

**Emmet County
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MEETING
February 26, 2014**

Due to the number of citizens attending the meeting it was moved from the Controller's Office Conference Room to the Board of Commissioners Room.

Present: Commissioner Les Atchison; Commissioner Charles MacInnis; Commissioner Bert Notestine.

Staff: Interim County Controller / HR Director Marty Krupa; Director Transportation and Development Kelley Atkins; Recording Secretary Vickie Carpentier.

Absent: None.

Others in Attendance: Approximately 19 citizens; Linda Ward, F.E.E.T. Co-Chair; Ryan Bentley, Petoskey News-Review; Martha Lancaster, F.E.E.T.

Call to order:

The meeting was called to order at 11:08 a.m. by Atchison in the Board of Commissioners Room.

Agenda:

Motion by MacInnis to add "Public Comment" right after "Agenda." Supported by Notestine.

Motion carried in a unanimous voice vote.

Public Comment:

None.

Communications:

None.

Minutes:

The proposed minutes of the November 4, 2013 meeting were presented and reviewed.

Motion by MacInnis to approve the minutes of the November 4, 2013 meeting. Supported by Notestine.

Motion carried in a unanimous voice vote.

Unfinished Business:

F.E.E.T. - Friends Enhancing Emmet Transit

F.E.E.T. Co-Chair Linda Ward recapped and reviewed F.E.E.T.'s goal and previous meetings regarding transportation in Emmet County.

Public Comment:

Karla Buckmaster inquired if the Committee had received a needs assessment.

Martha Lancaster, F.E.E.T. member, advised information was available on its website at www.emmettransit.org.

Karla Buckmaster stated F.E.E.T. had indicated they had been talking with the Friendship Center and Straits Regional Ride and asked if they had any information about what the Friendship Center and Straits Regional Ride feel about this.

Atchison stated that approximately eight years ago the Committee went through this process. He recapped a letter the Committee received in September 16, 2006 (Attachment 1) about studies done and the decision made to collaborate with existing transportation systems and look for the best solution to fill a specific need(s). The Committee continued to hold meetings to obtain information and discuss transportation. He then summarized what occurred in the intervening years and the hybrid system that was developed.

MacInnis stated information had been obtained through meetings with numerous individuals and attending meetings. It was his opinion there were unresolved issues and he had not received a plan to look at that helps him understand how to solve the dilemma of moving people from one rural area to another. He did recognize the need. He did not have an objection but spoke to a millage proposal and its impact on lower income individuals. He would like to continue the discussion. It was his opinion that the lack of a controller and having a concrete plan are two issues which add to the difficulties when trying to figure out possible solutions.

Notestine stated he would look at it somewhat differently if someone were to ask him to be supportive of a public transportation system that would be expanded from what we have. He indicated he would like to see a transportation system but the issue was how to pay for it. Currently the County participates in Straits Regional Ride, Friendship Centers of Emmet County and other subsidies. He questioned how you could support a system like this where you collect only \$2.00 to 3.00 per rider but to provide the service it could cost up to \$18.00 to \$20.00 per rider. It would be hard to justify it. He would like to see a program like that but was not seeing the documentation he needed. Having talked to people involved with transportation systems in other areas you will lose money not

make it. The question is how to do it to lose the least. He stated the necessity of being accountable for what that costs and was unwilling at this time to put such a financial burden on people.

Atkins stated the request was for a millage to create a transportation system, but he had not seen any business plan showing number of buses, routes, number of employees, the cost of a garage, fuel, maintenance and other costs.

Martha Lancaster, stated that she worked as an employee with F.E.E.T. and the United Way for a long time. She is no longer employed by them and is now just a concerned citizen. HSCB [Human Services Coordinating Body] is totally behind this. She stated in 2012 they had hired a consultant that upgraded the original NEMCOG study. The system would be a startup system to be built up as community needs became apparent and would consist of some dial-a-ride and some flex routes. She stated they had not provided hard copies but that it was all available on the website. She stated they were suggesting the system would incorporate the existing Emmet County Friendship Centers system and Straits Regional Ride into one comprehensive system. She stated the Emmet County Friendship Centers would only be willing to give up a portion of the transportation millage they receive. It was also her opinion that monies would be gained from fares, State and Federal contributions and Tribal monies and would also involve a millage.

Wid Lyman advised that he has a PhD in transportation engineering and over the years and in different communities has participated in the transit debate. He gave examples of programs proposed and the information provided up front. None of the programs ever came to fruition. In one, voters found out it would have been cheaper to provide limo service for the riders - one limo per rider. Voters are generous and they vote for a concept. Voters are not aware that it would cost them local, regional, state or federal taxes in addition to the millage because they are getting state and federal assistance. He expressed concern with being able to communicate the information to all the voters so they can vote in an educated manner.

George Ramey commented that he had just found out about this and had not had an opportunity to study it in depth, it was his opinion it would be the same people that are currently using the services. He questioned if it was promoting the City, and for details on how many "young professionals" were currently using the system.

An individual in the audience started questioning Mr. Ramey. Chair stopped the proceedings and reminded the individual, and those in attendance, that this was the portion of the meeting set for public comment which is never argumentative and the individual would have the opportunity to speak after Mr. Ramey finished.

Mr. Ramey continued with his comment stating there are always groups of people who want to use the public trough. He ask that everyone think about the young people

that were struggling financially and to then be asked to pay the taxes for this group of people. It was his opinion that everyone would like to see everyone have a ride, have their roof shoveled in the wintertime and their walks salted but that it was not the job of government to do all of these things. He expressed his concern with people wanting the rest of us to contribute to yet another social program.

No further public comments.

MacInnis stated he would like to have the opportunity to learn more about Straits Regional Ride and expressed his willingness to meet with them and with Martha Lancaster to obtain further information.

Dr. Tom Gietzen, stated that previously he was on the Petoskey City Council and has assisted with writing the Charter the City currently uses. He shared examples of the requests received by Council. He stated that there was no end to the needs and it becomes very important what needs are chosen, realizing they are all going to be money losers.

Krupa commented on millage concerns. What is being seen is that once a millage is established and the funding is in place is State and Federal funding drying up because of the deficits out there and that could result in the County taxpayers paying for all of it.

Notestine stated that he appreciated both sides and the information provided. He expressed his concerns with the cost and the money that could be lost.

Atchison stated that from his perspective from when the Committee first met with F.E.E.T. the Friendship Centers of Emmet County position is different now than it was at that time. He stated that based on Mr. MacInnis statements today he is indicating the need for further discussion.

MacInnis stated both F.E.E.T. and others have made strong cases for each side and he wants a strong, compelling case he can support. At the current time he was not anxious to do anything but would like to learn more and talk further about it.

Atchison stated the Committee's task is to make a recommendation, yea or nay, to the County Board of Commissioners. If the Committee is not ready to make that recommendation another meeting will be scheduled allowing time for further research to be done.

Notestine has no problem with further research. He appreciates what F.E.E.T. has been doing and the fact there is support from the HSCB [Human Services Coordinating Body]. He stated it would mean more if they were to come up with some financial support for it. What he is hearing is that they are supportive of it but they are not willing to put some of their budget into that and want someone else to pay for it.

Martha Lancaster advised the financial plan shows substantial contract services that public human service agencies receive to transport their clients.

Notestine stated that those funds are currently going to Straits Regional Ride to provide the service, so the dollars would be pulled from SRR and put here.

Atchison then spoke on behalf of a group not in attendance, the private transportation people. He expressed his concern for what happens to taxi cabs who do 24/7, not just weekdays during the day.

Atchison stated that based on the discussion today another meeting would be scheduled.

MacInnis indicated his willingness to meet with Martha Lancaster, Lorraine Manary or anyone else, to talk through the information. When he has new information he will contact the Chair.

Atchison stated that a meeting will be scheduled when Mr. MacInnis advises he has new information.

Other Business:

None.

Announcement:

None.

Adjournment:

Motion by MacInnis to adjourn the meeting. Supported by Notesine.

Motion carried in a unanimous voice vote.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 12:02 p.m.

Minutes approved at the January 29, 2015 meeting.