

**PIERCE TRANSIT
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

April 12, 2021

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Woodards called the regular Board meeting to order at 4:03 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Commissioners present:

Chris Beale, City of Tacoma Councilmember
Marty Campbell, Vice Chair of the Board, Pierce County Councilmember
Kent Keel, City of University Councilmember (*representing University Place and Fircrest*)
Ryan Mello, Pierce County Councilmember
John Palmer, Deputy Mayor for City of Puyallup (*representing Puyallup and Edgewood*)
Kim Roscoe, Mayor of Fife (*representing Fife/Milton/ Pacific/Auburn/Gig Harbor/
Ruston/Steilacoom*)
Kristina Walker, City of Tacoma Councilmember
Jason Whalen, City of Lakewood Deputy Mayor
Victoria Woodards, Chair of the Board, Mayor of the City of Tacoma

Staff present:

Sue Dreier, Chief Executive Officer
Deanne Jacobson, Clerk of the Board
Aaron Millstein, General Counsel from K&L Gates
Brittany Carbullido, Assistant to the CEO/Deputy Clerk of the Board

OPENING REMARKS AND HOUSEKEEPING ITEMS

Chair Woodards welcomed board members, staff, and citizens to the virtual meeting and provided instructions for participation to attendees.

SPECIAL BUSINESS

1. Appointment to the Executive Finance Committee

Chair Woodards appointed Commissioner Jason Whalen to the Executive Finance Committee.

Commissioner Whalen stated he is happy to serve on this committee.

2. Update Regarding the CEO Recruitment Process

Chair Woodards announced that the CEO Search and Recruitment Committee met with Karras Consulting on March 11 and April 2 and noted that Marissa Karras from the consulting firm is present today to give an update on the CEO recruitment process.

Ms. Karras gave an update and noted that her firm has worked with Pierce Transit over the years on previous recruitments, including the recruitment for the current CEO Sue Dreier, and she stated that she is looking forward to working with everyone.

Ms. Karras reported that the committee has been working on developing the job announcement and that the announcement has been finalized and it is posted on the Karras website and will be posted on the Pierce Transit website too. The recruitment firm will be conducting additional marketing and will be reaching out to each board member to receive input about the qualifications and skills each would like to see in the candidates. She noted that things are going well, and selection of the final candidate is expected to occur in June.

Chair Woodards thanked Ms. Karras for her help in the recruitment process and noted that the committee enjoys working with her firm.

A short discussion ensued about the overall recruitment process and the overall interaction the candidates would have with the full board. Chair Woodards noted that the overall process is still being finalized but indicated that she envisions the full Board would interview the final candidates and that there would be some sort of community engagement process as well that would include people/organizations from a variety of backgrounds.

Chair Woodard announced that Karras Consulting will provide an update at every board meeting moving forward.

PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSION

1. Biennial Fare Change Review

Principal Planner Lindsey Sehmel presented on the item. She reported that under Pierce Transit's policy, the board must consider fares every two years and indicated that the Six-Year Plan includes a 25-cents increase that is scheduled for 2022.

Senior Planner Sandy Johnson reviewed the goals in the policy. She reviewed the history of fare changes that occurred over the years for all the modes of service. (*Commissioner Keel arrived at 4:15 p.m.*)

The board also reviewed fare comparisons with other transit agencies in the region and reviewed revenue projections should the board consider increasing the fares. Should the board decide to raise the fares, a full equity analysis will be conducted.

A question and answer period ensued regarding fare box recovery averages and how they are calculated. It was noted that Pierce Transit established a 20 percent fare recovery goal and that it may be time to re-evaluate this goal given that the national standards for fare recovery average between 8-15 percent, with larger systems recovering at the higher level.

Upon inquiry about next steps, staff noted that next steps will involve staff returning to a future board meeting with a full timeline and outline of the process that would occur should the board decide to adjust fares. It was also emphasized that the board can choose to

increase fares for all or some of the modes, or decide to not adjust fares at all at this time; it is just required to review the fares every two years, pursuant to Pierce Transit's policy.

Commissioner Walker inquired about implementing an ORCA LIFT program -- a program that allows riders to pay a reduced bus fare because their household income is less than or equal to 200% of the federal poverty level -- and whether it should be done separately or at the time of a fare change.

CEO Dreier, noted that the board discussed ORCA LIFT in the past and it may be time to discuss again. She noted that when King County implemented the ORCA LIFT program about five years ago, they increased the adult fare rate and implemented ORCA LIFT. She expressed that she doesn't feel this strategy would work for Pierce Transit because data shows that 60 percent of our ridership makes \$35,000/yr. or less and ORCA LIFT is based on income. Further analysis should be done on this program.

2. Who Gets What From Increased Sales Tax

CEO Dreier introduced the item and noted this is a continued discussion from the Board retreat meeting that was held on March 18 and turned the presentation over to Ryan Wheaton, Executive Director of Planning and Community Development.

The board reviewed a PowerPoint presentation that projected extra services that could be offered to communities within the Pierce Transit boundary if the sales tax rate were increased from 0.6 percent to 0.9 percent. The projections factored in a rapid increase of population and new jobs that are projected to occur over the next 20 years, increased road congestion and offered solutions that would incorporate transit service that provides equity for people to access jobs, schools, doctors, housing and other essential services by providing more trips, more routes, expansion of hours, expansion of bus rapid transit system and reduced travel times.

Mr. Wheaton stated that staff is looking for feedback from the board about the extra services each would like to see for their communities, and noted that a community survey is being conducted to gather input from citizens regarding the service level they would like to see in the community. Those results will be shared.

Mayor Woodards noted that she would like to compare the survey information from a couple of years ago and compare it with the survey that is being conducted.

Discussion ensued about balancing the timing of considering fare increases with the timing of potentially going out to ballot to increase sales tax for additional service and about other taxes that have been enacted or soon to be enacted.

CEO Dreier explained that the board is required to review its fares every two years and does not have to raise them and posed the option that the board could call a special meeting in April to review the survey results.

Discussion ensued about messaging for the ballot measure and it was suggested that Pierce Transit may want to consider incorporating connectivity with Sound Transit services in its

messaging especially since Sound Transit will be expanding services to Pierce County. It was also suggested that the new working families tax credit may be helpful too if it passes.

Chair Woodards provided remarks about the need for a better transit system and acknowledged the other economic challenges that exist to communities and citizens. She noted that she is looking forward to seeing the survey results to understand what the community feels about additional transit service.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Woodards provided participation instructions to the public and opened public comment. The following individual(s) spoke:

- Julian Wheeler, Chair of Pierce County Accessible Communities Advisory Committee, invited members and staff to attend the committee's next meeting. He reminded attendees that this committee may be able to fund mobility/access type projects that they are unable to fund in their own respective jurisdictions.
- Nancy Slotnik, noted she is addressing the board today on fares and noted that her son is a long-time rider of Pierce Transit's paratransit service. She encouraged the board to review SHUTTLE fares with an equity lens when considering issues and fares for the disabled community, noting that the disabled community has more barriers to community access and to employment than the general population. She also commented on the presentation that was given prior to public comment, noting that she is happy to hear that service could come back to the Midland area [pending the outcome of the ballot measure].
- Clerk Jacobson reported Downtown on the Go submitted written comments in response to the Bus Stop Balancing Project and those comments were forwarded to the full Board this morning and will be incorporated into the record.

CONSENT AGENDA

(Items listed below were distributed to Commissioners in advance for reading and study and are enacted with one motion. Item(s) may be moved to the Action Agenda at the request of a Commissioner.)

Commissioners Mello and Roscoe **moved** and seconded to approve the consent agenda as presented.

Motion **carried**, 9-0.

1. Approval of Vouchers, March 1 through March 31, 2021
Operating Fund #10
Self-Insurance Fund #40
Capital Fund #90
Payment Nos. 375680 through 375876
Wire Nos. 6876 through 7139
No Advance Travel Checks
Total \$7,543,437.27

2. 2021 First Quarter Sole Source and Contracts Executed Between \$100,000-\$200,000 Report
3. Approval of Minutes: March 8, 2021, Regular Board Meeting.
4. Approval of Minutes: March 18, 2021, Special Board Meeting Retreat.
5. FS 2021-017, Authorized the Chief Executive Officer to issue Contract No. 1172 to Puget Sound Solar, dba EV Support, for the purchase, setting, and programming of six electric bus chargers, utilizing DES Contract No. 04016, in support of the Base Master Plan Implementation (MOBI) for a total approved amount of \$1,372,180, which includes a 10 percent contingency.

ACTION AGENDA

1. **FS 2021-018, Authorize the Chief Executive Officer to Increase the Capital Project No. 345 Building 4 Modifications Budget, and Increase the Authorized Total Contract Not to Exceed Amount for Pease & Sons, Inc., Contract No. 1100, for the Building 4 Interior/Exterior Improvements**

Executive Director of Finance Brett Freshwaters presented on the item, noting that the increased costs are due to unforeseen conditions that were discovered with regards to wiring and issues with the heating and ventilation and air conditioning system. He also noted that some infrastructure needs to be brought up to code.

Commissioners Keel and Whalen **moved** and seconded to authorize the Chief Executive Officer to increase the Capital Project No. 345 Building 4 Modifications Budget by \$175,000 for a new total project budget of \$4,168,317, and increase the authorized total contract not to exceed amount for Pease & Sons, Inc., Contract No. 1100, for the Building 4 Interior/Exterior Improvements by \$100,000.00 for a new authorized total contract not to exceed amount from \$1,066,406.00 to \$1,166,406.00.

Senior Project Manager Doug Dickinson responded to questions about the project costs and project.

Motion **carried**, 9-0.

STAFF UPDATES/DISCUSSIONS

1. **CEO Report** – CEO Dreier reported on the following items:
 - Reported on the recent Pierce Transit press release announcing that Pierce Transit will give free rides to COVID-19 vaccines. She read a letter received from Washington State Secretary of Health Umair Shah commending Pierce Transit for its efforts in helping the community during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Provided an update on PSRC's distribution of Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act funding to the region's transit agencies, noting that the distribution of funds has not been finalized and that transit CEOs will be meeting on the topic tomorrow. she will update the Service Delivery and Capital Committee with additional information.

INFORMATIONAL BOARD ITEMS

1. Chair's Report

Chair Woodards announced that the next Service Delivery and Capital Committee meeting will be held this Thursday, April 15, beginning at 3:00 p.m.

2. Sound Transit Update

Commissioner Keel reported that Sound Transit is still working on the realignment process and that it is going well. He noted that a lot of work still needs to be done to deliver light rail to Pierce County, and there are talks that the service stay on track.

Chair Woodards thanked Commissioner Keel for his representation on the Sound Transit Board and noted he is doing a good job.

3. Puget Sound Regional Council Transportation Policy Board Update

No update was provided.

4. Commissioners' Comments

Commissioner Keel expressed some disappointment that he wasn't made aware of monies appropriated to Pierce Transit by the House Transportation Committee and, in the future, he would like to be made aware of monies appropriated from the legislature.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no executive session.

ADJOURNMENT TO CLOSED SESSION MEETING

Commissioners Mello and Palmer **moved** and seconded to adjourn the meeting into closed session to discuss labor relations pursuant to RCW 42.30.140(b).at 5:22 p.m.

Motion **carried**, 9-0.



Deanne Jacobson
Clerk of the Board



Victoria Woodards, Chair
Board of Commissioners