

**GOLDEN EMPIRE TRANSIT DISTRICT
MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING
OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**SEPTEMBER 21, 2021
5:30 PM**

**1830 GOLDEN STATE AVENUE
BAKERSFIELD, CALIFORNIA 93301**

DIRECTORS PRESENT:

Carlos Bello

Leasa Engel

Rueben Pascual

DIRECTORS ABSENT:

Erika Dixon and Cindy Parra

ATTORNEY PRESENT:

Jim Worth

STAFF PRESENT:

Karen King

Steve Barnes

Deidre Brown

Robert Williams

Janet Sanders

Jeanie Hill

Victor Honorato

Chris James

Ricardo Perez

Jill Smith

Nicholas Hubbert

Sharon Pierce

OTHERS PRESENT:

Yolanda Hamen

Suzanne Campbell

Wayne Kress

The Vice Chair called the meeting to order at 5:32 p.m.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

Director Engel moved and Director Bello seconded a motion to approve the consent agenda items A-E (Agenda, Minutes of August 17, 2021, Accounts Payable Check Disbursements, Service Mix Study and Operational Analysis, and Fuel Cell Electric Transit Bus Purchase.) Item 1F Solar Array and Battery Backup Systems was considered separately. The motion carried on the following roll call vote:

AYES: Bello, Engel, Pascual

NOES: None

ABSENT: Dixon, Parra

ABSTAIN: None

After a presentation from Mr. Honorato, Director Engel moved and Director Bello seconded a motion to award a contract to Valley Unique Electric in the amount of \$1,472,700.00 for the Solar Array and Battery Backup Systems. The motion carried on the following roll call vote:

AYES: Bello, Engel, Pascual

NOES: None

ABSENT: Dixon, Parra

ABSTAIN: None

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Yolanda Hamen spoke concerning working conditions for “extra board” bus operators. (See Exhibit 1).

HIRING STRATEGIES AND EMPLOYEE INCENTIVE PAY

Ms. King presented the proposed strategies to the Board. The five recommendations addressed were:

1. Offer a \$1,500 sign on bonus for new employees (\$500 to be paid at time of hire, \$500 to be paid at the end of probation, and \$500 to be paid upon completion of one year of service);
2. Incentivize present employees to work their regular shifts consistently by offering 5% premium pay on hours worked;
3. Improve our employee vaccination rate and hopefully reduce sick time off by requiring all newly hired employees to be vaccinated;
4. Implement hiring of part time “relief” drivers per the provisions of the Bargaining Agreement between GET and Teamsters Local 517; and
5. Implement hiring contract employees per the Agreement with Local 517.

After some discussion, Director Bello moved and Director Engel seconded a motion to approve sign on bonus pay for new hires, vaccination requirement for new hires and incentive pay for existing employees through December 31, 2021, with possible extension subject to the CEO’s discretion; and, direct staff to implement hiring relief drivers and contract employees per the labor agreement. The motion carried on the following roll call vote:

AYES: Bello, Engel, Pascual
ABSENT: Dixon, Parra

NOES: None
ABSTAIN: None

2021 COVID-19 TRANSIT READINESS PLAN

Mr. Perez commented that the COVID-19 pandemic has changed our public transit system, and the impact of the crisis will be felt far beyond the public health orders. With limited resources, the District’s number one goal for the Transit Readiness Plan (TRP) is to protect the health and safety of the GET employees and the public as we recover. Mr. Perez shared that an internal task force has been appointed to develop potential service plans that could be implemented with fluctuating levels of available transit operators and maintenance crew members. This was an informational item only.

AUGUST 2021 FINANCIAL POSITION AND RESULTS OF OPERATIONS

Mr. Barnes reviewed August 2021 financial reports. This was an informational item only.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS/BOARD COMMENTS

Director Engel asked if Board members were attending the CTA Conference in Sacramento in November. Director Bello is looking forward to the implementation of the new hiring strategies. Director Pascual asked that a response be provided to Ms. Hamen on her comments tonight.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT/COMMENTS

Ms. King commented that she checked with Mr. Perez on the status of free rides in September promotion this month. Mr. Perez advised that if the current trend continues, ridership will be 39% over September 2020. The following is a report on HR activities since August 1st: 175 applications have been received. Those positions are: Coach Operator; Servicer C; Mechanic D; Maintenance Trainer; Servicer B; IT Intern; Dispatcher; Safety, Security and Training Coordinator; Servicer A HR Generalist; Customer Service Representative (CSR); and Facilities Maintenance Worker. Two part-time CSRs, two Servicer Cs, three Coach Operators have been hired. There are twenty-one people in various stages in the pre-employment process, and will hopefully be on-boarded shortly. Three Coach Operators, two Mechanics, and one CSR have resigned. The Governor has signed AB 361 which will extend meeting virtually through 2024. The \$4.2 billion that the California High Speed Rail was hoping to be approved by the legislature this year is not coming. There is no money available this calendar year to acquire GET's property.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Board moved into executive session at 7:02 p.m. to discuss Conference with Legal Counsel-- [Government Code Section 54956.8] Portion of APN 173-200-09, District Negotiator: Karen King, Negotiating with: John Ritchie, ASU & Associates. The Board returned to open session at 7:34 p.m.

OPEN SESSION

Attorney Worth stated that the Board met with legal counsel and staff on the items referenced in the executive session on the Agenda. Mr. Worth stated that no action was taken that requires disclosure under the Brown Act.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Director Pascual moved that the meeting be closed. The meeting concluded at 7:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Secretary of the Board of Directors

9-21-21

I'm here tonight to speak on behalf of "extra board" drivers who fear retaliation for speaking up, their concerns. regarding

Extraboard drivers leave their employment @ G.E.T. because they are overworked, sometimes working any where from 7-18 days straight with no day off... which is a safety issue.

Their schedules ~~are~~ contain long splits for long days and want operations to be flexible and allow them time off for the overwhelming work on On-Demand.

NEMT is a big money maker for GET @ the expense of the drivers mental & physical well being.

More beds should be available for drivers to have a schedule with time off.

Drivers have called in sick to get a day off.

Drivers are already talking about leaving GET if the company returns to a shorter schedule which means less bids for the drivers.

The drivers feel unappreciated and overworked - being told that "fatigue" is not an excused absence.

Drivers have problems with getting time scheduled in their shifts for bathroom breaks & getting a bite to eat.

They also have issues with working 104 hour days for upwards of 5 days.

Normal (4) 10 hour day shifts
warrant 3 days off - something that does not pertain to Extra board