



PINELLAS SUNCOAST TRANSIT AUTHORITY
3201 SCHERER DRIVE, ST. PETERSBURG, FL 33716
WWW.PSTA.NET 727.540.1800 FAX 727.540.1913

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES – JULY 13, 2015

The Legislative Committee of the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) Board of Directors held a meeting in the Auditorium at PSTA Headquarters at 9:30 AM on this date. The purpose of the meeting was to approve the May 6, 2015 meeting minutes and recommend the contract extension/amendment for Gray Robinson – state lobbyist. The following members were present:

Darden Rice, Committee Chairperson
Ben Diamond, Committee Vice-Chairperson
Wengay Newton

Absent

Doug Bevis
Pat Gerard

Also Present:

Brad Miller, CEO
Robert Stuart, Gray Robinson (via conference call)
Fred Leonhardt, Gray Robinson (via conference call)
Alan Suskey, Suskey Consulting (via conference call)
Bill Jonson, PSTA Board Member
PSTA Staff Members

CALL TO ORDER

Committee Chair Rice opened the meeting at 9:41 AM.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

INFORMATION ITEMS

2016 Legislative Agenda – Committee Chair Rice indicated that the 2016 Legislative Agenda includes many of the same items as last year.

2016 Legislative Strategy – Committee Chair Rice said that the timeline for the Legislative Committee meetings has been accelerated with the first meetings starting in September. She stated that there will be substantial discussion about strategy at today’s meeting in order for the Board to approve the Legislative priorities and strategy at the end of August.

Mr. Miller reported that he and Commissioner Long met with Gray Robinson, PSTA’s state lobbyist, and Alan Suskey, whom Mr. Miller added to the Legislative lobbying team for the special session in June. He asked the lobbyists if there were any concerns about the Central Avenue Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project and Gray Robinson stated that they did not hear any comments. Mr. Miller noted that both Senator Latvala and Senator Brandes told the lobbyists that they would offer their support and accompany PSTA to meet with the Secretary of Transportation in an effort to obtain the funding for the Central Avenue BRT directly from the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT). The lobbyists suggested that PSTA continue with the Central Avenue BRT priority, but since Senator Latvala supports the Clearwater Beach to the airport service, that should also be added as another priority. Mr. Miller reported that the Clearwater Beach service would need \$2 million per year in operating funds which is currently not budgeted.

[Mr. Newton entered the meeting at 9:50 AM.]

Committee Chair Rice indicated that the Legislative Committee’s recommended Priorities will go to the Executive Committee, and then to the Board for approval at their August meeting. Mr. Miller stated that at that meeting, the Board could also be presented with a combined Legislative Agenda for both PSTA and HART, as well as travel together to Tallahassee to show regional support. Mr. Miller explained that the lobbyists suggested that PSTA find champions for the projects, so he indicated that the targeted champion for the Central Avenue BRT would be Representative Peters, the Clearwater Beach service would be Representative Latvala, and on the Senate side, Senator Brandes for the Central Avenue BRT and Senator Latvala for the Clearwater Beach service.

Mr. Jonson mentioned the branding of the Central Avenue BRT, and Committee Chair Rice agreed that branding should be researched. She stated that with both projects traveling to the beaches, she believes that service paints a clear economic development tourism picture, and she indicated that it shows that PSTA is thinking strategically about how to use the infrastructure assets to get people to the beaches. Mr. Diamond suggested that when the one-page Legislative Priorities sheet is presented to the Board in August, perhaps Gray Robinson could write some recommendations with a short summary as to what PSTA has done and some recommendations on how to move forward. Committee Chair Rice suggested developing a packet of fact sheets of frequently asked questions. Mr. Diamond made a motion, seconded by Mr. Newton to recommend moving forward with the Legislative Priorities with the agreement that Mr. Miller would provide a

one-page priority list for the August 5th Legislative Committee meeting for further discussion. There were no public comments. Motion passed unanimously.

ACTION ITEMS

May 6, 2015 Meeting Minutes – Mr. Diamond made a motion, seconded by Mr. Newton to approve the minutes. There were no public comments. Motion passed unanimously.

Contract Extension/Amendment for Gray Robinson – State Lobbyist – Committee Chair Rice explained that the current contract with Gray Robinson ends on August 1, 2015. She said today's discussion will be about a recommendation to extend that contract through May 2016 to ensure PSTA will have seamless communication throughout the coming Session. Mr. Miller indicated that the Executive Committee recommended the extension along with two amendments: 1) add the performance criteria, and 2) add Mr. Suskey as a sub-consultant to Gray Robinson's contract. Mr. Miller reported that a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a state lobbyist would be issued in April, 2016.

Mr. Diamond asked for information on the Suskey Consulting firm and Mr. Miller provided some background on the firm stating that Mr. Suskey can provide greater local representation. He also expressed his concern about the cost increasing from \$5,000 per month to \$9,000 per month, adding that he did support the extension with the understanding that staff will convene an RFP process once the Legislative session is through. Mr. Newton said he concurs with the recommendation for an extension and asked if Gray Robinson has worked with Mr. Suskey in the past and how he was chosen. Mr. Leonhardt responded that Gray Robinson has worked with Mr. Suskey in the past, and Mr. Miller added that PSTA chose the Suskey Consulting firm.

FUTURE MEETING SUBJECTS

Committee Chair Rice reported that at the next meeting on August 5th, there will be discussion about refining a strategy for the priority list and specifics on the joint PSTA/HART meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Jonson inquired about the next step in the PSTA/HART joint Executive Committee meeting and Mr. Miller replied that the next meeting will be scheduled after August 5th.

Mr. Jonson handed out a paper he developed outlining public transit's historical background, public transit today, and what the public does not know about PSTA.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 AM. The next Legislative Committee meeting will be held on August 5th at 9:30 AM.