

TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES
Economic Development Committee
Town Hall Council Chambers
February 1, 2012, Wednesday

Present: Thomas J. Lacey, Vice Chairman
Brian McDonald, Councilor
Michael Smart, Councilor

Not Present: Victor Pap, III, Chairman
Jane Hackett, Councilor

Also Present: Jim Clarke, Director of Planning and Comm. Dev.
Arthur Mathews, Councilor

Recording Secretary: Mary Barker

Vice Chairman Lacey called the Economic Development Committee Meeting to order at 7:50 PM.

MBTA Proposed Reduction in Services

Vice Chairman Pap and President Mathews have drafted a letter for review by the committee and to submit as a draft to the Town Council, with the opportunity for additional information.

Councilor Mathews met with the Mayor and met with James Clarke and George Bezkorovainy last week and drafted the letter. It articulates the impacts of the MBTA's proposed reductions in service to the town, in the face of increased assessment in the Governor's budget. The T is proposing two scenarios; the first leaves some services intact and the second has the greatest impact to Weymouth. Vice Chairman Lacey reported that he had a brief conversation with Chairman Pap and he is aligned with Councilor Mathew's letter but has some additional information to add.

Jim Clarke presented a summary of the MBTA's presentation to its finance board and the impact to Weymouth service. They have floated two scenarios. The first scenario does not impact the Weymouth bus routes but does affect the subsidy for the ferry and eliminate commuter rail service on weekends and after 10PM weeknights. The second scenario would impact the bus service--two key bus routes originating at Quincy Center and running along 3A (rts. 220, 222 and 224) into Hull and Hingham and to Weymouthport. One comes into Weymouth on North Street and onto Middle and into Jackson square. The town successfully lobbied in 2009 to get the route extended further into Weymouth to Washington Street. The other route which goes into Weymouth Landing and up Federal Street was extended up to Columbian Square. The MBTA's proposal will end the Weymouth Landing route in the Landing; taking back not just the extension, but Federal Street as well. On the North Weymouth routes, the service will end

in Bicknell Square. There will no longer be service out to Neck Street to Weymouthport and the route that runs by Town Hall to Washington Street will be eliminated. The last page of the MBTA's report provides a timeframe for hearings and evaluation. The Finance Board will review the recommendations and hold public hearings in January and February with a recommendation to the MBTA in March. The board will vote in April. Mr. Clarke provided two memos from George Bezkorovainy, Traffic Engineer for the town. The first dated January 31, 2012, reviews the MBTA's per passenger average subsidy, and its strategy for targeting those bus routes that had a higher than average subsidy. Successful routes of lower subsidy were kept; higher subsidized routes were targeted for elimination. The Traffic Engineer found five routes with subsidy higher than \$1.86 which were not proposed for elimination, and three of those routes have a weekday ridership of less than the 225 Route (Columbian Square via the Landing). This route has been very successful with about 2500 passengers. The other route is not as well traveled. He suggested the Council could incorporate the information from this presentation in their letter. Councilor Lacey asked for clarification on the subsidy. Jim reported that the T subsidizes based on the ridership and is worked out to a per passenger cost. There are other routes with a higher subsidy rate that are not slated for elimination. The Traffic Engineer wrote a second memo in February after he reviewed further and found that other routes proposed for elimination have alternate public transportation; Weymouth does not. The administration plans to use the information in their testimony at one of the upcoming public hearings; either the 8th or 15th. Mr. Clarke read the draft letter from the committee and agreed it hit the important factors. MassDOT has said the impact would not be as great because while the bridge is under construction the ferry and other means of public transportation can be used; however, they are proposing eliminating the options. This will increase traffic when people have to resort to cars. They are working at cross-purposes. The other point they will bring up is the 225 route, which runs to South Shore Hospital; a regional hospital and largest employer in the town. The town fought to get that route extended and it will impact patients, visitors and employees who may not have access to private transportation. With the development of Southfield, the town was planning at some point to extend further. This is the direction the administration will take in its comments.

Councilor Lacey asked if there is any study of the effect to other communities like Weymouth. Mr. Clarke responded that a significant portion of the South Shore will be impacted. There will be no service to Hull or Hingham. Quincy has some routes cut back. Mr. Clarke and Mr. Bezkorovainy will see if they can obtain data for similar communities.

Councilor Mathews noted that the second scenario proposed will result in bus traffic only to Weymouth Landing and from Braintree to Bicknell Square. The town will have service to an area of two miles at most, yet with an increased assessment to the town.

Councilor Conlon noted the issue should be fair and equitable treatment. The town should have the same treatment as the city of Boston in the matter of subsidized routes.

Councilor Mathews reported that the Council has received a letter from John Farrell,

management of Queen Anne's Gate, in opposition to the plan and requesting support to keep the 224 route intact.

Councilor Mathews suggested discussing strategy; whether to vote it out at Town Council Monday. There are two upcoming public hearings and none are being held in Weymouth. The hearing of February 8th is scheduled in Hingham and on the 15th in Quincy. Councilor Mathews cannot attend the Hingham public hearing and will go with the correspondence.

Councilor Lacey reported that Councilor Pap has mentioned he may be planning to attend both public hearings.

Councilor O'Connor noted that he is working with Senator Hedlund's office and talking with commuters. There is a lot of other information to the formulas that the T uses to determine the routes.

A MOTION was made by Councilor O'Connor to adopt and forward to the full Town Council the draft letter submitted by Council President Mathews, with the possibility of edits or additional information and was seconded by Councilor McDonald.
UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:15 PM; there being no further business, a MOTION was made by Councilor O'Connor to ADJOURN the Economic Development Committee meeting and was seconded by Councilor Lacey. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

Respectfully submitted by Mary Barker as Recording Secretary

Approved by Vice Chairman Thomas Lacey