



*The COMET **Board of Directors Meeting Minutes** are prepared and presented in summary form. Audio recordings of the meetings are on file at The COMET and are part of the approved minutes. If you would like to hear the recording from the meeting, please contact Paige Jernigan at [pjernigan@thecometsc.gov](mailto:pjernigan@thecometsc.gov).*

*Per SC Code of Laws, Title 30, Chapter 4, Section 30-4-80 - All public bodies shall notify persons or organizations, local news media, or such other news media as may request notification of the times, dates, places, and agenda of all public meetings, whether scheduled, rescheduled, or called, and the efforts made to comply with this requirement must be noted in the minutes of the meetings. The COMET complied with the notification of this meeting on **Friday, January 22, 2021 at 3:15 P.M.***

**Central Midlands Regional Transit Authority  
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, January 27, 2021 – 12:00 P.M.  
3613 Lucius Road, Columbia, SC 29201 – Conference Room A**

**Members Present:**

Ron Anderson\*  
Joyce Dickerson\*  
Michael Green\*  
Representative Leon  
Howard\*  
Derrick Huggins\*  
Skip Jenkins\*  
Christopher Lawson\*  
Lill Mood\* (joined the meeting at  
12:07 A.M.)  
Dr. Robert Morris\*  
Andy Smith\*  
Debbie Summers\*  
Allison Terracio\*  
William "B.J." Unthank  
Barry Walker\*

**Guests Present:**

Pam Baker\*, Attorney, Burr & Forman Law Firm  
Bob Coble  
Frannie Heizer\*, Attorney, Burr & Forman Law Firm

\*indicates participation by phone

**Members Absent:**

Stephen Cain  
John Furgess  
Carolyn Gleaton  
Al Koon



Geraldene Robinson

**The COMET Staff Present:**

John Andoh, Executive Director/CEO

Rosalyn Andrews, Director of Finance/CFO

Leroy DesChamps, Director of Administration Operations/COO

Tanisha Gibbons, Interim Customer Experience & Contract Compliance Manager

Eric Harris, Planning & Development Specialist

Michelle Ransom, Grants and Regional Coordination Manger

**1. CALL TO ORDER AND DETERMINATION OF QUORUM**

The meeting started at 12:01 P.M. with the determination of a quorum.

**2. ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

**Motion:**

A motion was made by Mr. Anderson and seconded by Mr. Smith to adopt the agenda.

**Approved:** Huggins\*, Smith\*, Terracio\*, Dickerson\*, Anderson\*, Lawson\*, Morris\*

**Absent:** Furgess, Gleaton, Howard, Mood

**Motion passed.**

**3. MIDLANDS TRANSIT RIDERS ASSOCIATION UPDATE**

No representative was present.

**4. CALL TO THE PUBLIC**

No one signed up for call to the public.

**5. CONSENT CALENDAR**

**Motion:**

A motion was made by Mr. Anderson to adopt the Consent Calendar.

Mr. Andoh explained that Item B of the Consent Calendar is not ready yet.

**Amended Motion:** A motion was made by Mr. Anderson and seconded by Mr. Smith to approve the Consent Agenda, absent Item B.

**Approved:** Huggins\*, Smith\*, Terracio\*, Dickerson\*, Anderson\*, Lawson\*, Morris\*

**Absent:** Mood, Gleaton, Howard, Furgess

**Motion passed.**

A. APPROVAL OF THE DECEMBER 19, 2020 SPECIAL BOARD MINUTES

B. APPROVAL OF THE JANUARY 13, 2021 SPECIAL BOARD MINUTES



- C. FINANCE COMMITTEE: NASHVILLE BUS REVIEW AND ELECTRIC BUSES
- D. FINANCE COMMITTEE: UPDATE OF CMRTA POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
- E. FINANCE COMMITTEE: TUTORIAL REMBURSEMENT
- F. SERVICE COMMITTEE: RATP DEV KEY PERSONNEL
- G. INTERMODAL AD-HOC COMMITTEE: BUDGET REQUEST
- H. APPROVAL OF THE INVOICE PAYMENT SELECTION LISTING ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2020

## 6. DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS

### A. ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

**Motion:**

Dr. Morris nominated Mr. Huggins for chair, and Mr. Anderson seconded.

**Approved:** Smith\*, Terracio\*, Dickerson\*, Anderson\*, Lawson\*, Morris\*

**Abstain:** Huggins\*

**Absent:** Mood, Gleaton, Howard, Furgess

**Motion passed.**

**Motion:**

Mr. Huggins nominated Ms. Terracio for vice chair, and Ms. Dickerson seconded.

**Approved:** Huggins\*, Smith\*, Terracio\*, Dickerson\*, Anderson\*, Lawson\*, Morris\*

**Absent:** Mood, Gleaton, Howard, Furgess

**Motion passed.**

*Ms. Mood joined the meeting 12:07 P.M.*

**Motion:**

Mr. Huggins nominated Mr. Lawson for secretary, and Ms. Dickerson seconded.

**Approved:** Huggins\*, Smith\*, Terracio\*, Dickerson\*, Anderson\*, Lawson\*, Morris\*, Mood\*

**Absent:** Gleaton, Howard, Furgess

**Motion passed.**

Mr. Andoh confirmed to the Board that the new Chair of the Central Midlands Regional Transit Authority is Mr. Huggins, the new Vice Chair is Ms. Terracio, the new Secretary is Mr. Lawson, and Treasurer will remain Mr. Smith.

### B. KEY PERSONNEL APPOINTMENTS

Ms. Mood said she had presented a motion earlier to the Board to change the process for our review of key personnel positions for the contractor. She said she would like to withdraw that motion and ask the Board to allow the Service Committee to examine our policy and process for that area and discuss it and bring any recommendations for change back to the Board at a later meeting.



It was determined that this item is in the form of a motion and should be moved to the “motion period” later in the agenda.

### C. SECURITY AT COMET CENTRAL

Mr. Andoh explained why this is a Discussion and Action Item. He said the Board of Directors meeting in November resulted in a decision that this matter of COMET Central security should be discussed with the Service Committee. The subsequent Service Committee discussion regarding COMET security resulted in a tied vote to determine whether or not the security guards at COMET Central should carry firearms. Because it was a tie vote in the Service Committee, Mr. Andoh said this matter is being brought back to the Board without a recommendation, and we will need the Board to give staff direction on whether or not the security guards should carry firearms.

Ms. Mood added that at the Service Committee, four of the five members were present, and we discussed arming the security guards. She stated that all were in favor of arming with handcuffs, batons, mace, pepper spray, and the only disagreement was over whether guards should carry guns.

Ms. Mood said two Service Committee members felt there was too much risk to the security guards who may be alone at the transit center late and this concern was shared by the security company as well. She said the two members who were not in favor of guards carrying guns were concerned that an unexpected threat may cause use of a firearm that could be resolved with a non-lethal weapon instead. She said the Committee was influenced by many viral videos of authorities using guns where it is not necessary. She said the Committee considered the fact that there were no situations in the past at COMET Central, where there was need for use of a lethal weapon.

Mr. Huggins asked for input from the Service Standards Committee before opening up to general questions. Hearing none, he asked Mr. Andoh for a history of how well we have done, without weapons, over the last three (3) or four (4) years.

Mr. Andoh explained that prior to his arrival at The COMET, there had been difficulties with criminal activity at Laurel and Sumter, yielding multiple complaints from the downtown community and our passengers. He said that when we started to add additional security guards, police officers, and Yellow Shirt Ambassadors to COMET Central, the criminal activity significantly decreased. He said that as of today, because of the law enforcement partnerships we have with City Center Partnership, City of Columbia, as well as our contract security force, we have been able to mitigate any concerns quickly.



Mr. Andoh said that as of this fiscal year, as an effort to ensure that we are not overspending on security, we reduced the security budget to having one guard at COMET Central to work in partnership with City of Columbia police as a second security guard there, as well as continued use of the Yellow Shirt Ambassador and the RATP Dev Road Supervisor. He said that partnership has allowed us to continue to maintain good order at COMET Central. He added that all of the police as well as security are armed with guns as well as batons, mace, and other tools necessary to ensure the order at COMET Central.

Mr. Huggins asked for questions from the Board.

Dr. Morris said that since things are going well now without lethal weapons and considering how many problems we have throughout the country; he thinks adding guns would be a real detriment to The COMET. He said he certainly would not want to see The COMET get involved with an unskilled, untrained officer who is carrying a lethal weapon and kills someone.

Mr. Huggins asked Mr. Andoh to clarify what weapons are currently being carried, over the last three (3) or four (4) years.

Mr. Andoh said police officers and security guards have guns, batons, and mace. He said Yellow Shirt Ambassadors only have a radio.

Dr. Morris asked whether security guards currently have lethal weapons. Mr. Andoh clarified that security has had lethal weapons since July 1, 2015. Dr. Morris asked whether security could call police officers for backup. Mr. Andoh replied that they could, and he said there is already a police officer onsite during the operating hours of COMET Central.

Dr. Morris said he doesn't think we should change what we're doing if it's working, but that we should remain cognizant of the fact that there are too many problems throughout the country, and The COMET certainly doesn't want to get into a situation where we have someone shot or killed. He said he supports whatever we are presently doing.

Mr. Green asked Mr. Andoh what the average response time for City of Columbia Police Department is. Mr. Andoh replied that it is literally within minutes because we pay for an off-duty police officer to be on the property at COMET Central. He said that if, for whatever reason, that off-duty police officer is not available because the Police Department is not able to get one, lately it has been about three (3) to five (5) minutes because they have a substation next door to COMET Central.

Mr. Green asked whether the armed security guards have to be trained by SLED in order to carry a weapon. Mr. Andoh confirmed that they do. He said we beefed up the



contract requirements, this go-around, to have the contractor give a detailed training plan with a curriculum, and then they need to sign off with our contract compliance and customer experience manager, to show that that security guard has a proper certification to carry a weapon Mr. Andoh said this allows us to monitor that performance on an ongoing basis, as the previous contract did not allow for that, under Transdev.

Mr. Green said it is his understanding that if someone is intoxicated due to meth use, the taser would not be effective against them. Mr. Andoh confirmed that is correct, and he said a lot of the activity that occurs at COMET Central could be of a psychiatric nature, which sometimes requires the use of the baton or handcuffs and extra reinforcement from either the police or another security guard.

Mr. Anderson noted that Mr. Andoh had said the contractor must provide written documentation of certification of the guards. Mr. Anderson asked Mr. Andoh whether that has yet occurred. Mr. Andoh replied that we've not executed the new contract yet, so no. He said we are working with Legal to finalize that contract, but before they engage, we will do those actions.

*Representative Howard joined the meeting at 12:17 P.M.*

Mr. Huggins suggested that a Board member could frame, as a motion, Dr. Morris' indication of continuing to monitor what we are doing.

**Motion:**

A motion was made by Dr. Morris and seconded by Mr. Anderson to continue to do what we are doing now with security and provide as much support that we possibly can.

**Approved:** Huggins\*, Smith\*, Terracio\*, Dickerson\*, Anderson\*, Howard\*, Morris\*

**Nay:** Mood\*, Lawson\*

**Absent:** Gleaton, Furgess

**Motion passed.**

**7. MOTION PERIODS**

**Motion:** A motion was made by Ms. Mood and seconded by Mr. Anderson, that the Board ask the Service Committee to review our process of reviewing key personnel appointments from the contractor and to make a recommendation to the Board for any changes that they see as helpful.

**Approved:** Huggins\*, Smith\*, Terracio\*, Mood\*, Dickerson\*, Anderson\*, Lawson\*, Howard\*, Morris\*

**Absent:** Gleaton, Furgess

**Motion passed.**

**8. PROGRESS REPORTS – INFORMATION ONLY**



#### A. CHAIR REPORT

Mr. Huggins told the Board members and Advisory Board members how much he appreciates their time. He said he knows they have taken a lot of time over the last thirty (30) days, but we are trying to be efficient and effective to get the information out and have dialogue, previously, to ensure that these Board meetings continue to be productive.

#### B. COMMITTEE CHAIRS UPDATE

##### I. COVID-19 AD-HOC COMMITTEE UPDATES

Mr. DesChamps said the COVID-19 Ad-Hoc Committee met January 22, 2021 and at that time, the Governor had extended, through executive order, the State of Emergency. He added that President Biden had signed an executive order, requiring masks at all federal facilities and when interacting with all federal employees. Mr. DesChamps said The COMET continues to operate with a COVID-19 Policy which requires masks and social distancing on all buses, including entering the bus from the rear, as we are still fare free. He said food delivery is also continuing.

Mr. DesChamps said The COMET and DHEC are still maintaining a kiosk at COMET Central, Wednesday through Friday from 7:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M. and 2:00 P.M. to 6:00 P.M., and on Saturdays from 10:00 A.M. through 5:00 P.M. He added that next week, here at the Administrative Building, we will offer COVID testing to all staff members on Tuesday, February 2, from 8:00 A.M. until 10:30 A.M., and then on Wednesday from 1:00 P.M. to 3:00 P.M. He said Maintenance has continued to install barriers on our buses, and that project should be finished in late March or early April.

Mr. DesChamps added that The COMET will work with providers from retail, pharmacies, and organizations, where we will be entertaining Take The COMET to Vaccinations. He said our marketing and public information manager is in the process of having a marketing plan that will promote that to the public.

Mayor Walker asked if we can revisit our COVID protocols and our fare-free policy in a future meeting.

Mr. Andoh said the Finance Committee has studied this matter, and we anticipate that after driver barriers are all installed around late February, the Finance Committee will make a recommendation to resume fare collection in March.

Mr. Andoh said that The COMET is working with city police to ensure riders are not taking advantage of free rides to mitigate protocol concerns.

##### II. INTERMODAL COMMITTEE UPDATES

Mr. Huggins requested to defer this item to Executive Session.

##### III. SERVICE COMMITTEE UPDATES



Ms. Mood said the Service Committee had an in-depth presentation regarding where we are with the long-term planning process and it was extremely informative and thought-provoking information. She said the Service Committee will encourage the Board to schedule a workshop, so all the Board members have that in-depth understanding of the analysis that has been done, and what choices we will be confronted with in shaping any changes in our transit system. She said it will take an investment of time and attention that would be impossible to fit into a regular Board meeting.

#### IV. FINANCE COMMITTEE UPDATES

Mr. Smith said Finance Committee met twice since the last Board meeting. He said most of the items on our agenda have been addressed already today for the Consent Calendar and fare resumption. He said the biggest undertaking last month was an update of CMRTA Policies and Procedures, in anticipation of the upcoming FTA review. He said there are a lot of things staff need to update and get consistent, in preparation for that. He said the second meeting was only to look at those items, and everything was examined closely, and we came away with all of our questions answered and those updates implemented. He commended the Finance staff again for the GFOA Award and Budget Award.

Dr. Morris suggested the Board learn from what the Finance Committee did at the last meeting. He said that when it comes to discussing policies, it usually takes a long time, and we should consider a special meeting for policies, and it would have to be three or four hours.

#### V. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Mr. Huggins, Ms. Terracio, and Mr. Smith all said they had no update.

#### C. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/CEO UPDATE

##### I. COMMUNITY OUTREACH REPORT

Mr. Andoh said he e-mailed the Executive Director Update with the Community Outreach Report for review on the activities of The COMET staff.

##### II. REVIEW OF BOARD MOTIONS

Mr. Andoh said the Board packet contains a list of the outstanding motions that still exist.

#### 9. EXECUTIVE SESSION

##### **Motion:**

A motion was made by Mr. Anderson and seconded by Ms. Terracio to go into Executive Session.

**Approved:** Huggins\*, Smith\*, Terracio\*, Dickerson\*, Anderson\*, Lawson\*, Howard\*, Morris\*

**Absent:** Gleaton, Furgess





No vote: Mood  
**Motion passed.**

*The Board entered Executive Session at 12:38 P.M.*

**Motion:** A motion was made by Mr. Anderson and seconded by Ms. Dickerson to leave Executive Session.

**Approved:** Huggins\*, Terracio\*, Lawson\*, Mood\*, Smith\*, Dickerson\*, Anderson\*, Morris\*

**Absent:** Gleaton, Howard, Furgess

**Motion passed.**

*The Board exited Executive Session at 1:23 P.M.*

Mr. Huggins stated, on the record, that no votes were taken in Executive Session.

**Motion:** A motion was made by Ms. Mood and seconded by Ms. Dickerson that the Board authorize Mr. Andoh to enter into a working relationship with a commercial realtor to further identify an appropriate site for a future intermodal transit center.

Mr. Anderson stated that he recused himself from this discussion and vote.

**Approved:** Huggins\*, Terracio\*, Lawson\*, Mood\*, Dickerson\*

**Abstain:** Morris

**Recused:** Anderson

**Absent:** Smith, Gleaton, Howard, Furgess

**Motion passed.**

## **10. ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion:** A motion was made by Dr. Morris and seconded by Ms. Mood to adjourn.

**Approved:** Huggins\*, Terracio\*, Lawson\*, Mood\*, Dickerson\*, Anderson\*, Morris\*

**Absent:** Smith, Gleaton, Howard, Furgess

**Motion passed.**

*Meeting adjourned at 1:26 P.M.*

CENTRAL MIDLANDS REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY

Adopted this \_\_\_\_\_, 2021

Prepared by:

---



Reviewed by:

---

Paige Jernigan, Administrative and Customer  
Service Specialist

Approved by:

*Christopher Lawson*

---

Christopher Lawson, Secretary