

Worcester Redevelopment Authority

Michael P. Angelini
Chair

Peter Dunn
Chief Executive Officer



WORCESTER REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Thursday, October 12, 2023

9:00 A.M.

City Hall, Levi Lincoln Chamber

Worcester, MA 01608

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Present:

Worcester Redevelopment Authority Board

Michael Angelini, Chair
David Minasian, Vice Chair
Sherri Pitcher
Richard Burke
Walter Weekes

Staff

Peter Dunn, Chief Executive Officer
Michael Traynor, City Solicitor
Alexis Delgado, WRA Finance Manager
Julie Lynch, Director of Facilities
Paul Morano, Office of Economic Development
Greg Ormsby, Office of Economic Development
Rachel Pressey, Office of Economic Development
Victoria Porteiro-Cejas, Office of Economic Development
Jane Bresnahan, Office of Economic Development

Pursuant to a notice given (attached), a meeting of the Worcester Redevelopment Authority was held at 9:00 A.M. on Thursday, October 12, 2023

1. Call to Order

Mr. Dunn called the meeting to order at 9:04 A.M.

2. Roll Call

Chair Angelini called the meeting to order and welcomed Mr. Weekes.

Mr. Dunn called the roll – Ms. Pitcher, Mr. Weekes, Mr. Minasian, Mr. Burke, and Chair Angelini.

3. Approval of Minutes: September 14, 2023

Mr. Burke made a motion to approve the minutes of September 14, 2023.

Mr. Minasian seconded the motion.

The minutes were approved 4-0 on a roll call.

New Business

1. Update from MBTA relative to the Change in Schedule for Heart to Hub express service

Chair Angelini advised this topic was discussed at some length last meeting and expect a report from the MBTA regarding the change.

Mr. Dunn introduced Angel Donahue-Rodriquez, Assistant General Manager for External Affairs from the MBTA General Manager's Office who will provide an update and summary of the changes discussed last month at the meeting on the schedule and take questions after. The fall/winter schedule became effective October 2, 2023. The MBTA changes its schedule twice a year in May, then in the fall, which was on October 2. The next schedule change will be in the spring. In the timeframe between now and around April, they will gather feedback from riders, stakeholders on the types of service they would like to see, the schedule they would like to see in the spring.

With that, effective October 2, 2023, the 6:30 a.m. Heart to Hub train added four additional stops, from Framingham in. It continues to be an express train and changed the arrival time of 7:35 a.m. to 7:56 a.m. in the morning. The time for departure did not change, however, the arrival time did because of the additional stops. As a consequence, MBTA added additional peak trains over to Worcester. Previously the frequency was one train every hour, now it will be every forty-five minutes. Changes are always looked at holistically and feedback from riders. Sometimes it gets frustrating, but it is a holistic approach to ensure the service throughout the whole system is equitable and fair.

MBTA has spoken to City Manager Batista, along with several members of the Delegation around some of the concerns around the new arrival times in particular. MBTA will make improvements to their communication and ensure that these changes are more clearly announced and effectively communicated to members of the Delegation and the WRA.

Chair Angelini asked what feedback from Worcester passengers was taken into account in making this change without any advanced notice to the city? Mr. Donahue-Rodriguez advised they do a rider survey and heard from folks across the line wanting more frequency. There are some limitations with infrastructure that makes things more complicated to provide additional train service. One the projects the MBTA is looking at exploring is the Worcester triple-track project and invite the Board to look at that project, a longer-term project. The feedback largely received has been people wanting more frequency throughout the line and other lines as well.

Chair Angelini asked if it is to say there was no feedback from any rider in Worcester that they wanted to extend the time to get to Boston by more than twenty minutes? Mr. Donahue-Rodriguez could not speak to the specific feedback from riders in Worcester. Chair Angelini suggested the problem is this decision was made without consultation from the WRA or with anyone in the city at a time when we are trying to promote a greener economy, want to promote people taking the train to Boston. Taking an hour and half to get to Boston is unacceptable by any measure, very disappointing to this community and the fact that the MBTA did this without any consultation with this Authority or with the City Manager is unacceptable. This is very disappointing news and does not reflect in any way the sense of inclusiveness in its participation that should be in the spirit of the relationship with the MBTA and do not know if this was politically motivated or otherwise. It's beyond understanding why in the age of trying to improve commuter rail, taking major steps here in Worcester to induce people to live here and giving them the advantage of easy access to Boston, but MBTA is making that more difficult. What will happen as a result of this is less people will take the train and then in April, the feedback will be that fewer people are taking the train to Boston so MBTA will need to cut service further. This is the wrong direction and an insult to Central Massachusetts.

Mr. Donahue-Rodriguez stated unequivocally, there is not political motivation behind any of this at all and want to make that clear. Chair Angelini responded, in the absence of that, what is the rationale for extending the time to get to Boston from Worcester, is that a step forward? Mr. Donahue-Rodriguez said the intent was to improve overall frequency and service throughout the whole line.

Mr. Burke asked if MBTA stands by this decision because that's what it sounds like. Mr. Donahue-Rodriguez confirmed because it did increase frequency and certainly acknowledges the communication issue. Mr. Burke made the point that the WRA and Worcester are in disagreement with the schedule change, not just frustrated about communication. Mr. Burke asked ultimately who signs-off and makes this decision for the MBTA. Mr. Donahue-Rodriguez advised decisions like these are worked out at the beginning stages with the scheduling team based on solicitation and feedback from riders, then through a series of vetting processes based on car availability and a whole host of other things. Eventually the recommendation gets presented to senior leadership at the MBTA. Mr. Burke asked if the General Manager would have signed off on the recommendation from Leadership Team. Mr. Donahue-Rodriguez, yes.

Ms. Pitcher asked how Central Massachusetts and Worcester are represented on the Leadership Team as these decisions are made, how the rider survey is administered, and what kind of feedback was received. Mr. Donahue-Rodriguez said he would have to follow up regarding how the survey was administered and the feedback received. With respect to express trains, this is the one change on the express trains that was made.

Ms. Pitcher reiterated the question of how Worcester and Central Massachusetts voices are represented on the Leadership Team as these decisions are made. Mr. Donahue-Rodriguez asked about where the Leadership Team lives? Ms. Pitcher clarified either where they live or how the voice is represented. Mr. Donahue-Rodriguez believes there are some on the team who live in the Worcester area and ride the Worcester-Framingham line and the General Manager encourages everyone on the Leadership Team to use the system. Chair Angelini asked if he would provide the names of those individuals. Mr. Donahue-Rodriguez advised one of the folks on the team is Lynsey Heffernan who he believes lives in Shrewsbury.

Mr. Minasian echoed the rest of the Board's comments and asked to go through the schedule again in terms of the morning commute - what is the fastest train going from Worcester to Boston. Mr. Donahue-Rodriguez advised the new fall schedule departs Worcester at 6:30 a.m. and arrives at South Station at 7:56 a.m. On the p.m. the Worcester train departs Boston at 4:45 p.m. and arrives in Worcester at 6:11 p.m. which is the express train. Passengers outbound in Worcester in the evening also have trains departing South Station at 4:00 p.m., 5:30 p.m., 6:50 p.m. arrive correspondingly 5:25 p.m., 6:56 p.m. and 7:40 p.m. at night respectively. Mr. Minasian asked what does express train mean? Mr. Donahue-Rodriguez advised it means the reverse commute of the Heat to Hub. Mr. Minasian asked where it stops after it leaves South Station? Mr. Donahue-Rodriguez clarified it makes one stop in between and goes to Worcester. Mr. Minasian asked to clarify if the 6:30am train leaving Worcester now makes additional stops. Mr. Donahue-Rodriguez advised there were four stops added from Framingham into Boston. Mr. Minasian reiterated that it would be helpful to see the surveys, riders comments that led to this decision. He also emphasized the housing and economic development happening around the station consistent with what the Governor is prioritizing, and the Leadership Team should be aware of that. What he has heard from riders is that they want to get to Boston in under an hour, and not twenty or thirty minutes longer. Concerned with ridership decreasing if the times do not work for them.

Mr. Donahue-Rodriguez clarified that as part of the overall schedule, there is more frequency, more trains that are provided to Worcester than there were before. The change is the additional twenty minutes. Mr. Minasian understood that point but reiterated that the feedback from riders anecdotally in Worcester is that they care more about the timing than the frequency. Having that one morning express train and trying to get that fast as possible is really important to riders.

Chair Angelini stated that in this modern age calling even an hour trip to get to Boston as an "express" train is a questionable use of that word. Chair Angelini summarized the board's requests:

- Share the survey regarding the feedback they received.
- Share the members of your Leadership Team.
- Communicate this feedback to the General Manager and that the Authority would like to meet with him regarding this and certainly would like to meet with him before any further changes are undertaken.

Chair Angelini also asked MBTA to take into account the effect this has on human beings in a real way; people who live in Worcester that work in Boston have responsibilities, childcare, among others. They set their lives around a schedule and the fact that someone just with little notice at all changes that schedule and disrupts their lives is very meaningful to those people. there is a human element to this we do not thing has been appropriately taken into account.

Mr. Weekes also echoed the Board's comments and emphasized greater representation from Central Massachusetts prior to any decisions being made. Mr. Donahue-Rodriquez responded that with respect to the leadership makeup, he cannot confirm that, but certainly willing to have a conversation with the Board, and continuing conversations with the City Manager as well as members of the Delegation about what is important to the region prior to making those additional changes.

2. Update and discussion relative to the Cleaning Services Agreement with Paixio, Inc. d/b/a Kleen Rite for Union Station

Mr. Dunn provided a background regarding the contract. At the time when the Board awarded the contract there was a discussion to evaluate that as it was coming up for renewal or to put it back out to bid to see if we could get better pricing. Before presenting the Board with a specific action this item is on the agenda for an update.

Chair Angelini received and acknowledged communication from Ms. Lynch. As a matter of process, since bidding takes time and the statutory requirements Chair Angelini requested that going forward, this should be considered well in advance. Obviously, it is impractical to bid this and have another company in place November 1, 2023. I hope from a process view in the future take that timeframe into account.

Mr. Dunn asked Ms. Lynch to discuss her observations and analysis over the last years' experience and recommendations going forward. Ms. Lynch complimented the cleaning company's performance. Her recommendation was to move forward with renewing for another year based on the positive experience. She also referenced recent bids for cleaning that have been resulting in increased pricing, acknowledging that risk. Kleen Rite has agreed to hold their price if the contract is extended. Confirmed if the Board decides to put it out to bid again, they will certainly do that. Due to limited time she suggested a potential month-to-month contract until the bidding process is completed and a new contract awarded.

Chair Angelini asked for clarification on the pricing – base level and total contract value. Ms. Lynch advised the base price was \$424,000.00, which was increased to \$450,261.00 because the city was requesting a working supervisor on each shift. That was the change made and the consumables are on top of the base price. Chair Angelini asked for clarification of the total contract value. Ms. Lynch confirmed the current price is \$553,056.00. Chair Angelini asked which tenant spaces are included in that cleaning contract. Ms. Lynch advised just the Cannabis Control Commission which encompasses the second floor of the Station.

Chair Angelini referenced the analysis regarding the cleaning needs and the commentary about the number of tenants in the building but questioned whether that was relevant if they are cleaning their own spaces. Ms. Lynch clarified her comment relates to the foot traffic within Union Station is anticipated to go up, not down with activity at all hours. Chair Angelini asked about the use of the public spaces from 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. Ms. Lynch responded that sometimes there are special events; the new restaurant going in will be open until 2:00 a.m. Thursday, Friday, Saturday.

Mr. Burke, asked for clarification if these are WRA funds and is that why the Board approves the lease terms. Mr. Dunn advised the Board is considering the cleaning services agreement for the building. Every year through the city's budget appropriation process the WRA requires the funds necessary through the tax levy to support operating

costs as well as capital expenditures for the upcoming year. This year the main capital expenditure was the match requirement we had to put in for center platform and waterproofing. Mr. Burke assumed in the budget process that whatever this contract expense is the city would budget and transfer to the WRA and the WRA would approve. Mr. Dunn advised about two years ago it was a little over \$300,000.00 and now \$553,000.00. Mr. Burke commented that he thinks RFPs are generally a good thing to do since it affects the city budget funded by the taxpayers doing an RFP would be recommended especially if it can provide a better value. Chair Angelini appreciated the comment.

Mr. Minasian asked if REIPP for the WRA applies, also if the wage theft ordinance applies as well. Ms. Lynch confirmed this contract resulted from an RFP and the vendor is lowest responsible respondent. The REIPP was included as well as the wage theft ordinance. Mr. Minasian asked if in order to be considered responsible is there a review of the company's history and what that review includes. Ms. Lynch advised the company's history in terms of references they have and there are thirty-four clauses that are required by the FTA anytime a contract is awarded. It is a very stringent process that is followed including SAM.GOV certification as well as following Chapter 30B contract process, there is due diligence to make sure that they have no disbarment or any issues in terms of paying employees. This vendor had stellar references from Springfield in particular that stood out and there has been no issue with this firm in terms of responsiveness or responsible actions. Mr. Minasian asked if there was a check on citations on the Attorney General's Office concerning payment of wages. Ms. Lynch confirmed and acknowledged that was an issue with the former cleaning company.

Mr. Weekes asked about the bid process, how long that would take, and what would be done in the interim. Ms. Lynch advised another RFP would be issued for this and that process in total would likely take six weeks before ready to award. In terms of what will be done in the short term, staff and Law could explore extending the contract on a monthly basis until that process is completed.

Chair Angelini asked about the scope and whether the price increase resulted from an increase to 24 hours a day with two staff - a cleaning person and a supervisor. Ms. Lynch advised it is a working supervisor, so there are two people on each shift for the scope of cleaning. She also mentioned from a safety perspective there are not City staff onsite at this time 24 hours a day. Chair Angelini asked if the Police Station is operating 24 hours a day. Ms. Lynch confirmed and advised they respond to the entire downtown area, not dedicated to the building aside from details.

Chair Angelini recommended a review of what the needs are for cleaning Union Station and issuing an RFP as soon as feasible and asked for thoughts from the Board. Mr. Minasian made a motion to issue an RFP assessing the cleaning needs of Union Station. Mr. Burke seconded the motion. Chair Angelini stated the motion to undertake an RFP process to survey what are the needs and to discuss those needs with the Authority and ultimately issue an RFP. In the meantime, implicit in that motion is that there would be a month-to-month arrangement with the current contract. Mr. Minasian confirmed. Chair Angelini asked Ms. Lynch if she has a question. Ms. Lynch asked if the Board is looking for Kleen Rite to discuss their processes and evaluate what they are doing on each shift? Chair Angelini clarified the motion is to justify what the needs are for the building, communicate those needs including the 24-hour arrangement and then ultimately develop an RFP to invite new bids based upon the determination of need and do that as soon as practical.

The motion was approved on a 5-0 roll call.

3. Financial Update Report

a. Report on Prior Month's Executed Contracts and Payments

b. Report on Downtown Urban Revitalization Plan Expenditures

Mr. Dunn from the period of September 12, 2023, to October 10, 2023, total expenditures were \$247,361.00 primarily the operational costs for Union Station.

4. Status Reports

a. Union Station

b. Downtown Urban Revitalization Plan

c. The Cove

c. The Cove

Mr. Dunn started with The Cove REIPP status and turned it over to Ms. Porteiro-Cejas. Referring to Page 39 – the August 2023 numbers regarding Worcester residents are up 2% to 26%; people of color down 2% to 75% and still experiencing challenges in the women category at 0%. With subs within thirty mile radius, up 8% at 25%. There is one new subcontractor onsite for August, Superior Plumbing. Page 40 shows out of 89% of the total contracts awarded, 19% are minority/women business enterprises very close to their goal of 20%.

Mr. Minasian commented it looks like 20,000 hours through August on the job and there is no female participation, and looking for description of the conversations, or corrective action plan as there is a lot more to go. Ms. Porteiro-Cejas advised there was a site visit last Thursday October 5th with the compliance team at NEI. Discussed past practices, recent posting of a QR code that's visible and easily accessible where Worcester residents can scan it and directly apply for jobs on their website. She met someone new on their crew who was a Worcester resident, person of color. In terms of women they are trying to target with their marketing, women who want to get into the construction force and also following guidelines provided by the PGTI. They are following best practices, recommendations by city staff and professionals in the field and monitoring very closely.

Mr. Minasian commented that NEI does not do the bulk of the hiring, that is the subcontractors that do the bulk of the hiring. Ms. Porteiro-Cejas confirmed. Mr. Minasian referencing the hours that come for female participation does not come from the labor set at NEI it is coming from the subcontractors. What do those conversations look like, is that NEI having those conversations subs as they load up on framing, drywall, all the rough MEP work, are those conversations happening with the subcontractors and having a plan? Ms. Porteiro-Cejas acknowledged the good question and has been discussing with NEI the importance of having a diverse core crew at the beginning of the project and has relayed the importance of this to the subcontractors as well. Mr. Minasian asked if there is a direct communication with the city and the subcontractors or just through NEI. Ms. Porteiro-Cejas advised primarily it is through NEI. Mr. Minasian asked in terms of the women and minority businesses is that a self-reported status, how is that tracked? Ms. Porteiro-Cejas advised they do have to submit certification through the State SDO and the contracting status is self-reported. Minasian asked if the certification is received or verified. Ms. Porteiro-Cejas confirmed staff do not receive the physical certification. Mr. Minasian suggested there is a list that can be

used look up their certification. Mr. Minasian also asked about a contractor listed – Metro Cabinets – and could not find them registered with the state corporations. Ms. Porteiro-Cejas advised she can find out where or how they are registered. Mr. Traynor, advised when the City does contracts they need to have proper legal standing, legal existence. He also advised that when it is an out of state corporation or company there is a registration with MA to make sure that they have paid their share of taxes. Mr. Dunn added he would guess that it was a corporation that is registered in a different state or could be a d/b/a of a larger corporation and there may be multiple lines of business with different d/b/a's.

Mr. Burke added the report is very good, very clear, the presentation is very well done and complimented Ms. Porteiro-Cejas.

Mr. Weekes asked to clarify relative to the MWBEs with the goal of 20% and their status of 19%, from the list how is it determined which companies are MWBEs. Ms. Porteiro-Cejas, Page 40 any values in the red or yellow category that indicates that they are MWBEs. Mr. Weekes appreciated the clarification along with Chair Angelini.

b. Downtown Urban Revitalization Plan

Mr. Dunn provided an update on the Denholm Project and the Land Disposition Agreement. Continuing to work on that and some of the language with the Menkiti Group. Has taken a little bit longer than expected, but continuing to make progress. Mr. Weekes asked if there is a tentative date for demolition. Mr. Dunn advised not yet, best guess would be about twelve months from now.

a. Union Station

Mr. Dunn announced that on Friday, October 13th at the annual Game Changers Conference sponsored by Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce – the City of Worcester and the Worcester Redevelopment Authority have been selected as one of the award recipients for efforts related to Union Station. The reason for that is the entire topic for Game Changers is on transportation.

Mr. Dunn advised Luciano's has still not executed the lease extension. He should be hearing from the tenant's attorney with regard to some of the language in the draft document. As a reminder, the Board had voted on this and extended for two years with a potential option for third year. Mr. Dunn suggested the Board propose a deadline to push the sense of urgency. Ms. Pitcher asked if there had been a deadline already. Mr. Dunn advised there was not, did not expect this delay, but noted he has been paying in accordance with the updated rent schedule in the amendment. Ms. Pitcher asked to clarify that he is paying but has not signed the agreement. Mr. Dunn confirmed. Chair Angelini suggested a deadline of November 1, 2023. Board members supported. Mr. Dunn will communicate that.

Mr. Dunn advised there is continued progress with the other tenancies, the Lebanese 961 Restaurant continues with their buildout. Noted that there will be an amendment for the Board consideration soon to amend the commencement date for rent based on the updated project schedule.

The Food Hub continues to make progress on their construction level drawings and hope to put out to bid by the end of the calendar year. Mr. Dunn and Ms. Lynch are coordinating with the Cannabis Control Commission in terms of construction. There is a

storage cabinet now in the Cannabis Control Commission space which will accommodate the ventilation system in terms of the exhaust for the kitchens they will be installing. The contractor may need to do work after hours to avoid disruption.

Chair Angelini commented all good news with increased use at Union Station.

Ms. Pitcher asked about an update from Mr. Lana on Midtown Mall. Mr. Dunn has shared updates on his behalf and where that currently stands.

Chair Angelini asked to return to the subject of commuter rail. There is nothing in the WRA Charter that makes them the City's spokesperson on this subject, but suggested the community needs a concerted effort in this regard politically, legislatively and otherwise. The fact that this happened the way it happened without much notice is an indicator that it could happen again without any notice. Need to stay on top of it and perhaps a letter can be sent on behalf of the Authority. Welcome other thoughts on how the community can engage more energetically on this subject.

5. Adjournment

There being no further business, Mr. Dunn called the roll to adjourn the meeting at 10:12 A.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Dunn
Chief Executive Officer