

NORTHWOODS RAIL TRANSIT COMMISSION

MEETING SUMMARY

GLTPA - Rhinelander

October 26, 2018

I. Call to Order

In the absence of Chairperson Albarado, Vice-Chair Kupczyk called the meeting to order at approximately 10:05 am.

II. Introductions of Attendees and Public Comments

Mr. Kupczyk asked for introductions from around the room. Commissioners in attendance were: Dale Kupczyk Ashland County, Stacey Johnson Oneida County Economic Development Corporation, Wendy Gehlhoff Florence County Economic Development Corporation, Paul Ehrfurth Oconto County Economic Development Corporation, Al Koskela Houghton County Board, Tom Tikkanen Houghton County Board, Joe Bonovetz Gogebic County Board, William Liebert Oneida County Board, Tricia Grebin Marinette County Board, Mike Cassidy Marinette County, Joe Pinardi Iron County WI Board, Gary Frank Oconto County Board, Al Christenson Marathon County Board, Gary Kabasa Ashland County Board, *Dave Nutting Marathon County Board*, *Angie Close Langlade County Economic Development Corporation*, and *Peter Van Steen Delta County*.

Others in attendance were: Rich Kedzior WisDOT, *Brad Barnett WUPPDR*, *Jeff Ratcliffe KEDA*, John Varda Lake States Shippers, Bill Korrer WI Counties Association, Tom Klimek Klimek Rail Consulting, Brian Buchanan CN, Rick Bliese Lincoln Wood Products, Ty Penca, Jim Rosenberg WEDC, *Sheldon Johnson NWWRPC*, and Darryl Landeau NCWRPC.

Note: Others may have attended via teleconference but did not check in or arrived late and did not sign-in.

Public Comment: Mr. Varda suggested that the organization needs to find some funds for projects and to support grant writing. (*Ed. Note: See Item 10 for examples of some of the types of projects Mr. Varda's group is promoting.*)

III. Approval of Meeting Notes from July 20, 2018

On a motion by Mr. Pinardi Iron County WI, seconded by Mr. Christenson Marathon County, the meeting notes of the July 20, 2018 meeting were approved with all in favor.

IV. Acceptance of Resignation of NRTC Chair and Appointment of Acting Chair

Mr. Kupczyk reported that Andy Albarado has had to resign as Chair due to increasing job commitments at Rusk County and has submitted a letter to that effect. Mr. Kupczyk further noted that in working with Stacey Johnson, Oneida County's new EDC Director, the Executive Committee had identified her as a volunteer for the vacant Chair position. Mr. Kupczyk will continue as Vice-Chair and Alan Christiansen as Secretary-Treasurer.

On a motion by Mr. Cassidy Marinette County, seconded by Mr. Liebert Oneida County, the NRTC accepted the resignation of Andy Albarado as Chair and appointed Stacey Johnson as Acting Chair to fill out the term until Spring Election, with all in favor.

V. Approval of NCWRPC to Reassume Administrative & Fiscal Services for NRTC

Mr Landeau reported that with the departure of RRS as administrative agent for the NRTC, the Executive Committee turned to the NCWRPC to reassume the role. (Ed. Note: The NCWRPC provided administrative services for the NRTC since its inception in 2012 through 2016.) The proposed Agreement for Administrative Services distributed to Commissioners is similar to that under RSS and formalizes the relationship between NRTC and NCWRPC, laying out the Scope of Services to be expected.

Mr. Bonovetz raised a question regarding compensation under the Agreement. Mr. Landeau explained that the Agreement has traditionally been tied to the calendar year to correspond with collection of membership dues and that the level of compensation has been reduced slightly in recognition of slightly less work load anticipated by the Executive Committee with fewer meetings moving forward. (Ed. Note: ie quarterly (4) down from 6+) Mr. Landeau further explained that because of the work necessary for the administrative transition to closeout this year, including this meeting, a one-time, prorated amount has also been included. Since early October when the Executive Committee first met with the NCWRPC, the RPC has developed this agreement, a 2019 budget, the meeting agenda, and a new email list serve which will be more efficient and allows people to add or remove themselves.

RPC Staff has also been working on website transition. The RPC NRTC page is already live but will be under construction over the next couple of months, so Mr. Landeau asked for patience during this period. A redirect will be in place to take people from the old RRS page to this new one. And finally, RPC Staff has been working on banking transition, but new bank regulations have delayed this with a lot of new paperwork requirements. The NCWRPC will continue to work on transition issues over the remainder of 2018.

On a motion by Ms. Gehlhoff Florence County, seconded by Mr. Bonovetz Gogebic County, the Agreement for Administrative Services with the NCWRPC was approved as presented, with all in favor.

VI. Approval of NRTC Budget for 2019

Mr. Landeau presented a proposed budget for 2019. At this point, the budget is still pretty basic with expenditures comprised of the fee for administrative services to fund the day to day operations of the NRTC and a small reserve for miscellaneous expenses identified by the Commission. Revenue is still just county membership dues. With regard to the earlier question of project or seed funds being reflected in the budget beyond what is for operations: when a viable application is identified and funding source(s) secured, it would then certainly be reflected in the budget upon approval of the Commission. And, the Bylaws provide for this. (Ed. Note: Any additional commitment of county funding by the NRTC must first be approved by the county boards.) Mr. Landeau further noted that the NRTC has worked on various project concepts and funding options that just haven't panned out as yet.

A question was raised about the difference in contribution level between WI and MI counties. Mr. Landeau explained that there had been some miscommunication during the push to recruit the MI counties that resulted in this difference. Mr. Landeau further noted that he had been slowly working toward closing this equity gap as reflected in the slight increase shown for MI counties. There was some general discussion regarding MI that basically arrived at we (WI, MI) all have the same freight issues and need to work together.

On a motion by Ms. Gehlhoff Florence County, seconded by Ms. Johnson Oneida County, the Budget for 2019 was approved as presented, with all in favor.

VII. Approval of Letter of Support for WI FRPP

Ms. Gehlhoff explained that the NRTC has supported the statewide Freight Rail Preservation Program (FRPP) grant program along with the 6 other Rail Transit Comissions around the state in the past; in order to communicate to the administration and legislature the importance of freight rail to our communities and the need for funding to maintain rail service across Wisconsin. Some Commissioners questioned the basis for some elements of the draft letter, and it was determined that edits would be made to clarify. There was further general discussion regarding FRPP details and related rail service issues. Expanding outreach on the MI side was also discussed.

On a motion by Mr. Ehrfurth Oconto County, seconded by Mr. Pinardi Iron County WI, the FRPP Letter of Support was approved with all in favor.

VIII. Discontinuance of Ashland to Park Falls Rail Line

CN's filing for discontinuance of service on the segment of track between Ashland and Park Falls was discussed. This led to a wide ranging discussion on rail service concerns and issues.

IX. Discuss Need to Expand Membership/Participation to the Private Sector

Due to the extended duration of the meeting, Ms. Johnson briefly introduced this item with further discussion anticipated at future NRTC meetings. Some Commissioners feel there is a need to expand the horizons of the NRTC to include more involvement of the private sector either through direct membership or other means of participation, which should increase the organization's level of clout and leverage funding to expand the role of the organization in achieving its mission.

X. Update on efforts of WCG/LSSA

Mr. Varda gave an update on the work of the Wisconsin Central Group and the Lake States Shippers Association. This includes promoting the assistance of local officials and the NRTC in its shipper data collection efforts and pushing for legislative action and public investment in the rail network.

XI. Next Meeting

Trying to keep a quarterly meeting schedule, the next meeting will tentatively be schedule for Friday, January 25, 2019 at 10 am Central Time at the GLTPA offices in Rhinelander, WI. Watch for email notifications as the date approaches.

X. Adjourn

On a motion by Mr. Koskela Houghton County, seconded by Mr. Cassidy Marinette County, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 12:15 pm with all in favor.