

MINUTES OF HUMAN RELATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING

LANE TRANSIT DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

October 17, 2016

Pursuant to notice given to *The Register-Guard* for publication on October 13, 2016, and distributed to persons on the mailing list of the District, a meeting of the Lane Transit District Board of Directors Human Relations Committee was held at 2:30 p.m. on Monday, October 17, 2016, in the District's Board Room at 3500 E 17th Avenue, Eugene.

Present: Julie Grossman, Acting Chair
Gary Wildish
Aurora Jackson, General Manager
Roland Hoskins, Director of Administrative Services
David Collier, Human Relations Manager
Jeanne Schapper, Clerk of the Board

Absent: Gary Gillespie, Chair

Guest: Dwight Purdy, Thorp, Purdy, Jewett, Urness & Wilkinson P.C.

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL: Mr. Wildish and Ms. Grossman agreed that Ms. Grossman would chair the meeting in Chair Gillespie's absence. Ms. Grossman called the meeting to order at 2:32 p.m. and called the roll.

MOTION: APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Mr. Wildish moved approval of the April 18, 2016, minutes; Ms. Grossman provided the second.

VOTE: The motion was approved as follows:

AYES: Grossman, Wildish (2)
NAYS: None
ABSENT: Gillespie (1)

GENERAL MANAGER EVALUATION PROCESS: Mr. Hoskins turned the discussion of the general manager's 12-month evaluation to Mr. Purdy to lead. Per Mr. Gillespie's request, Mr. Purdy distributed a questionnaire to be used as a tool for questions to be posed to community members regarding the general manager's (GM) six-month goals. Ms. Grossman clarified that the questions reflect the Board's adopted work plan goals. She asked for additional clarification as to how the goals of the organization relate to the goals set for the general manager.

Mr. Jackson stated that Mr. Gillespie had asked her to comment on her goals relative to the goals set for the organization. Ms. Jackson referred to the Transit Board Members Handbook that was shared with the Board Human Relations (HR) Committee members in a separate e-mail. She referred to the section of the Handbook that discusses the process for evaluating a transit CEO. There are two pieces to the evaluation process: 1) How does a Board evaluate before; and 2) how does the Board set new performance standards? The book discusses policy-making as the

main role of governing bodies. During the last 12 months, the Board has put a lot of practices in motion that have improved the day-to-day operations of the organization, such as contractual commitments, CEO signature authority, and fare management. In addition, the Board and staff have really examined how LTD communicates with the community. Board and staff have also explored the distinctions between governing versus managing, some of which overlap. Board and staff been exploring how to function in a cohesive manner when the lines are blurred, and how staff receive direction that is not in conflict with the direction of the organization. Ms. Jackson expressed how impressed she was with how the recent Budget Committee meeting and October 10 work session were evolving. The Board really dug deeply into the details of the staff presentations, asking insightful questions involving communicating decisions with the public and impacts on the budget and service. The Board is getting the information needed to make informed decisions.

Regarding evaluating the organization versus the CEO, Ms. Jackson referred the group to the section of the Handbook that discusses evaluating the CEO. A systematic approach begins with agreements on the job description, priorities, and action plans. This is an opportunity when actions have been agreed upon cohesively, and new actions will be determined based on 12-month periods rather than six. Related to a CEO assessment tool, questionnaires should be completed without identifying each Board member participant individually. Questions should be organized by importance, area of responsibility, progress in achieving goals, while working with the Board in translating the vision and mission into realistic goals and objectives, creating an effective process for long- and short-range strategic planning. These goals are about continuing to build relationships with Board, community, and staff. APTA recommends that the questions also examine progress with recommending modification to operations that need adjustment; recommending revisions to the organization chart as appropriate; and leading the Board in developing efficiencies related to Board advisory committees, fiscal responsibility, service quality, and communications.

The Handbook, however, does not discuss how to engage employees in the process. It's not typically done, but certainly could be done. Ms. Jackson said that she believes that employees play a valuable role with providing input, but pertinent information regarding development of a transportation plan can be complex. What would be the focus of an employee survey: morale or organizational direction? How do we engage employees in the planning and organizational process? The organization is going through a lot of change. It's unlikely that the overwhelming response from employees is that they love the process. If employees' honest opinions are sought and the input is not used, Ms. Jackson expressed that she wants to make sure that employees feel respected through the process. If input is sought, it needs to be used. Ms. Jackson stated that she would rather receive a negative evaluation that reflects a good relationship with employees, than to go to work every day with employees who don't trust her. Building trust with employees makes an effective leader.

In response to a question from Mr. Wildish, Ms. Jackson said that these questions should be explored internally with the management team. The survey contains questions that work well for community leaders and community stakeholders who are effectively who the Board answers to. Ms. Jackson said that her job is too look out for the interests of the organization and the

community. She stated that her management and actions reflect that. It doesn't always feel good internally, but perhaps management should be asking employees for more input so that a smoother transition can be managed. There has been a noticeable change in how the work groups function since the reorganization. There are groups working together that would have otherwise worked in silos. There is a synergy being built, but there also is some uncertainty with roles and responsibilities, which staff are working through. It will be a bit messy until a new norm is established.

Ms. Grossman said that Ms. Jackson's approach seemed very insightful. With a new general manager, there will be change, and people don't like change. To ask outcome-based questions when the organization is in the eye of the storm of change is tough. Inevitably, change does not make a leader popular. Ms. Grossman stated her support for evaluating the change and if the change is helping the District reach its goals.

Mr. Wildish noted that the general manager answers to the Board and the Board answers to the 250,000 members of the public and community partners. Input from staff should go to the general manager to assess the information and to evaluate in terms she understands. In previous GM evaluations of which he participated, he said he found the input from community partners most helpful. The Board should not overstep its role. The APTA Handbook is of great benefit in helping the Board understand its role. He stated that he would not support conducting the GM evaluation in the same manner as done in the past; he did not recommend including a survey of staff.

Ms. Grossman reiterated that it is the GM's job to ensure maintaining employee morale through change; the Board's job is to ensure that the GM is engaging in activities that provide her with the tools for continuous organizational improvement to achieve the District's goals. The Board will then survey the outcomes of the organization moving forward together as a team, weathering the inevitable storms that come with change.

Ms. Jackson said that she is a staff member, thinks like a staff member, and performs the day-to-day tasks of a staff member; however, she reminds herself daily that, as the GM, she also needs to focus on the Board's vision every day. The community wants to know how the District is doing financially, how/if it is completing projects and managing service, and what direction it's going. Nonetheless, to be an effective leader, Ms. Jackson said that she has to consider employee morale. The community will feel the effects of employee morale in the way staff interact with them.

Mr. Purdy shared that he represents other government entities, and none of those agencies survey employees for the purpose of evaluating the CEO.

Ms. Grossman said that the questionnaire provided by Mr. Purdy was intended by Mr. Gillespie to be used as a tool to survey LTD employees. She clarified that the HR Committee has determined that the tool would not be used to survey employees, but that the Board emphasizes that the GM's relationships with staff is key to the success of the organization; that the Board's responsibility is to the community, the GM's responsibility is to the Board, and the staff's responsibility is to the GM.

Ms. Jackson said that she feels it's important that Mr. Gillespie is comfortable with the decisions that the HR Committee makes today in his absence.

Ms. Grossman added that it's important that the Board be clear that it's not that the Board doesn't care about staff morale or performance; in fact, the Board cares so much that it is abundantly clear where the lines are in order to create a better work environment. That's not the Board's role; staff go to the GM. She stated her belief that Mr. Gillespie does not want staff to receive a message that the Board doesn't care; rather, there needs to be a clear understanding of responsibility.

Ms. Jackson asked for clarification of her understanding of a goal: that the GM is to work with the Board to identify ways to include employees in the strategic planning process, and develop ways to improve communication regarding the Board's direction. Throughout the reorganization, the management team is exploring ways to consistently and effectively communicate change to employees. She referred to, "Develop ways to restore LTD to its former status as an employer of choice." There has been so much turnover. Management wants employees to know that we care that they work here and we care that they stay here – that they have a stable future here. Their stability leads to the success of the organization, and that's a value that the Board shares. That means that LTD offers competitive wages, which it does; that LTD has an organizational structure and culture in which communication moves freely throughout the various work areas in a productive manner; and that staff feel that LTD is a good place to work.

Mr. Wildish asked how progress on this goal would be measured. Ms. Jackson referred to TransitStat. One of the performance measures is a rate of turnover. HR staff may suggest that retirements are not the fault of management. Ms. Jackson countered that assertion with the desire to have employees who want to work longer; if staff retire early, that's not a good sign. Additional training has been added to the budget as an additional investment in employees. This allows for employee development to grow knowledge and expertise and place them in better positions for advancement. Staffing is at capacity and hasn't kept up with organizational growth. If people are overworked and don't feel appreciated, low morale results. The Board also approved the addition of staff to support the agency's major projects.

Ms. Grossman stated her approval of something measurable and specific in the general manager's work plan and outcomes that gets to relationship building between the general manager and staff.

Mr. Wildish suggested that one item that needs attention is the Board's need to understand its role. LTD's image is another important item. The way to measure success in this area is being out in the community and hearing comments from community members. Mr. Wildish said that he was scheduled to talk to a group who specifically asked that only Mr. Wildish give the talk without staff. This request was made to prevent the group from feeling like they were being preached to. To illustrate, Mr. Wildish said he heard a city councilor make a statement that, "LTD will do whatever they want." That speaks to image. To long- and short-range plans, Mr. Wildish allowed that the Finance Department has weathered extreme challenges, but the clouds seem to be parting. Another challenge coming is negotiation of the labor agreement.

Regarding the contract, Mr. Hoskins recommended that the Board be clear, intentional, knowledgeable, and aligned about its desired goals and outcomes as the District enters negotiations. As a rule, the process creates tension; but if the Board is strong and clear up front in support of the bargaining team, the process will be much smoother.

Mr. Wildish continued with the Board's understanding of its role as a policy-making body. The general manager should strive to keep the Board apprised of current affairs. The Board should understand and be interested in the benefit of LTD spending an additional \$1 million on service, for example. The Board needs to understand the return on investment of its decisions.

Ms. Jackson explored this further in terms of her goals. Some investments are measured quantitatively in that the investment in the particular service will provide so much ridership; it is qualitatively measured in that there is now a new clinic for low-income citizens, an outcome of which may not provide the return on investment in terms of numbers, but is a result of the Board's decision that it's the right thing to do. These things should be explained to the Board in terms of what the community's response would be. This can be measured, but it should be stated up front as to what is being measured.

Mr. Purdy stated that at six months, the Committee developed goals for the general manager, which were adopted by the Board. The Committee needs to also develop goals for the GM's next 12 months.

In response, Ms. Grossman said that one option would be for the GM to respond to the six-month goals set previously. After reviewing the GM's response, the HR Committee would begin assembling goals for the next 12 months, including the GM's input. The list would then be forwarded to the full Board for its review and input.

Mr. Purdy clarified that the HR Committee's recommendations regarding the GM evaluation would be reviewed by the Board in executive session, with the recommended goals adopted in open session.

Ms. Grossman recommended receiving input from the community, which were, in effect, who the Board reports to, regarding the survey questions submitted by counsel. Mr. Wildish recalled the same process used in prior evaluations was found to be very valuable.

Ms. Grossman expressed that using the same survey tool with the same questions to the same people year after year would provide benchmarks for measuring achievement of the stated goals. It would also help with community perception that LTD is asking these questions. Mr. Wildish agreed with the plan to ask the Board members to participate by contacting three or four community members each and asking some of the questions on the survey tool. This could be done under Board Committee Reports at the October regular meeting.

The Committee asked staff to update the contact list from the prior GM's most recent evaluation and provide those names to the Board members at the October 19 regular meeting. The members would then provide to Ms. Schapper the names of individuals they wish to contact. Ms. Schapper

would divide the list of contacts among the Board members, taking into consideration their individual preferences.

Mr. Purdy asked the Committee members to cull the number of questions his office provided down to five or so. In response, Ms. Grossman chose Nos. 1, 2, 5, 6, and 12. She stated her preference would be to try to get responses from 20 individuals. Mr. Wildish agreed with Ms. Grossman's recommendation. The Committee members agreed that the format of the tool, with a scale of one to ten, would work well. In addition to the five questions, interviewees would be given an opportunity to add anecdotal comments, which could provide additional insight.

Mr. Purdy agreed to send a revised survey tool for sharing with the Board at the October regular Board meeting, with the deadline to return all surveys to Ms. Schapper by the November regular meeting. Survey results will be compiled and shared with the HR Committee meeting at its next meeting on December 5. The HR Committee will share its recommendations with the full Board during an executive session at the December Board meeting. The December Board meeting may be moved up one week, which could still work.

Mr. Purdy clarified that the HR Committee will have the general manager's stated goals for the next 12 months, and her responses in meeting the goals set for the current six months, to be discussed during an executive session at the December 5 Committee meeting. The compiled survey responses also will be provided under separate confidential cover to the Committee members prior to the meeting. There will still be an additional 45 days or so before the January 31 GM 12-month evaluation deadline.

NEXT MEETING: There will be no meeting in November; the next meeting will be held on Monday, December 5, 5:00 p.m. Mr. Gillespie works until 3 p.m., so he prefers a later afternoon meeting.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 11:01 a.m.

Recording Secretary