

MINUTES OF THE THIRTEENTH MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE NATIONAL ROADS AUTHORITY, HELD AT THE PWD OFFICES, NORTH SOUND ROAD, GRAND CAYMAN 16 June, 2005 AT 3:00PM

PRESENT:

J. L. Hurlston	-	Chairman
Troy Whittaker	-	Deputy Chairman
Debra Welcome		
Justin Woods		
Gina Ebanks-Petrie		
Marilyn Conolly		
Colford Scott		
Edward Howard		
Michael Barnett		
Michele Rochester	-	Executive Secretary

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

An apology for absence was received from Carson Ebanks.

WELCOME:

The Chairman welcomed the new Executive Secretary, Michele Rochester, on board and introduced her to the other Board Members. He expressed the hope that Ms. Rochester's position would not evolve into that of a Girl Friday but that it instead becomes a type of Secretariat, reflecting the description stated in the NRA legislation.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING:

Mr. Hurlston stated that the minutes of the previous meeting (19 May) had been circulated and assumed read. After brief reviewing, and with no amendments, a motion for their adoption was moved by the Chairman and seconded by Mr. Whittaker. The motion was carried and the minutes adopted.

MATTERS ARISING:

1. Ministry Liaison:

The Chairman stated that he had attempted to meet with the Minister, but it was decided to wait since ministerial responsibilities will change within a few weeks and a meeting after 1 July should be more effective. Mr. Hurlston therefore proposed that Mr. Scott should invite the new post-1 July Minister to attend the next Board of Directors' meeting.

2. Publicity:

- (a) **Rotary Club:** Mr. Hurlston reported that he had made a brief presentation to the Rotary Club (Sunrise), the final text of which he had emailed to Mr. Scott. He requested that Mr. Scott pass this on to Ms. Rochester for permanent recording, but advised the Board that he had explained the legislative framework of NRA, its operations and functions, and had listed current NRA projects. He noted that one of several questions from the floor dealt with "malfunction junctions." A first of that type of forum for the NRA, the talk had been well received, the audience enthusiastic.

(b) **West Bay Bypass Project:** The Chairman noted that today's (16 June) *Caymanian Compass* contained a favourable article on the continuation of the 1.6 mile West Bay project which is slated to cost \$M12 over an eighteen-month period. He thanked all who had contributed to this well-written article.

3. Ritz-Carlton Overpass/Water Authority:

Mr. Whittaker reported that he attended a meeting with the CPA regarding the Ritz-Carlton's overpass. The meeting was requested to view the design before the CPA gives approval to start construction.

Mr. Scott stated that he believes the Ritz-Carlton has applied to have their licence changed. They have also applied to have the service road upgraded until it is necessary to elevate it, but that the NRA opposes this because of the Hyatt experience; instead, the Ritz-Carlton service road should serve as a bridge over the main road—and it does *not* need to be perpendicular. The most important aspect is the finished elevation of the main road and by law there is a separation of the riding surface of the main road and the underside of the bridge.

The Chairman referred to a memorandum from the Water Authority that had been mentioned at an earlier meeting. The memo suggested that the NRA might want to take on more of a coordinating role in relation to issues of national record. The matter had been referred through the Ministry to the Legal Department. Recently-received advice from Legal (copied to the Water Authority) concluded that whilst there is no expressed obligation or authority under the law for the NRA to assume the responsibility of keeping a register of underground location of cables, wires, mains, etc., it appears that as an "administrator and protector of public roads," there is an implied obligation and the NRA should undertake the responsibility.

Mrs. Ebanks-Petrie suggested that in order to avoid another media 'issue,' Mr. Scott could write to the Director of Planning outlining NRA concerns re overpass issues. Mr. Scott responded that he has just received the minutes of the latest CPA meeting and that they will be checked for content prior to the next NRA meeting.

4. Island Paving:

Mr. Howard reported that at the last utilities meeting, apologies had been received for water main breaks. He noted that, due to other obligations, Island Paving is not currently working on NRA projects, but management has asked whether the NRA would take over responsibility for trench work, and then invoice Water Authority accordingly.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Road-user Charges Concept:

The Chairman presented the concept of road-user charges which he said had arisen for two reasons: one, because the law allows the NRA, after giving three months notice and consulting with the Minister, to institute user charges. Secondly (and coincidentally), a UK newspaper article indicated that the newly elected Labour Government was considering instituting a specific type of user charge for drivers in and around London. Both had led the Chairman to ponder whether such a concept might be applicable to a small country like Cayman. He spoke with Mr. Scott, who suggested that a future technical presentation on the subject might be made. Queried on presentation readiness, Mr. Howard indicated that more time was needed; road pricing on a whole is complex, involving toll and social (affordability) issues. A report will be prepared covering some five or six options at which Cayman can look.

2. Intersections/Junctions:

Referring to two key road junctions—the one near Mango Tree Restaurant (Malfunction Junction”), the second at Smith Road/Airport Road near Jose’s gas station—Mr. Hurlston stated that they bear the brunt of public criticism and need enhanced efficiency. He suggested consulting with engineers to obtain their input.

Mr. Howard suggested a three-way roundabout at Mango Tree as a possible solution, provided sufficient land is available. Mr. Scott noted that Civil Aviation Authority requirements must be considered but that engineering-wise, a roundabout is possible and if implemented would also provide effective and low-cost PR.

Mr. Howard noted that similar issues applied to the Smith Road junction and that the Police report a high incidence of motor accidents there. The Police have been asked to supply supporting evidence for study by the NRA. The Chairman suggested seeking an inexpensive solution to make the junction user-friendlier.

Mr. Whittaker mentioned the North Sound Road/Portland Road junction which he said has been identified by A L Thompson’s as excessively busy and therefore problematic. He said Thompson’s has offered to pay for the work if a solution can be found and the company has been asked to put their concerns and offer **in writing** for NRA discussion. The Board agreed that as is, the intersection is dangerous.

3. Flooding:

The Chairman noted recent talk-show criticism regarding flooding in the Prospect area, particularly Marina and Prospect drives. He noted that some experimental steps are being taken in this subdivision but that the problems arise from design faults and are not exclusive to road development and maintenance, since they cut across all infrastructural development. While solutions are not easily found to these inherited 25-year-old problems, the NRA *is* attempting to find them, in keeping with the public’s expectations. He suggested that the Minister could be asked to issue a statement re the complaints, reinforcing the message that rectifying old flooding problems is difficult, but providing assurance that concerns are not being ignored and encouraging the public to grasp the larger picture. The Chairman added that if the NRA remains silent on this issue, then public concerns may gain credibility. He said that the Authority should be proactive, and that in fact the Minister’s statement should actually be prepared by the NRA, on his behalf.

Mr. Howard stated that roads in Prospect were substandard structures and the area’s dense population compounds the problem. Recent heavy rainfall has also increased the number of potholes, particularly around the Prospect Drive/Holly Drive roundabout. He noted that Peter and Paul are assessing ways to try and improve the drainage on Marina Drive. Almond Avenue is also being looked at in an attempt to devise a workable drainage system, although it may be necessary to consult the Planning Department in this respect.

He said that post-Ivan, flooding exists where it had never previously occurred, citing Willie Farrington Drive and the Ed Bush Playing Field as examples. He also said that the low-cost housing scheme in West Bay has added to the problem. Digging new wells may provide an immediate solution but additional building may reactivate the flooding situation.

Ms. Conolly proposed a one-day conference which, she suggested, could be an 'event,' generating positive publicity for the NRA. The Chairman responded that it was first necessary to establish an NRA platform, a technical, politically acceptable concept which would allay public fears concerning the need for corrective action re road solutions. This might emerge from a mixture of short-, medium- and long-term strategies, of which a one-day conference may well fit into the medium-term range, acknowledging public concerns.

Mrs. Ebanks-Petrie enquired whether the problem/situation with road conditions had been already brought to the attention of the Cabinet, in her view, an essential first move. Ms. Conolly indicated that the previous Cabinet was so advised and the Chairman repeated that there are plans in place to debrief the new Minister after 1 July.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

1. Scholarship:

Referring to the scholarship offer for S. 23(1) of the FOI Law 2015, Ms. Conolly indicated that the issue still requires resolution. The Chairman suggested that S. 23(1) fund the first semester herself (estimated cost-US\$14,000 per semester) and that she should understand that NRA aid would *not* comprise a full scholarship from a single source, particularly since her interests lie in liberal arts. Mr. Barnett stressed the need to look at available funds in the administrative budget and Mrs. Ebanks-Petrie suggested that the Board check costs elsewhere.

The Board agreed that while the NRA is willing to help S. 23(1) the Authority cannot establish a precedent and absorb the full cost. The Chairman stated that S. 23(1) should be written and that the letter should explain everything in full. It should emphasise that she is not being let down and should be clearly detailed to prevent any misunderstanding and the tone should be polite. He said that Mr. Howard should write the letter to S. 23(1).

Ms. Conolly further noted that a scholarship should only be offered if S. 23(1) entered a study programme approved by the NRA, one that would equip her with the necessary skills to work with the NRA. The Authority needs to be very specific regarding what it will pay for and the terms re academic performance, continuance in the programme, and the length of S. 23(1) bond must also be specific.

2. Project Proposal

Mr. Howard reported a discussion with Mr. Renard Moxam regarding a joint venture to refurbish a downtown building between Fort Street Market and the Kirk House Building. Parking issues are to be addressed but Mr. Moxam is proposing a seven-storey car park. The matter has not yet reached Planning.

3. Staff:

Ms. Conolly said that a few NRA employees have approached her individually regarding the NRA's restructuring. She noted that the Ministry is also proceeding with a major restructuring process at PWD, resulting in a rise in PWD staff morale. Ms. Conolly stated that there are suggestions that morale issues are carrying over to the NRA, such as in the area of outstanding promotions. Employees complain that nothing positive is happening at the NRA. Another question from anxious employees is: "Given the political changes, is the NRA here to stay?" but Ms Conolly stated that she believes the real and underlying question is, "What is happening to the *structure* of the NRA *at below-management levels*?"

Mr. Hurlston observed that people will always question and complain and some NRA employees have also approached him, from a different angle. However, he redirects them to management but his advice to the Board is that employee concerns should be handled and alleviated at the management level.

Mr. Scott noted that the situation is difficult, particularly in the area of increments which were frozen in 2000, and the proposed replacement of the increment system with an appraisal model, about which little has been officially said/explained to employees across the board.

Mr. Hurlston stated that he believes salary costs are likely to be prohibitive, but meanwhile, management could strive to create a friendly, welcoming environment. The compound could also be tidied up to create the appropriate image for employees.

4. Annex:

The Chairman requested an update regarding office accommodation facilities. Mr. Scott responded that he had moved into the annex the previous day (15 June) and that Ms. Rochester had also done so. Mr. Barnett is to move shortly and the HR and accounting persons later on next month.

Senior Engineer and some other management staff remain housed in two trailers (since April) and some accounting technicians are still upstairs in the PWD building or in shelters at the rear of the compound. It is likely to take six to twelve months to resolve accommodation problems, some of which are serious, Mr. Scott stated, and are hampering some of the programmes the NRA plans to put in place.

5. Financial News:

Mr. Barnett reported that the budget summary has been circulated: The NRA remains within budget and should stay so, with only one month to go. He has started looking at 2005-2006 issues. The Chairman pointed out that the Authority's budget is not inhibited by Cabinet, but Mr. Barnett responded that even so, the budget cannot be finalised until Cabinet has approved the figures he has submitted to them.

The Chairman concluded that in his view, the NRA has done remarkably well, despite Hurricane Ivan.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:15pm.

The next meeting is scheduled for 3:00pm, Thursday, 21 July 2005.

Confirmed: _____

Chairman: _____