



**Benzie Transportation Authority
Millage Communication Committee Meeting
Tuesday, March 5, 2024 @ 5PM
14150 US 31 Beulah, MI 49617
Minutes approved as presented May 13, 2024**

1. Call to Order by Acting Chair John Morse at 5:02 PM.
2. Roll Call- Present: Anne Noah, Dorene Strang, and John Morse (ex-officio). Absent: Brian Halliday.
Staff Present: Jessica Carland and Nancy Hunt.
3. Welcome and Recognition of Visitors: Jessica Gardner, Chair of Friends of Benzie Bus and Member of the Local Advisory Committee (LAC).
4. Public Comment: Jessica gave her background in connection to Benzie County and Benzie Bus. She shared that her mother takes the bus everyday and this enables her to retain her independence. She is thrilled to chair the Friends of Benzie Bus. There was a suggestion to open a P.O. Box for Friends group so that Gardner does not have to use her personal address.
5. Approval of January 11, 2024 Meeting Minutes: **Motion** by Strang and supported by Noah to approve minutes as presented. All ayes, **motion carried.**
6. Approval of Agenda: Addition of Ballot Language under New Business.. **Motion** by Noah and supported by Strang to approve agenda as amended. All ayes, **motion carried.**
7. Call for Conflict of Interest: None
8. Old Business
9. New Business
 - a. Timeline: Carland went over the millage timeline. Ballot language must be approved at the March board meeting. Early voting begins July 7th and the primary election is August 6th. We must have our messages out prior to early voting.
 - b. Educational vs Advocacy: Carland was asked to give the board clarification on what the board may do and say pertaining to the upcoming millage. The Board may educate, the Friends may advocate No Benzie Bus funds may be used to advocate votes. Only factual information may be shared. Advocacy Group (Friends of Benzie Bus) may advocate for a yes vote. Carland will provide a one-pager to the full board with “do’s and don’ts”.
 - c. Communications Plan: Carland will be meeting with King Media, who specializes in public transit informational campaigns, to determine how they may be able to help create key messaging for the millage campaign. There is an additional \$10k in the marketing budget for millage purposes. Most of the marketing for the campaign will be completed by Carland and the Mobility Coordinator; King Media would just help with strategy and messaging.

- d. Ballot Language: According to Mark Koerner, BTA Attorney, state law prohibits asking for a millage renewal and new millage in one question unless the new millage is 0.5 or less. Carland presented three options provided by the attorney's office.
- Option 1: The authority can ask for the total millage in two questions. The authority can ask for a renewal of .4766 mill in one question and the new millage of .5234 mill in a separate question.
- Option 2: The authority can ask for only .5 mill of new millage, so the total millage rate would be .9766 mill instead of 1.0 mill (of which .4766 mill will be a renewal and .5 mill will be additional new millage). Essentially, BTA would only be asking for the maximum of .5 mill so that we can be under the threshold for one question.
- Option 3: The authority can characterize the entire 1.0 mill as "new additional" millage. It is the attorneys' recollection that Option 1 has never been chosen by a transit authority as it would be easy to vote "no" on the new millage. Option 2 would result in a loss of approximately \$38,000 each year due to the 0.234 mil reduction. The committee would like clarification from the attorney whether the words "new additional" millage in Option 3 are required. If the word "additional" can be removed, they would like to go with option 3. **Motion** by Strang and support by Noah to recommend to the board that we choose option 3 if the word additional can be removed. If it cannot be removed, Option 2 will be recommended. Discussion. The committee determined it is important to just have one question on the ballot. Vote: 1 aye, 1 nay, **motion failed**.
- Motion** by Noah and supported by Strang to recommend to the board that they consider options 2 or 3 in order to limit the ballot language to just one question. The final decision should be based on the official ballot language which will be provided by the attorney in time for the Regular Board Meeting. All ayes, **motion carried**.
- e. Next Steps: Carland showed some examples of websites that have millage resources available. She asked the committee to start looking around for ideas that we think would be helpful. A decision regarding whether or not to schedule another Millage Communication meeting is to be determined. Morse will provide a Committee Report to the board at the next meeting. Letters to the Editor should be encouraged as we get closer to the millage. Carland will be creating a calendar to highlight the best timing for specific tasks.

10. Public Comment: Gardner is impressed with all the thought going into the campaign and thinks that this is a great group.
11. Roundtable: Morse will be presenting at the Village of Lake Ann next week. Carland has two left and then the presentations will be finished. Appointment of the committee Vice Chair will be added to the next meeting agenda.
12. Adjournment @ 6:08PM