

**SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA WATER EMERGENCY TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY**  
**MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**

*(December 10, 2020)*

The Board of Directors of the San Francisco Bay Area Water Emergency Transportation Authority met in regular session via videoconference consistent with California Governor Gavin Newsom's Executive Orders N-25-20 and N-29-20 to ensure social distancing and help mitigate the transmission of COVID-19.

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair James Wunderman called the meeting to order at 1:32 p.m. He welcomed directors, staff, and meeting guests and noted that the meeting was being recorded. Chair Wunderman advised guests about offering public comment and how guests could sign up to speak throughout the meeting.

**2. ROLL CALL**

Chair Wunderman, Director Jessica Alba, Director Jeffrey DelBono, Director Anthony Intintoli, and Director Monique Moyer were in attendance.

**3. RECESS INTO CLOSED SESSION**

Chair Wunderman proposed moving the closed session agenda item ahead of all other items for immediate discussion. The Directors agreed and recessed into closed session at 1:35 p.m.

- a. Conference with Legal Counsel – Anticipated Litigation  
Pursuant to Government Code Section 54956.9 (d)(2)  
One potential case
  
- b. Public Employee Appointment and Conference with Labor Negotiator  
Pursuant to Government Code Sections 54957(b)(1), 54957.6  
Title: Executive Director  
Agency Representative: Steven Miller

**4. REPORT OF ACTIVITY IN CLOSED SESSION**

The Directors returned to the meeting at 1:41 p.m.

Chair Wunderman called for public comments on the closed session and there were none.

Chair Wunderman reported that pursuant to Government Code Section 54956.9 (d)(2), Conference with Legal Counsel, the Board gave direction to legal counsel with no further reportable action.

Pursuant to Government Code Sections 54957 (b)(1) and 54957.6, Public Employee Appointment and Conference with Labor Negotiator, Chair Wunderman reported that the Board confirmed the appointment of Seamus Murphy as the next Executive Director of WETA.

Chair Wunderman made a motion to adopt a resolution to appoint Seamus Murphy as the WETA's next Executive Director for a three-year term effective January 4, 2021 at an annual salary of \$271,500.

The Directors thanked KL2 Connects LLC (KL2) for their professionalism and their thoroughness in the recruiting process.

Chair Wunderman called for public comments and there were none.

Director Intintoli seconded the motion and the item passed unanimously.

Yeas: Alba, DelBono, Intintoli, Moyer, Wunderman. Nays: None.

Chair Wunderman welcomed Mr. Murphy and invited him to introduce himself. Mr. Murphy thanked the Board and said he was excited to join the team, looked forward to meeting everyone, and work together to address the challenges ahead.

## **5. REPORT OF BOARD CHAIR**

Chair Wunderman reported that there were debates and bipartisan proposals to get through the pandemic following the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and hoped that money for transit would come through a vote on a lame duck bill.

## **6. REPORTS OF DIRECTORS**

Director DelBono said that he had ridden the ferry a couple of times during the Dollar Days on the Bay promotion and reported that it was the most diverse ridership that he had ever seen and said that there were families who would normally not be able to afford to take the ferry. He stated that he was disappointed that the promotion was suspended and said that the Board needed to put a priority on making the ferry affordable for everybody.

Director Moyer thanked everyone for their advocacy and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) staff for amending the strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Plan Bay Area 2050 (Plan) by emphasizing public transit. She expressed her appreciation of staff, the creative initiatives brought forward, the captains and crew for continued smooth operations, and wished everyone safe and healthy holidays and better horizons for 2021.

## **7. REPORTS OF STAFF**

Executive Director Nina Rannells provided six written reports to Directors and said that she had no new project updates but said she had a staffing report. Ms. Rannells announced that she had received two retirement notices from Operations & Maintenance Manager Keith Stahnke and Program Specialist Scott Houston in addition to Finance & Grants Manager Lynne Yu who had given notice previously. She stated that WETA was looking at integrating the Program Specialist duties within the existing staff and that recruiting had started for the Operations & Maintenance Manager position but that the final decision to fill the position would be determined by Mr. Murphy.

For the federal report, Ms. Rannells stated that MTC is seeking to coordinate efforts and create a regional list going through Caltrans and the Bay Area delegation for a federal infrastructure package. For the state report, Ms. Rannells reported that many delegates had been reelected and that Josh Becker was elected to the Senate representing the 13th Senate District in San Mateo County, replacing termed out Senator Jerry Hill.

Ms. Rannells said that she received notice through WETA lobbyists and MTC that State Transit Assistance (STA) funds were estimated to be down by 39 percent next year but that these funds were typically reserved for capital projects and were not a source for supporting operations.

Lastly, Ms. Rannells reported that WETA had submitted a Blueprint for Medium-and-Heavy-Duty Zero Emission Vehicle Infrastructure grant to the California Energy Commission and thanked Program Manager/Analyst Lauren Gularte and Mr. Stahnke and his staff for their efforts. She added that, if funded, this grant would support the development of an infrastructure blueprint for a future zero-emission ferry fleet.

Ms. Rannells offered to answer any questions and then invited Planning & Development Manager Kevin Connolly to provide an update on the Monthly Ridership and Recovery Report. Mr. Connolly shared his presentation and said that except for the Richmond service, the trend was positive throughout the fall and that there was a significant bump in ridership because of the November Dollar Days on the Bay promotion with a high during Thanksgiving week followed by a 50 percent drop the following two weeks.

Mr. Connolly said that there was hope that the Dollars Days on the Bay promotion would jumpstart ridership on the Richmond service and said that WETA would work with partner West Contra Costa Transportation Advisory Committee (WCCTAC) to discuss next steps for the service.

Mr. Connolly offered to answer any questions and introduced Public Information & Marketing Manager Thomas Hall who provided an updated overview on the reduced fare promotion.

Mr. Hall said that Dollar Days on the Bay was a big success and saw significant ridership increases late morning, midday, and evening with post-March highs on Veteran's Day and Thanksgiving week. He noted that WETA staged backup vessels to minimize disruption to existing commuters who were appreciative of the discount but expressed concern about greater than normal ridership as the outbreak numbers started to worsen as the month went along.

As nonessential business was being discouraged, Mr. Hall said Ms. Rannells reached out to Chair Wunderman and it was decided that the promotion would be suspended effective December 1. He said passengers were notified and had received refunds for prepaid tickets by December 1 and credited Hopthru for their work on it to ensure minimal passenger frustration.

Mr. Hall said that staff had planned to resume a fare promotion at a future date and take various factors into consideration and that it was good timing to launch right into the Clipper START program.

Ms. Rannells thanked Blue & Gold Fleet staff for their amazing work in rolling out the program and added that she and Director Intintoli had given a presentation about WETA and the status of the services to the Solano Transportation Authority earlier that week and that Vallejo Mayor Bob Sampayan was ecstatic about the Dollar Days promotion and its ability to connect local residents to the Vallejo ferry.

Chair Wunderman thanked the staff for their reports and thanked Director DelBono for the idea and hoped that the promotion could be reinstated in the future.

## **8. CONSENT CALENDAR**

Director Moyer made a motion to approve the consent calendar:

- a. Board Meeting Minutes – November 5, 2020

Chair Wunderman called for public comments on the consent calendar and there were none.

Director Intintoli seconded the motion and the consent calendar carried unanimously.

Yeas: Alba, DelBono, Intintoli, Moyer, Wunderman. Nays: None.

Having handled Items 7 and 8 earlier in the meeting, Chair Wunderman moved on to Item 9.

**9. RECEIVE THE INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORTS FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING  
June 30, 2020**

Maze & Associates Vice-President (Audit) David Alvey introduced himself and briefly explained the following reports:

- A. Memorandum on Internal Control and Required Communications;
- B. Basic Financial Statements;
- C. Single Audit Report;
- D. Measure B Fund Financial Statements; and
- E. Measure BB Fund Financial Statements.

Mr. Alvey was pleased to report that WETA had passed its audit and that there were no findings and no disagreements with management and that the audit opinions were clean and unmodified – the highest assurance that a CPA firm can give an entity.

Mr. Alvey thanked Ms. Yu for her work in completing the audit virtually, commended WETA on its internal controls, and offered to answer any questions.

Director Moyer asked for clarification on reconciling numbers and confirmation of the capital contributions received in 2020. Ms. Rannells confirmed that Director Moyer was correct.

Director Intintoli made a motion to receive the reports.

Chair Wunderman called for public comments and there were none.

Director Alba seconded the motion and the item passed unanimously.

Yeas: Alba, DelBono, Intintoli, Moyer, Wunderman. Nays: None.

**10. RECEIVE FINAL WETA HOVERCRAFT FEASIBILITY STUDY**

Chair Wunderman reminded the Board that he participated in a trip along with Ms. Rannells on a trip organized by his organization, Bay Area Council, to the United Kingdom to visit a hovercraft operation there connecting Portsmouth to the Isle of Wight. He said that he was impressed and asked the Board to look at the opportunities a hovercraft could provide.

Mr. Connolly introduced the item and began by recognizing and acknowledging all the people who participated and provided input including the two committees, cities, regulatory agencies, environmental advocacy groups, industry representatives, major employers, Senior Planner/Project Manager Chad Mason, and Transportation Planner Taylor Rutsch.

Mr. Connolly thanked all the participants and invited AECOM consultants Mark Sisson, Krystle McBride, and Emily Schwimmer to share their presentation. Mr. Sisson began by thanking Mr. Connolly, Mr. Mason, and Mr. Taylor for providing guidance and introduced Project Manager Krystle McBride who gave an overview on the presentation.

Ms. McBride stated that the purpose of the Hovercraft Feasibility Study was to provide the Board with the information needed to determine whether hovercraft passenger service is feasible. Ms. McBride and Ms. Schwimmer presented the study including the study process and stakeholder engagement; hovercraft technology, routes, and terminals; environmental considerations; ridership and fares; hovercraft operating and capital cost; funding and financing; and key findings.

Ms. Rannells said that taking a deeper look into hovercraft had its challenges but that there were opportunities and potential to reach a wider part of the Bay if WETA was able to find funding and partners to help offset the costs.

Chair Wunderman spoke about the opportunities and advantages the hovercraft offered in their flexibility, versatility, and emergency response capability. He said that he was interested in the public private partnership element with companies looking for alternative ways to get their employees to work.

Director Intintoli offered a motion to receive the report. He thanked the consultants and stated that he appreciated their best professional advice and their thoroughness.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge (Refuge) Co-Chair Gail Raabe speaking on behalf of the Refuge, San Francisco Baykeeper, Sierra Club-Loma Prieta Chapter, and the Center for Biological Diversity followed up on their written comments and expressed their concerns that public transit projects be environmentally sound, financially responsible, and socially equitable.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Sierra Club-Loma Prieta Chapter Peninsula Regional Group Susan Lessin referenced some of the environmental and financial impacts from the study and asked that no additional funding be allocated to further this study and urged WETA to focus resources to sustaining existing ferry services.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Bay Area Council Policy Manager Kelly Obranowicz voiced her support of hovercraft service, asked the Board to take the necessary steps towards the deployment of hovercraft services in consideration of incorporating all information into the analysis, and offered assistance with stakeholder input and feedback.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Griffon Hoverwork Marketing and Sales Director Nick MacLeod-Ash followed up on his written comments supporting hovercraft as a ferry solution stating that several conclusions in the report were incomplete and not supported by data that he has related to such items as environmental impact, training and maintenance, and ridership efficiency.

Director DelBono thanked AECOM for the thorough report and stated that his interest and goal was figuring out more ways to move people on mass transit.

Director Moyer appreciated all the participants and engagement of the community noting participation by one emergency response agency, U.S. Coast Guard. She asked if other emergency response agencies were invited and if they provided any feedback on the report.

Mr. Connolly responded that consistent with other projects, feasibility is evaluated from a transit dynamic and that emergency response would be a bonus if the project is determined to be

feasible. He added that it was a point that has been made before and that it may be an area for future exploration.

Director Alba thanked the project team for putting together the report and noted appreciation of the written comments that were provided. She requested clarification on the significant difference comparing the hovercraft and the catamaran on the CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions and confirmation of land use development in the report.

Mr. Sisson responded that he did not know which engines were used in the comparison for the study and offered to review the information.

Director Alba commented that the report was prohibitively conservative and said she hated to dismiss the technology based on the report without having been tested in the United States and questioned the initial investment required adding that hovercraft should be given a fair chance potentially reaching inaccessible areas around the Bay.

Mr. Connolly noted that the study analysis was based upon estimated service demand and the use of a smaller, proven passenger hovercraft.

Chair Wunderman reminded the Board that it was the mission of the WETA to try to develop the kind of system outlined in the Strategic Plan recognizing that access to some locations was limited. He said that he thought that it would make sense to figure out some priorities, think about a pilot program, test it out, and learn as you go not unlike determining the vessels WETA uses today.

Even with the findings and many challenges, the Directors agreed that more information was needed and understood that there were potential opportunities and applications where a hovercraft would make sense especially from in an emergency response perspective.

Director Moyer wished everybody a Happy Holiday and left the meeting at 4:25 p.m.

Director Intintoli repeated his motion to receive the report.

Director Alba seconded the motion and the item passed unanimously.

Yeas: Alba, DelBono, Intintoli, Wunderman. Nays: None. Absent: Moyer.

Ms. Rannells said that staff would work to develop next steps for discussion at a future board meeting.

#### **11. FY 2020-21 BUDGET OVERVIEW, YEAR-TO-DATE AND YEAR-END PROJECTION**

Ms. Rannells presented this informational item with background information on the budget process and some of the steps WETA took to reduce expenses while retaining crews and staff. She reported that for the first four months of the fiscal year WETA had underspent the budget by \$4.4 million due to the continued low level of service demand and resulting slow ramp-up of services. Ms. Rannells noted that WETA's service approach, which matches service levels with demand, had allowed WETA to minimize expenses during the pandemic. She further noted that, accounting for planned service ramp-up in 2021, anticipated expenses should remain within or below the budget for the year.

Chair Wunderman said that he was proud that WETA was in a positive position without having to sacrifice the interests of the workers. He thanked Ms. Rannells for the report, Ms. Yu for her work, and Director DelBono for pushing to maintain staff during this difficult time.



**12. CONSIDER AUTHORIZING A COST-OF-LIVING PAY ADJUSTMENT EFFECTIVE  
JANUARY 1, 2021**

Ms. Rannells presented this item to consider authorizing implementation of a 2.9 percent cost-of-living pay adjustment (COLA) for staff beginning January 1, 2021.

Ms. Rannells reminded the Board that the Board generally authorized COLA's annually as part of the adoption of the agency's annual operating budget and that these would normally go into effect on July 1 of each new fiscal year. Due to the pandemic and unknown financial situation for the year, the Board had directed Ms. Rannells to defer the implementation of the COLA to no earlier than January 1, 2021.

Director DelBono stated that he was committed to providing staff with the COLA, as promised, and made a motion to approve the item and thanked staff for their patience and hard work.

Chair Wunderman called for public comments and there were none and thanked staff for their commitment.

Director Intintoli seconded the motion and the item passed unanimously.

Yeas: Alba, DelBono, Intintoli, Wunderman. Nays: None. Absent: Moyer.

**13. UPGRADE ACCOUNTING SPECIALIST POSITION TO ACCOUNTANT**

Ms. Rannells presented this item recommending upgrading the Accounting Specialist position in the organizational chart to an Accountant with a pay range of \$85,570 to \$122,250.

She advised the Board that the Accounting Specialist position, which is a mid-level accounting support position with a pay range of \$68,770 to \$98,240, had been approved and included in the FY 2020/21 and past year budgets but that the position has never been filled. She indicated that with Lynne Yu, the Finance and Administration Manager, retiring it will be important to have a professional with senior-level experience and qualifications to support the finance function of the organization. She indicated that this would require upgrading the Accounting Specialist position to an Accountant position with a new, higher, pay range. She noted that the pay level recommended was consistent with the pay of other experienced public sector accountants in San Francisco and aligned with other positions at WETA with similar levels of responsibility to support internal pay equity.

Director Intintoli made a motion to approve the item.

Chair Wunderman called for public comments and there were none.

Director Alba seconded the motion and the item passed unanimously.

Yeas: Alba, DelBono, Intintoli, Wunderman. Nays: None. Absent: Moyer.

**14. REVIEW AND CONSIDER ADOPTING A RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT FOR SEAMLESS  
TRANSIT PRINCIPLES**

Mr. Connolly presented this item recommending review of and considering adoption of a resolution to support Seamless Transit Principles as developed by Seamless Bay Area, which Director Alba brought to WETA's attention.

Mr. Connolly reviewed the seven principles Seamless Bay Area is asking the region's public agencies to support. He noted that these principles have been adopted by the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART), the San Francisco County Transportation Authority, and a handful of cities.

Director Alba made a motion to adopt a resolution of support for Seamless Transit Principles as developed by Seamless Bay Area.

Director Alba said that these principles had been implemented in many regions across the world and that it was time that something similar be implemented here noting that the focus was on coordinating the different agencies to provide a better experience for the rider.

Ms. Rannells thanked Mr. Connolly and his staff for supporting this conversation with the Blue Ribbon Task Force and for working to advance these principles in planning the WETA system.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Seamless Bay Area Policy Director Ian Griffiths thanked the Board for considering a resolution of support adding that the WETA would be the second Bay Area transit agency if adopted.

Chair Wunderman thanked Mr. Griffiths for his leadership

Director DelBono seconded the motion and the item passed unanimously.

Yeas: Alba, DelBono, Intintoli, Wunderman. Nays: None. Absent: Moyer.

#### **15. PUBLIC COMMENTS FOR NON-AGENDA ITEMS**

Chair Wunderman called for public comments on non-agenda items and there were none.

He thanked Ms. Rannells for helping WETA through a tough year, the work of the staff, the teamwork of the Directors, and participation and comments from the stakeholders and wished everyone a safe and happy holiday.

With all business concluded, Chair Wunderman adjourned the meeting at 5:02 p.m.

- Board Secretary

\*\*\*END\*\*\*