridge with a view of the water coming out of the cables during the testing. During the video, Director Waldron asked if zinc was used when the cables were first made. Mr. Seabury replied that the cable strands were galvanized and originally packed with lead paste. When the cables were rehabilitated in the early 2000s, it appears all the lead was removed.

A motion by Peter M. Janaros, seconded by Karen D. Pinch, passed unanimously to adjourn the public meeting at 9:12 a.m.

Lori Caron Silveira
Secretary