

CITY OF PORTAGE HUMAN SERVICES BOARD

Minutes of Meeting, March 1, 2012

CALL TO ORDER: Meeting called to order at 6:35 p.m. by Marc Meulman, Chair

MEMBERS PRESENT: Cody Dekker, Elma (Pat) Maye, Marc Meulman, Nadeem Mirza, Cory Puterbaugh, Sandra Sheppard

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Diane Durian, Angela Manahan Ilori, Raymond LaPoint

MEMBERS ABSENT: Kyle Huitt (Youth Advisory Committee Liaison)

STAFF PRESENT: Elizabeth Money, Neighborhood Program Specialist

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: A motion was made by Sheppard, supported by Dekker, to approve the February 2, 2012 minutes with a correction that Cory Puterbaugh was excused and not absent. Upon voice vote, the motion passed 6-0.

NEW BUSINESS:

Overview of Kalamazoo County Public Transportation Issues and Portage Bus Route Changes- William Schomisch, Metro Transit: William Schomisch gave an overview on Portage Bus routes and ridership information. Bus routes are not being altered as previously considered because the drop in ridership in early 2011 ended and, starting in September 2011, bus ridership has steadily grown. However, four bus routes currently exist in Portage and are numbered 26, 27, 28, and 29. The routes will remain unchanged but the route numbers will be consolidated into just routes 26 and 27 to reduce rider confusion as only two buses served the previous four routes. Metro Transit is committed to continued ridership growth and is currently looking into rider educational efforts and publicity options to assist in that endeavor. In addition, the predicted climb in gas prices should contribute to continued increases in ridership as gas prices directly effect ridership numbers. Sheppard questioned if Federal funds were available to assist with lowering the cost of fares. Schomisch responded that Metro currently receives a large amount of funding and revenue from both the Federal and State governments. Additional funding comes from millage, ridership, ad revenue, and the Western Michigan University bus agreement. Federal and State monies are currently used for both capital improvements and to fund administrative costs to keep rates at \$1.50 per ride (including transfers). Maye questioned if rising gas prices meant more funding for Metro through the gas tax. Schomisch stated the 19-cent gas tax revenue would actually be reduced because the higher the cost per gallon the less gas that was purchased. He discussed some movement at the State level to alter the gas tax from 19-cents per gallon to a percentage on the wholesale cost of gas that would increase revenue but he did not think that would get passed in the near future. Schomisch indicated that budget complications may arise if the Kalamazoo designated urbanized area is increased by the Federal government to include Mattawan and Lawton. Current populations figures are close to 200,000 and the inclusion of new areas would push the urbanized area over that number. Urban areas over 200,000 have greater restrictions on Federal and State funds and would pose budgeting problems for Metro based on the way those funds are currently allocated. Metro is working not only to support new legislation that would grandfather urbanized areas previously under 200,000, but also on millage options that would secure future budget stabilization and afford a continuation of service. Dekker clarified that the urbanized area boundaries were different from County boundaries as Mattawan and Lawton were in Van Buren County. Dekker also questioned if Metro used hybrid vehicles and if funding was available to purchase more fuel efficient vehicles. Schomisch indicated that they do have five hybrid vehicles and have determined that while they cost more upfront, they save money due to lower gas and repair costs. They plan to incorporate more fuel efficient vehicles in the future but there is no funding specifically to assist with the purchase of those vehicles. Dekker then questioned if there was anything the HSB can do to increase ridership. Schomisch indicated they were working on plans to increase ridership, build support for the millages, and that development of a public relations campaign would most likely be carried out by the newly hired public transit administrator. Schomisch also provided detail about Kalamazoo County Transportation Authority (KCTA), including a brief history on the formation of the county-wide transportation authority, past millages, and the future direction of funding. Included in his comments was an overview of how millages can be requested and the need to form a new city transportation authority that operated under the KCTA so that millages for county-wide demand service and fixed route services can be requested separately. In November, Metro will likely request a continuation of the current millage until the city transportation authority can get up and running and then they will go back to voters in May 2013 with new millage requests. Meulman pointed out that the difficulty with this scenario is assuring voters that if the May millage requests passes, the November millage request

would not be collected and/or implemented. Schomisch indicated that they had a plan to ensure continuation of services.

Metro Transit ADA Advisory Committee: Meulman had no updates as the committee had not met since the last Board meeting.

OLD BUSINESS:

Human Service Public Education Proposal- update: Money passed out the human service educational brochure and informed the Board the direct mailing had been sent, brochures would be placed at city buildings, the Portage District Library, Portage Community Center, and Portage Senior Center by the following Monday. The brochure would be uploaded to the city website with an accompanying press release, an ad placed on cable access, and an article was scheduled to appear in the *Portager*.

STATEMENT OF CITIZENS: None.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Elizabeth Money, Neighborhood Program Specialist