Community Advisory Committee Minutes May 9, 2024

I. **Call to Order**

- Meeting called to order by Dr. Joseph Sopko at 9:02 am.

II. **Roll Call**

- Roll call conducted by Dr. Joseph Sopko. All committee members present, along with emeritus member Ron Jackson and GCRTA employees Kimberly Wright, Joseph Clark, and Samantha Pechkurow. A quorum was declared.

III. **Certification**

- Certification regarding notice of committee meeting read by Albert Johnson.

IV. **Approval of Minutes**

- February 22, 2024 committee meeting minutes were approved by committee vote. All voted in favor, and passed unanimously, with no abstentions.

V. **New Business**

I. **Subcommittee Reports:**

i. **ADA Advisory Subcommittee Report:**

- Kim Wright reported on the ADA subcommittee meeting held on April 30th, discussing survey wording and emergency phone accessibility at Brook Park Rapids Station.

- Van Aken project update pending. Future meetings to be in-person with a virtual option.

II. **Advocacy and Education Subcommittee Report:**

- Joseph Clark reported on scheduling issues due to a lack of responses; the Advocacy and Education meeting is to be scheduled by the end of the month.

III. **Rules Subcommittee Report:**

- Albert Johnson discussed proposed revisions to CAC's Operating Guidelines. Further discussion is needed before bringing updates to the committee.

II. **Discussion and Vote Public Comments/Input:**

- Dr. Joseph Sopko communicated scenarios where public comments could lead to administrative challenges and past disruptions, highlighting concerns about the effectiveness and purpose of public comments in CAC meetings.

- Paul Meissner agreed with Dr. Joseph Sopko, expressing concerns about the potential manipulation and disruption from direct public input. Suggested that management should direct issues to the CAC when necessary.

- Johnny Brewington suggested allowing public comments on agenda items with certain criteria and time limits, emphasizing the importance of public input. Discussed the practicality of written comments and the need for ADA accessibility.

- Alicia Howerton shared her perspective as a blind person, agreeing with the need for written comments and cautioning against disruptive public comments.

- Loh emphasized the need for multiple channels for public input, such as web forms and voicemail, and the importance of promoting these options. Suggested these methods should be ADA accessible and available 24/7.

- Ron Jackson discussed the legal implications of public comments, time limits, and the necessity of allowing public input while maintaining order. Highlighted the changes in public meetings due to legal developments and the need to adapt.

- Cole Ware proposed reviewing existing public feedback received through other RTA channels to better understand the issues. Supported creating an online form for public input specific to the CAC.

- Charles Kennick shared it's important to note that the CAC is very different from a City Council or the board of trustees, where again, we have advisory power, as you mentioned, and that we are a volunteer organization that is selected by the board to represent different aspects of the community that the board sees fit. I think using already established forms, the myriad of ways that the public can provide their input on the services that the RTA provide that are already in place.

- Jonathan Sieck expresses a cautious approach towards the handling of public comments by the newly formed committee. He acknowledges the lack of experience within the group and suggests implementing basic and structured methods for public engagement. Emphasizing the difficulty of reinstating limitations once removed, he advocates for a careful progression.

- Dr. Joseph Sopko summarized the discussion, noting the consensus for public input through non-disruptive means such as written or voicemail submissions.

- Brian Gibbons clarified that the goal is not to eliminate public comment but to manage it through appropriate channels like web forms and voicemail.

- Dr. Joseph Sopko raised the motion to proceed with having a voicemail option and a web form option for submission of public comment to the CAC, retaining the no public comment element for in-person meetings, but allowing public attendance and invitation-based comments. Johnny Brewington made the motion, and Cole Ware seconded. All voted in favor, and passed unanimously, with no abstentions.

VI. **Open Discussion**

- Albert Johnson provided an update on the development of a SharePoint dashboard for the committee, addressing concerns about email addresses and accessibility.
- Loh raised previous concerns about the necessity of GCRTA email addresses for accessing the dashboard. Highlighted accessibility issues with SharePoint for users like Alicia Howerton who rely on Jaws software.
- Albert Johnson confirmed that no GCRTA email addresses will be provided but assured the development of credentials for accessing the SharePoint dashboard.
- Alicia Howerton noted accessibility challenges with SharePoint and offered to inquire about alternative communication dashboards with the IT department.
- Albert Johnson acknowledged the accessibility issues with SharePoint and discussed its integration with the Microsoft 365 suite.
- Paul Meissner asked about the status of Next Connect and its relevance given the availability of real-time departures on the GCRTA website.
- Albert Johnson indicated uncertainty about the status of Next Connect and will follow up with the internal department regarding the status of Next Connect.

VII. **Closing Remarks**

- No additional remarks.

VIII. **Adjournment**

- Dr. Joseph Sopko took a motion to adjourn the meeting. The committee unanimously approved to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 10:03 am.