



**Benzie Transportation Authority
Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors
March 19, 2024 @ 5:30PM
14150 US 31 Beulah, MI 49617
Minutes approved as presented May 21, 2024**

1. Call to Order - Meeting called to order by Chairperson Morse at 5:30PM
2. Roll Call to Determine Quorum Present: John Morse, Anne Noah, Jeannette Feeheley, Chris Kitchen, Dorene Strang, Brian Halliday (Virtual). Gary Sauer is in attendance on behalf of Evan Warsecke, Ex-officio member & liaison from Benzie County Board of Commissioners. Staff: Jessica Carland, Chad Hollenbeck, Wendy Wedemeier. Absent: Sara Hienz, Nancy Hunt (Staff), both excused
3. Welcome and Recognition of Visitors - None
4. Consent Agenda **Motion** by Kitchen with support by Noah to approve the consent agenda. **All ayes, motion carried.**
 - a. Correspondence - Donation letter
 - b. Committee Meeting Minutes - Executive, Millage (including Educational vs Advocacy campaign info)
 - c. Approval of Regular Meeting Minutes from January 2024
 - d. Manager Reports
5. Amendments/Additions to Agenda - None
6. Public Comment - Sauer gave an update on County activities. The jail operational millage will be on the August ballot and includes an increase from 1 mil to 1.4 mils in order to hire additional correctional officers. Benzie Senior Resources millage is also up for renewal, and they are requesting an increase to the statutory maximum of 1.0 mils. Their current mil rate is .85 mils. The County is working on the Headlee override as well. A committee has been formed and has a short amount of time to make a recommendation to the full board of commissioners.
7. Approval of Agenda - **Motion** by Kitchen with support by Feeheley to approve the agenda as presented. **All ayes, motion carried.**
8. Call for Conflict of Interest - None
9. Reports to the Board
 - a. Chairperson's Report - Morse presented the Chairperson's Report. There has been a lot of work on the Millage Committee including the 5-year Financial Projection.
 - b. Financial Report - Wedemeier presented the February Financials. Year to date, net income is \$124K higher than budgeted. Both Passenger Fares and Advertising Income are higher than budgeted. Three engines have needed replacement, resulting in several expense line items to be over-budget. Mechanics have been working more hours due to the condition of the fleet. The wages of the Operations Supervisor is also included in that line item, and was not included in the initial budget. Feeheley inquired about some unexpected revenues from the State. Wedemeier discussed formula adjustments that occur after final audits have been completed at the State level. Morse inquired about the refund from Blarney Castle. The current rebate is

\$0.37/gallon. This is not something that can be budgeted for as it is dependent on Blarney's sales. Morse commented on the investments and stated he was pleased with the current rates and CD accounts that are currently being used. Kitchen informed the Board that the Finance Committee approved the ED's mileage reimbursement request at the March 18 committee meeting. There was not a quorum at the meeting. Feeheley questioned the accounting principles used in preparing the Income Statement. Wedemeier explained the Income Statement reflects some items as cash (for example, State Operating Assistance) and some as accrual accounting (for example, Passenger & Contract Fares). **Motion** by Noah with support by Kitchen to accept the Financial Report as presented. Feeheley would like the income statement to be changed to reflect accrual accounting only. **4 ayes 1 nay, motion carried.**

10. Old Business

- a. Mobility Coordinator Position - Carland informed the Board that a Mobility Coordinator has been hired. There were several great candidates, including an internal candidate. Sophia Hogarth has been at Crystal Mountain for the past 16 years where most recently she has been the manager of the call center. She will begin her new position as Full Time Mobility Coordinator on April 15.

11. New Business

- a. Ballot Language and Resolution - Carland presented the draft ballot language and associated Resolutions. Morse gave a recap of the Millage Committee meeting and the three options presented by the attorney. The Committee recommends the Board consider approving either .9766 mills or a full 1.0 mill. The Finance Committee reviewed both options at the March 18 committee meeting, and recommended the Board approve a new additional millage of 1.0 mills. Noah discussed the importance of messaging in order to convey the correct information. **Motion** by Kitchen to approve the Ballot Language for a new additional 1.0 mills with support by Noah. Halliday stated BTA needs to ensure the public fully understands the term "new additional" and the millage question. Feeheley is in agreement, and thought the language for the .9766 mills was clearer to the taxpayer. Morse stated he would be fine with either amount. **Roll call vote.** Feeheley - No, Morse - Yes w/ reservations, Strang - Yes w/ reservations, Noah - Yes, Kitchen - Yes. **4 ayes, 1 nay, motion carried.** **Motion** by Kitchen with support by Strang to approve the Resolution Submitting Millage Reproposal. **Roll call vote.** Strang - Yes, Morse - Yes, Kitchen - Yes, Noah - Yes, Feeheley - No w/ reservations. **4 ayes, 1 nay, motion carried.** Noah explained the millage may be rolled back up to two times prior to the millage first being levied in 2026 due to Headlee Rollback. Carland reminded the Board that the last two years there was no Headlee Rollback, so it may not be an issue.
- b. Board Competencies - The Executive Committee has been working on Board Competencies to help inform the public of what qualifications/competencies the Board values when seeking new Board Members. This will be a helpful tool in the board recruitment process. **Motion** by Kitchen with support by Noah to approve the use of the Board Competencies as presented. Noah asked about a review schedule. **Motion amended** to include an annual review date by the Executive Committee prior to the Annual Meeting. Noah recommended the language under "No obvious conflicts of interest" to be changed to "with a propensity toward collaboration." Kitchen again **amended his motion** to include this change. Support by Noah. **All ayes, motion carried.**
- c. Board Self-Evaluation Tool - The Executive Committee created a Board Self-Evaluation Tool. The intention of this tool is to provide an opportunity for Board members to take a holistic look at the board culture and provide self-awareness. The Executive Committee would like the Tool to be completed each year prior to the Annual Meeting. Kitchen stated the importance of moving away from operational oversight and more towards governance. **Motion** by Noah with support by Kitchen to approve the Board Self-Evaluation Tool as presented. Feeheley stated the first 6-7 questions are geared toward a "whole board perspective", but questions 10-12 are geared

toward the individual. **Motion amended** with support by Kitchen to approve the self-evaluation tool as amended in order to include Feeheley's suggestion of changing questions 10-12 to be Board-focused, and to include Noah's suggestion that questions 10-12 be amended to address board climate as opposed to being individual-focused. Kitchen suggested adding comment fields to each question. Morse voiced his frustration in changing a document that was previously approved at Committee level. Kitchen disagreed, stating that during discussion other ideas were raised, and that the spirit of the tool has not been changed but that the tool has been improved. Noah concurred, reminding everyone that the committees' purpose is to make recommendations, while decision-making is the responsibility of the Board. **All ayes, motion carried.**

12. Public Comment - Sauer brought with him two ballot petitions for anyone to sign who might be so inclined. One is an initiative to repeal the recently passed State law which takes local control away from the townships in determining where large solar and wind projects can locate. The other is called "Ax my tax" and is a ballot proposal to eliminate property taxes, which would require the State to provide funding instead, possibly via sales taxes. Halliday stated such would then be a consumption tax. Sauer stated more information can be found at axmitax.org
13. Board Roundtable - Carland is out of the office the week of March 25 but will be available via email. Kitchen thanked Sauer for the County Summary, and would like Warsecke to provide a similar report during Public Comment or the round table at future meetings.
14. Next Meeting - May 21, 2024
15. Adjournment - Meeting adjourned at 6:55PM

Recording Secretary

Date