



## **Citizens Advisory Committee Minutes**

Wednesday, November 9, 2022

Location: via: Zoom

### **Attendance:**

**New Jersey:** Reggie Haynes, Alan Becker, Steve Benigno, Straso Jovanovski, Marty King

**Pennsylvania:** Scott Cohen, Larry Davis, Bob Melikian, Tyrone Wesley

**Emeritus Member(s):** Judy Boldurian, Jeff Kessler

### **Potential Member(s):**

**DRPA/PATCO:** John Hanson, CEO; John Rink, GM; Rob Finnegan, Chief of Homeland Security; Barbara Wagner, Executive Assistant

### **Public Member(s):**

### **Call to Order**

A motion was made to approve the October 12, 2022 minutes. The minutes were approved.

### **CFO, Jim White**

### **Finance Update:**

CFO White reported that the Bridges are still around 90 percent of pre-Covid numbers, so we've been very stable for over a year; however, the numbers have not been moving in an upwards direction. DRPA traffic is \$1.5M or 5 percent higher than last year through August. The number will be a little flat in September and October based on the unaudited numbers I've seen. Toll revenues are up at 4.3 percent, which is a good increase, however we will be under budget simply because we haven't reached the 92.5 percent we used for budget purposes. That being said, we will not be as far under budget because our average toll is still higher than our projections. The reason for the average toll being higher is because we get more tolls from commercial vehicles which props up the average toll from what we originally expected when we forecasted the budget late last year.

On the PATCO side, ridership is hovering around 49-50 percent of pre-Covid numbers. At least that's the trend we've seen in the last couple of weeks. It moved up from 45-48 percent to 45 to 50 percent in the last month. We are hoping those numbers don't flatten but continue to increase. PATCO ridership and revenue will be under budget because our budget was more aggressive than the actuals and we are still significantly under for the operating budgets. We've been constraining our expenses and, as a result, our cash flow is higher and because of that the general fund is higher than we anticipated. Currently, it is around \$275M.

Lastly, CFO White reported that he, CEO Hanson, and a group of individuals met with Moody's and S&P. They reaffirmed our ratings on the 2022 PDP refunding and our ratings for both revenue and the revenue refunding bonds. We are showing good financial numbers from rating agencies, and they are, in fact, affirming the numbers. Additionally, we are in the process of finalizing the operating budget. The capital budget has been presented to the Finance Committee which then goes to the Board on November 16, 2022. We don't anticipate any problems with the passage and the guidelines for the 2023 capital budget as we are well within the parameters that CEO Hanson, CE Venuto and I have agreed upon.

### **Bob Melikian asked what the bond rate is going to be?**

CFO White reported that it depends. We're going for pricing next week and the numbers change, so it's hard to project because the Feds keep changing the rates. The bonds will mature in the next four or five years, so there's more of an impact. Even though we may not get significant savings from the interest rates, the coupons are roughly 5 percent. The main reason for the bond deal is not necessarily to achieve savings from the difference in the actual rate and the coupon rate, but to relieve the reserve fund by roughly \$17M. That's where we get cash flow savings and debt service savings so that we can go through the next four or five years.

CEO Hanson added that when you set up a bond issuance, there are reserve funds that are set up like escrows. It's money that's held in escrow in the event of a default. We have \$17M in escrow that won't be freed up until we pay off this bond issue which is in the next four or five years. By refinancing, we will free up the \$17M, and because this issue is going to be much smaller than the initial one, we'll get the \$17M out of escrow right now.

### **Scofflaw Update: Governor Wolf passed a law to suspend driving privileges or PA Turnpike Scofflaws – Can DRPA use that as a roadmap to create similar law?**

CEO Hanson reported that the DRPA would need a similar law on the New Jersey side. We had that law written and in committee several times, but it never moved to the legislative process. We are going to continue to work on it in the beginning of the new year. It reminds me to meet personally with the legislators again which is something I haven't done in a while. Our Government Relations people have been talking about it, so I will get back involved and personally meet with the legislative team.

### **Solar Power: What are the current savings to date?**

CEO Hanson reported that the DRPA does not have an answer on what the current savings are to date, but he does have information from Dr. Ochroch from our Engineering Department. Unfortunately, no one from engineering can make it tonight. Dr. Ochroch wrote that there are a few ways that we track solar power. One is the utility bill. We receive a monthly invoice from the solar developer for each of the seven solar systems. The invoice identifies the generation of each system which is cross-referenced against our PSE&G bill and compared month to month. There is a system that they give called Power Factors. It's cloud based and provided by the solar developer. Each of the systems are viewed in real time showing predicted power generation versus actual at different intervals such as day, month, and year. The product has the capability to show the data status for each device throughout the system. We've just switched over to Power Factors from Energy Link and we're still learning about that system and learning about all the data that is produced.

Finally, there's an annual report that's produced on the anniversary of each system. The report identifies how much the system was expected to produce versus actual production throughout the year. We have only received One Port Center so far. We're a little too new in this right now to give an answer but we're working towards it. All the solar sites have been online since April of 2022, and it takes twelve months of operations to fully realize and understand the savings. Unofficially, we can say that the DRPA found that solar power accounted for more than 50 percent of the total DRPA and PATCO electrical portfolio this summer. In May through September, more than half of the power used was generated through our seven solar systems. We recognize the importance of tracking the solar systems and savings, so we have an energy analyst position budgeted for 2023. This position will aid the current internal staff monitoring generation and savings of the power and considering other energy conservation savings and more environmentally friendly systems. Once we have a full year of operations across all sites, we'll present a comprehensive presentation to the CAC including the savings and the power factors product most likely in the summer of 2023.

### **Bob Melikian asked if it is a fixed rate for the term of the contract? Is the rate tied into whatever the market rate is so it could go up and down?**

CEO Hanson reported that it's a Purchase Power Agreement. The rates can rise but there are caps on what the rates can be raised if we're in compliance with the contract. It will always be less than what it would cost us to purchase the power in another way. The price is derived by amortizing the cost of Sun Power, now Total Energy's investment over the life of the contract with a reasonable profit. There is an escalation clause in the contract, but it is capitalized.

### **Bob Melikian asked if the DRPA is happy with the decision.**

CEO Hanson reported that we are very happy with the decision. We're definitely saving money, and we're reducing our dependence on the power grid. One of the unique things about this project is the power generated goes directly to the PATCO rail line. It's not connected to the grid because we can consume consistently all the power we produce so we are realizing the

savings. We just can't give an exact number right now, but we are using much more environmentally friendly energy sources.

GM Rink added that we're using the power and requiring less power from PSE&G, so the power we have been buying has dropped.

CEO Hanson stated that the cost is much less and when he gets a better understanding about how the pricing is calculated, he'll get back to the committee.

### **Ben Franklin Bridge:**

#### **Report on the two men who died on the PATCO Ben Franklin tracks. Why didn't they have a route of escape?**

Chief Finnegan reported that the only thing we can comment on is that we can't comment due to the investigation by the NTSB. We are not at liberty to discuss anything relating to this accident at this time.

#### **Bob Melikian asked if it was dark when the accident occurred? Were there any lights on the track where the people were working?**

CEO Hanson reported that the accident occurred at about 9:30 p.m. When the NTSB conducts an investigation that involves OSHA, the FTA, the company, and all the contractors and subcontractors involved in the investigation, we become a part of the investigation team. They allow us to be a part of the investigation team where we share information that we otherwise wouldn't have. For that reason, we're not permitted under penalty of law to disclose any information about the investigation. When GM Rink told me we weren't allowed to talk about the incident, I said we are committed to transparency. I later attended a kick-off meeting and the way it was explained to me made sense. You're literally in on the investigation receiving information that you otherwise wouldn't get. It enables us to have better access to information so in exchange and under penalty of law, we have to agree not to talk about the investigation.

#### **Steve Benigno asked if the incident was captured on video?**

CEO Hanson reported that yes, the incident was captured on video.

#### **Larry Davis asked if CEO Hanson could discuss information that is out there publicly as he saw a report that came out in the paper. It was a horrible accident, and the operator applied emergency brakes beforehand. Is there anything else that you can discuss that is out in the public domain?**

CEO Hanson reported that the information that was put out in the public domain was put out by the NTSB, the National Transportation Safety Board. All those questions must be directed to the NTSB.

Reggie Haynes stated that we should change the topic of discussion because not much more than what's been discussed or has been been disclosed in the media can be discussed. Consequently, this topic will have to be revisited when more information is available.

CEO Hanson stated that we will be happy to have a full discussion when we receive all the information that's in the public domain and has been disclosed by the NTSB. We have been referring everyone to the NTSB, and they release what they believe is appropriate.

**Marty King asked how long the investigation will take?**

Chief Finnegan reported that the investigation could take between a year and eighteen months before a final report is issued.

**Can Mr. Williams invite the TV stations to take a new photo of the Ben Franklin Bridge when the new lighting is operational?**

CEO Hanson stated the answer is yes, but to be clear the northside facing the Betsy Ross Bridge should be completed in the spring, April or May. The southside won't be complete until the latter half of 2024. With respect to turning on the northside, we will absolutely invite the press to take a picture. I asked CE Venuto to hold and structure an event around the lighting. When we do that, the first invitations will go to the CAC members and CAC emeritus members. There will be others invited, but I'm going to drop the first invitations in the mail to the CAC committee.

**PATCO Update:**

**Does PATCO's roadway worker protection program require an RWP-qualified employee to accompany contractors on job sites?**

CEO Hanson reported that the answer is yes, but at this time, we will go no further.

**What can be done about the unsheltered sleeping on the early morning trains? The 5:55 a.m. train out of Collingswood is horrible. Customers must stand since there aren't any available seats.**

GM Rink reported that the police are actively dealing with this issue every day. Around 6 a.m., there is a shift change. The police work platoons from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. I spoke to Chief Cobbs and Chief Finnegan, and they are trying to stagger their officers to get to these areas and to the trains that run during that time. They were out there this week, and I can hear them on the radio every day. When the reports come, the officers respond as soon as possible to remove people who don't have tickets and people who shouldn't be there. It is a challenge as the officers can't be everywhere at any time, but they do remain proactive in dealing with this issue.

Judy Boldurian stated that she doesn't want to seem heartless, but some days are worse than others. Recently, the weather has been nice, so it hasn't been bad, but tonight there was a packed car with a few seats occupied by the homeless. She stated that she understands the weather is cold, but at the same time it's a catch-22. She stated that she saw the police this morning asking a gentleman to leave. She realizes that you can only do so much.

CEO Hanson added that some of these issues seem to be occurring around a change of shift. The Chief has made some changes and issued some new directives around that issue and, hopefully, will tighten that up.

### **Update on graffiti removal at 15<sup>th</sup> & Locust Street Station.**

GM Rink reported that he went out to visit all the stations on Monday afternoon. The city attempted to remove the graffiti, but their removal process vs. our removal process is below our standard. All the graffiti was removed except in the far 16<sup>th</sup> Street northwest stairwell area. GM Rink contacted the city officials that day forwarding pictures and to address that there was a light out and a floor grate that needed to be fixed.

### **What is the plan to address homeless individuals needing restroom facilities instead of using public stations for lack of a place to go?**

GM Rink reported that this matter was addressed at previous meetings regarding the homeless needing restroom facilities. PATCO does not own any public restrooms in our areas. When people use PATCO stations as restrooms, we have our custodians called out immediately. We don't have a plan to provide any type of public restrooms in those facilities.

### **Will PATCO run the Christmas train this year?**

GM Rink reported that PATCO will bring back Santa's Silver Sleigh and it will take place on Saturday, December 3, 2022. We will be pushing out that information and publicizing it shortly on all social media channels. This will be the only public event held at this time. He reported that he and CEO Hanson will be playing Santa on that day. It's a shame that we had to shut the event down during the past few years, but very happy to bring it back this year.

### **Initial sales figures of our new weekend pass:**

GM Rink reported that from December 4<sup>th</sup> until this date, we have sold twenty-eight passes.

### **Potential for fare capping retrospect application weekend passes:**

GM Rink reported that with our current system, we don't have the ability to perform fare capping. That's more for someone that has a daily/weekly/monthly pass. We don't offer those types of passes yet. Our pass is priced to give the discount up front. It's a one-time fee to buy but our system is not set up for fare capping.

### **AFC Upgrade:**

GM Rink reported that it is a retrofit of our existing equipment. The TVMs and the fare gates will be retrofitted with new materials. The back systems and the actual software will remain, but we will modify the fare gates and the TVMs for open payments. It will be a nice upgrade to our system and will take about three years.

### **Justification for any sole source project:**

GM Rink reported that there is a specific form that we must forward to the Director of the Department, which then is forwarded to CFO White, and finally to CEO Hanson. We all sign the form with all documentation attached including the Summary Statement and the Resolution that was presented to the Board. In this case, the Cubic Systems remaining software and all the equipment is considered proprietary in our system, and we must go with them.

### **The valuation of the restored transfer discount:**

GM Rink reported that the discount disappeared back at the same time SEPTA started their key card and we started our shared Freedom Card. We originally discounted 25 percent and SEPTA discounted 25 percent on paper transfers. It was only available on certain subway buses and trolley lines. Obviously, their new system didn't accept paper transfers, so at that time, we all made the decision (specifically because of the cost we had to pay to implement a new system for the Share Card) that it was not feasible to continue at that time. A \$.50 discount is still available if you buy the quick trip ticket option on your Share Card. Presently, it's a \$3.00 transfer fee, but if you buy it through the card, you will save \$.50.

### **Jeff Kessler asked if that was published anywhere?**

GM Rink stated that he will look into it. If you use our card, you can buy a quick trip off their transit fares, but he will look into it.

### **The accuracy of the Countdown Clock:**

GM Rink reported that he sent an e-mail to the vendor but hasn't heard back. He reported that when the clocks are not working, we go in and get a log of the events and send it to the vendor. We upload it to their system, and they can troubleshoot the system based on that information. Hopefully, I will have an answer for you in the very near future.

Jeff Kessler stated that the vendor should be able to give you a plot that the train is six minutes away but predicted at five minutes. You can easily spot where there are prediction errors.

### **GTFS Update:**

GM Rink reported that Mike Williams hasn't heard back from our vendor.

### **Feasibility of posting alerts as an interim solution:**

GM Rink reported that we asked the vendor to post that information on the dashboard, but we haven't heard back. I spoke to Mike Williams, and we agreed that we might have to find a new vendor because their response hasn't been good. GM Rink asked Jeff Kessler if he knew of any vendors and if so, to send his recommendations and he and Mike Williams will explore those options.

Jeff Kessler stated that he sent a tool to PATCO's IT that, theoretically, should do what someone on the scheduling team or whoever makes Excel spreadsheets should be able to generate. He stated that he would be happy to help because it seems like it's been going on for a while.

GM Rink reported that our vendor was working on a solution but, unfortunately, they haven't followed up. It's been in the test mode, and we haven't been able to contact them.

### **CAC Recruitment update (recruitment ads on LinkedIn.**

Reggie Haynes asked if more signs and/or ads can be placed in the Stations.

CEO Hanson reported that Mike Williams has been doing that, but that he will follow-up with him to see what the status is and what we are doing and ask him to reinvigorate it if he's not doing enough with the advertisement.

Bob Melikian said he saw the DRPA/PATCO's LinkedIn efforts, but they seem to be mostly for recruiting DRPA and PATCO employees but not seen anything for the CAC.

CEO Hanson reported that we put those advertisements on Facebook and Twitter, but he will discuss this with Mike Williams.

### **Social Media, Larry Davis**

#### **Is there an update on the backlog of parts that were expected by the end of October?**

GM Rink reported that we were hoping to get motors in but didn't express a timeframe because we continue to receive them in dribs and drabs. Currently, we do not have a long-term solution from our motor vendors.

Larry Davis stated that he seems to recall that it was reported that PATCO was expected to receive motors by the end of October. GM Rink reported that we did receive some motors and put those trains back in service.

#### **Do we have more trains back on the tracks?**

We have put more trains on the tracks, but now it's leaf season so we've been doing a lot of grinding and truing of wheels due to the flats during the leaf season.

**Do you have an active social media person? I use Twitter and your responses are not as attentive as they have been in the past. Someone reached out to Larry Davis this morning saying that she has been blocked by DRPA/PATCO on Twitter.**

CEO Hanson reported that the DRPA/PATCO has two active social media people, the same two that we've had for a while now, as well as our Communications Manager under Mike Williams who also runs the accounts. He stated that he will speak to them about the level of attention given to social media. He reported that he is not aware of anyone being blocked on social media. To my knowledge, we've never blocked anyone, so I will look into it.

### **Old Business:**

#### **Upcoming Advance Notice on Public Events:**

GM Rink reported that PATCO will bring back Santa's Silver Sleigh and it will take place on Saturday, December 3, 2022.

### **New Business:**

**Judy Boldurian's nomination for CAC Membership post Emeritus Status.**

A vote was taken to nominate Judy Boldurian for active CAC Membership. The motion was made and seconded.

### **Members transitioning to Emeritus Status**

The only member transitioning to Emeritus Status in December is Martin Ostremsky, but he has not been to a meeting in a long time. Judy Boldurian stated that Martin Ostremsky submitted a formal resignation to the committee two years ago.

Reggie Haynes reported that he received another resignation from Joe Russell due to conflicting family matters. The letter was received this morning and, as such, we will have another vacancy on the New Jersey side.

### **CAC Social meeting discussion:**

CEO Hanson reported that the DRPA/PATCO will host a post-holiday party with the CAC if people want to come into OPC as we have done in the past.

Reggie Haynes stated that through e-mail there's been a decision to meet at TJ Clarks in Philadelphia which is close to PATCO Station. The agreed upon date is Thursday, December 8, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. A reminder will be forwarded to all members.

**Next CAC Meeting:** Will be held via Zoom on January 11, 2023, at 6:00 p.m.

**Next DRPA Board Meeting:** Will be held virtually on December 14, 2022, at 9:00 a.m.