

Received: 2/26/26 9:27am Nicole Charest, TC

THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL AT THE NEXT RIVER VALLEY TRANSIT MEETING
RIVER VALLEY TRANSIT
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
Friday, February 13, 2026
91 N. Main Street, Middletown CT and via ZOOM

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Strauss called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m. In attendance included: Leslie Strauss, Charlie Norz (ZOOM), Tim Griswold, DG Fitton, Joan Gay, (ZOOM), Kathryn Russell, John Hall, Christine Marques, (ZOOM) Mike Pelton (ZOOM), and Michelle Benivegna (ZOOM).

Staff: Chris Denison (ZOOM), Brendan Geraghty, Joe Comerford, Mutez Ennab, Lisa Gibson (ZOOM), Jared Whitcomb, and Laurie McElwee.

Guest: Ben Lipper, Wesleyan University, Tom Partalas (ZOOM), Seward Monde.

VISITOR'S COMMENTS

PRESENTATION OF FY24/25 COMPLETED AUDIT

A copy of the 24/25 Audit was included in the Board's packet. Tom Partalas, Seward Monde provided an overview of the 24/25 Audit and was available to address questions/comments posed by Board members. These documents have been reviewed by the Finance Committee.

Kathryn Russell made a motion to accept the 24/25 Audit as presented. Joan Gay seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Tim Griswold made a motion to accept the minutes of the 12/12/25 Expansion Committee Meeting as presented. The motion was duly seconded and passed unanimously.

On a motion made and duly seconded, the minutes of the 12/12/25 Board Meeting were unanimously accepted as presented.

On a motion made and duly seconded, the minutes of the 1/8/26 Expansion Committee Meeting were unanimously accepted as presented.

On a motion made and duly seconded, the minutes of the 2/10/26 Facilities Committee Meeting were unanimously accepted as presented.

On a motion made and duly seconded, the minutes of the 2/11/26 Finance Committee Meeting were unanimously accepted as presented.

COMMUNICATIONS

On a motion made and duly seconded, the resignations of Jim Irish and David Lahm were unanimously accepted with regret.

The Board thanked these gentlemen for their service to the District.

TREASURER'S REPORT – None.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Facilities

The minutes of the Facilities Committee were included in the Board packet. Joan Gay, Chairman, provided an overview of the meeting and was available to address questions/comments posed by Board members.

On a motion made and duly seconded, the Facilities Committee Report was unanimously accepted as presented.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

The minutes of the Finance Committee were included in the Board packet. The Committee has reviewed all financial documents and no issues were reported. Tom Partalas provided a full overview of the Audit to the Finance Committee at their recent meeting and the Finance Committee unanimously voted to recommended that the RVT Board of Directors accept the Audit.

Operating expenses are “on target” for all programs, and unrestricted funds and cash flow remain “healthy”.

Charlie Norz was available to address questions/comments posed by board members.

On a motion made and duly seconded, the Finance Committee Report was unanimously accepted as presented.

MARKETING COMMITTEE

Marketing initiatives were screen shared, including newspaper articles, Events Magazine articles, social media postings, email newsletters etc. Leslie and Joe provided an overview of these initiatives and were available to address questions/comments posed by board members. The Committee remains pleased with the Marketing Consultant.

Transit employees and staff are being highlighted in anticipation of next month's Appreciation Day. In addition, the District participated in Rosa Park's birthday celebrations.

Advocacy initiatives at the Legislature are on-going. These initiatives encourage people to support public transit funding and reach out to their Legislators expressing their support of the District.

The State and District are participating in a campaign (posters, social media, etc.) to encourage good behavior on the buses.

On a motion made and duly seconded, the Marketing Committee Report was unanimously accepted as presented.

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

Joan Gay reported that the Legislative Breakfast held in January was a great success. Various First Selectmen, Board members, Senators and Representatives attended the event.

The next Legislative Committee meeting is scheduled on 2/18/26.

Joan provided an overview of testimony presented by Joe to the Appropriations Committee and the Transportation Committee highlighting the Micro Transit and Extra Mile programs.

Joe reported that Joe Courtney's office has been contacted regarding the Federal Transit Funding Bill that expired in September. Negotiations are on-going and the situation will be monitored.

On a motion made and duly seconded, the Legislative Committee Report was unanimously accepted as presented.

TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The minutes of the Transit Advisory Meeting were included in the Board packet. Tim Griswold provided an update on the initiatives of the Committee including:

- Bus stop sign installation and the transition from flag stops to fixed stops
- Shelters/Bus Stops
 - Possible amenities (trash cans)
- On-time performance and bus capacity discussed

DG Fitton made a motion to accept the Transit Advisory Committee Report as presented. Tim Griswold seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

EXPANSION COMMITTEE

The minutes of the Expansion Committee meeting were included in the Board's packet.

Items discussed include:

- The origin of the dues structure when the District was created.
- Parameters of Federal, State and Local funding.
- The history of the District including the merger with Middletown.
- Calculations for dues structure are on-going
 - The difficulty in determine a "one size fits all" formula was discussed. Committee members determined that initial dues will be set to cover the basic elements of service the prospective town receives. Any additional services requested would incur additional costs.

Committee members recommended that the Board offer membership to the Town of Madison with dues set at \$30,000.00.

On a motion made and duly seconded, the Expansion Committee Report was unanimously accepted as presented.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE – No report.

COG UPDATE – Brendan reported on COG initiatives as follows:

- Regional Waste Authority project
- Assisting Towns with the recently passed Housing Bill.
 - Breakdown of requirements, zoning codes, etc.

On a motion made and duly seconded, the COG Update was unanimously accepted as presented.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Joe reported:

- No issues reported in the National Data Report. The Report was “closed out”.
- The Tri Annual Review, required by law, is beginning and will be time consuming for staff. Reviewers will be on-site in June.
- The State Review is on-going, and the State is requesting that the District provide considerable information.
- Joe has attended various budget meetings in member Towns.
- The District's budget is being developed
 - Several buses are up for replacement and funds will be requested.
- A Bus Shelter meeting is scheduled with the State.
- The new Bureau Chief has been appointed and hopes to visit the District.
- The Commissioner has reached out to all Districts to schedule a meeting.
- We are working with the software company to streamline data.
- A Ford recall has delayed delivery on buses. It is anticipated that buses will be delivered in March.

Joe was available to address questions/comments posed by Board members.

On a motion made and duly seconded the Executive Director's Report was unanimously accepted as presented.

REGIONAL MOBILITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Laurie McElwee reported on recent initiatives including:

- Attendance at meetings
- Public outreach efforts

- Community engagement activities
- Discussed barriers to transportation for disabled Veterans
 - A DATTCO bus may be used to facilitate Veterans attending various events.
 - It was suggested that the local VFW may be of assistance.

Laurie was available to address questions/comments posed by Board members.

On a motion made and duly seconded the Regional Mobility Manager's Report was unanimously accepted as presented.

TRANSIT PLANNER REPORT

Brendan provided the following information:

- He is reaching out to Towns and the State regarding approvals for bus stop locations/installations
 - It is anticipated that permitting will be completed by the end of Winter and installation will take place shortly thereafter.
- Four shelters in Middletown have been installed.
- Update on Xtra Mile ridership growth.
- Micro Transit routes in Middletown are doing well.
- Wesleyan students have been asked to provide testimony in favor of funding a Transportation Bill.
- Automatic passenger counter software has been installed. Data will be used to aid in future planning initiatives.

On a motion made and duly seconded, the Transit Planner's Report was unanimously approved as presented.

FINANCE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Copies of the financial reports (Budget vs. Actual, Cash Flow) were included in the Board's packet and screenshared. No issues reported.

Joe reported:

- All programs, except for the Municipal Grant and Dial a Ride are under budget.
 - It is not unusual for Dial a Ride to be over budget and local contributions are used for this program.
- Cash Flow and Unrestricted Net Assets are strong.
- Income from interest is currently decreasing; however, the District realized significant income from interest in the past year. There are no restrictions for the use of these funds.

On a motion made and duly seconded, the Finance Director's Report was unanimously accepted as presented.

OPERATIONS DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ridership figures were included in the Board's packet and screenshared.

Jared reported:

- Drivers for Centerbrook are being interviewed.
- Two new dispatchers are on board.
- Training is on-going.
- Ridership is increasing and data was shared with the Board.
- On-time performance is strong.

On a motion made and duly seconded, the Operations Director's Report was unanimously accepted as presented.

MAINTENANCE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The Maintenance Director's report was included in the Board's packet and screenshared.

Joe reported:

- We now have a full complement of mechanics, and they are beginning to work on shoreline buses for maintenance items. A contractor is still used for some repairs.
- The software project is on-going.
- Bus recalls continue to be a challenge.
 - We are waiting on the manufacturer to release batteries.

On a motion made and duly seconded, the Maintenance Director's Report was unanimously accepted as presented.

NEW BUSINESS

Personnel Policy Changes

A copy of the revised Estuary Transit District Policy 303, Vacation and Personal Day Benefits was included in the Board's packet.

On a motion made and duly seconded, the revised Estuary Transit District Policy 303, Vacation and Personal Day Benefits was unanimously approved as presented.

Committee Assignments

Leslie reported that Board members are required to serve on at least one Committee. An updated list of Committee assignments will be forwarded to Board members. Leslie encouraged Board members to advise her of their interest in serving on a Committee. She suggested that membership on Committees be expanded as there are now 15 Towns in the District.

Town of Madison

On a motion made and duly seconded, a discussion and possible action to approve the Town of Madison's membership into the Estuary Transit District was unanimously added to the Agenda.

Tim Griswold made a motion to offer the Town of Madison membership into the Estuary Transit District and set dues for FY2027 in the amount of \$30,000.00 as recommended by the Expansion Committee. The motion was duly seconded and passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS – None.

CHAIR COMMENTS

- Several towns do not currently have a Board member appointed (Lyme, Durham, Middlefield).
- Christina was thanked for her facilitation of the Holiday party as well as today's Valentines.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS – None.

EXECUTIVE SESSION – None.

NEXT MEETING - 4/10/26

ADJOURNMENT

Leslie Strauss made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:45 a.m. Tim Griswold seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Suzanne Helchowski
Clerk