

NIACOG EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE - MINUTES
NIACOG, 525 6th St. SW, Mason City, Iowa
April 17, 2024 at 12:00 p.m.

Members in Attendance: Members in attendance included Sis Greiman, Mark Johansen, A.J. Stone, David Vikturek, Jim Wherry. Others in attendance included Executive Director Myrtle Nelson.

Members Absent: None

1. Call to Order: Chair Stone called the meeting to order at 12:03 p.m.
2. Approval of Agenda and Minutes of Previous Meeting: The members reviewed the current agenda, as well as, the minutes for the Executive Committee meeting held on March 11, 2024. Johansen made a motion to approve the agenda and the minutes as printed. Wherry seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.
3. Financial Report – February 2024, Financial Reports: Nelson reviewed the ‘Statement of Net Assets’, the ‘Statement of Revenue and Expenses’, and the ‘Monthly Disbursement Detail’ (listing of checks) for February 2024. Nelson noted that no checks were written for capital expenditures exceeding \$5,000. Vikturek made a motion to approve the financial report. Wherry seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.
4. Communications and Reports – Additional EDA Revolving Loan Fund Unlikely: Nelson recalled that the Executive Committee approved submitting a grant application to EDA to add a third revolving loan fund for businesses. She noted that a minimum of \$667,000 in loans would need to be identified before an application could be submitted to EDA; however, after several discussions, emails, and presentations, no businesses had come forward in need of the loans. Therefore, the potential for creating the third loan pool is not viable at this time. Vikturek asked if the grant would be available again the next year, but Nelson said that the fund was related to disaster recovery from a storm in December of 2021 and would not be available again.
5. New Business
 - a. TripMaster – ‘TripReminder’ Module (Automated Calling): Nelson stated that progress is being made with adapting to the TripMaster program to the extent that it is becoming workable as modifications are made within the software and to our own practices. The new TripMaster representative assigned to NIACOG is vastly more helpful and a big part of the improvements. Nelson noted that an additional module for the software would be helpful to automatically call clients to modify their pick up times and remind riders of upcoming rides. Other systems have found that this module greatly reduces ‘no shows’. The program will also be moving riders, when needed, to accommodate rides being added, which will require additional

calls. She referred to the proposal in the meeting packet that quotes a price of \$7,500 plus a \$264 monthly subscription. Nelson noted that this would be a sole source procurement because Trip Master is the only firm that could provide the call module given its integrated connection with the Trip Master dispatch software. Greiman made a motion to approve the purchase of the TripReminder Module at a cost of \$7,500 and a monthly subscription of \$264. Vikturek seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

- b. Conflict of Interest Policy: Nelson explained that NIACOG does not currently have a conflict of interest policy for non-federal purchases, but the agency should have one as a non-profit organization. She referenced the attached 'Conflict of Interest Policy' and noted that the policy requires board members to announce any conflict of interest and to remove themselves from voting on any item that would pose a conflict of interest. Wherry made a motion to approve the 'Conflict of Interest Policy'. Johansen seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.
- c. Budget FY 2025: Nelson presented the FY 2025 budget and provided detail about the change in the budgeted amounts from FY 2024. She also proposed the following changes to salaries:
 - i. 3% Cost of Living Adjustment with 3% being the COLA for most counties
 - ii. Raising the starting wage for new part-time drivers to match that of full time drivers at \$17 per hour
 - iii. Increasing wages for existing part-time drivers by seventy-five cents per hour after the COLA adjustment

Vikturk made a motion to approve the FY 2025 budget including the increase in the base wage of part-time drivers from \$16.25 to \$17 per hour and a 3% cost of living adjustment. Wherry seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

6. Old Business:

- a. Amendment to Health Insurance 28E Agreement with Mason City & Delay in Implementation of the Personnel Policy Changes: Nelson stated that provisions in Iowa Administrative Code 191-35.20(2)b. needed to be added into the 28E agreement. These provisions related to the unlikely event that the plan would have a deficit and the insurance pool were to be disbanded. In that event, NIACOG would be required to pay its share of the loss. A deficit would be highly unlikely because the City maintains a \$2 million risk pool reserve, stop loss coverage limits any claim to not more than \$100,000, and a pool of over 250 employees creates a large collective to absorb losses. Nelson also stated that the new insurance had previously been approved by the NIACOG Executive Committee to begin on May 1st; however, the process of researching and preparing the amendment necessitates a delay to what will likely be July 1, 2024. She reviewed the modifications to the amendment but said that the City is still reviewing it with their attorney. She recommended a delay in the Personnel Policy modifications approved on February 14, 2024. The personnel policy changes included a thirty-

five dollar contribution for single coverage and a \$100 monthly fee for spousal coverage unless a waiver is provided. Nelson noted that the amendment could be revisited at the May meeting after the city has finalized the modifications to the amendment. Greiman made a motion to delay the changes to the Personnel Policy in Chapter 6.1 that were approved by the Executive Committee to an effective date of July 1, 2024 to match the anticipated start date for the insurance. Greiman seconded the motion, and it carried unanimously.

- b. Follow Up on Driver Input: In follow up to staff input provided at the previous Committee Meeting, the following four issues were discussed: 1) a request for higher wages especially for part-time drivers who start at \$16.25 instead of \$17.00 per hour, 2) too much downtime for drivers and the converse of too many rides in too little time, 3) Shorter workdays requested by some, and 4) Concern over lack of presence by the Operations Manager.
 - i. Wage Increases: She reviewed the request by Gene Anderson for wage increases for all drivers, stating that the wage increase would cost \$220,000 in FY 2025. She noted that the transit program's operating budget approved for FY 2024 had a deficit of \$400,000, but the transit operating budget for FY 2025 has a deficit of \$150,000. So, the budget is heading in the right direction, but not flush as yet. She said that increasing the wage for all part-time drivers by seventy-five cents would cost an estimated \$13,400 and would help to resolve an inequity in the part-timers' rates of pay. She noted that the approved COLA of 3% would increase driver wages an additional fifty cents.
 - ii. Too Much Downtime & Too Many Rides: Stone asked about the gaps in driver schedules noting the conflicting concerns of too much downtime and too many rides at the same time. In response, Nelson referred to the attached report (provided by Gene Anderson), which lists downtimes for multiple days. She noted that downtimes generally ranged from 20 to 45 minutes with total downtime of 2 to 2.75 hours per day. She also noted that downtime does not recur at consistent times or in large blocks of time that could accommodate a reduction in driver time. She also explained the need to balance wanting a full schedule of rides with needing to maintain gaps in scheduled rides to be able to pick up riders to return them home. She also noted that, when the data was migrated, the ambulatory status of the riders was not moved so insufficient time was being assigned for riders who take a longer time to load. This issue is being fixed by manually entering the ambulatory status of literally thousands of riders. Nelson said that, to balance peak loads, dispatchers are encouraging people who schedule rides to also schedule pick up times so that we have less glutting of the system to smooth out the peaks and valleys where possible. Also, the seat assigning feature in TripMaster is becoming more workable, and the software is going to be moving pickup times as needed to accommodate better spacing for pick ups.

iii. Shorter Workdays: The Operations Manager split one route into two six-hour shifts, but the drivers did not prefer this. The driver who requested shorter hours is currently on leave. The other drivers were polled and none of them would prefer a shorter shift.

iv. Concern Over Lack of Presence of the Operations Manager: The Operations Manager has selected a consistent work schedule, is logging his hours, and is keeping dispatchers better informed of his location.

Nelson also expressed her appreciation for the quality work performed by the drivers. The board discussed the method for appealing to the board for cases when employees did not agree with decisions made by the Executive Director. Nelson noted that the process for appeal to the Executive Committee is a method outlined in the Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual. The board agreed that positive steps were being taken to address the drivers' concerns. They also noted that providing the raises as approved in the budget was a good step in that direction. Although the raise did not match the \$220,000 request, Stone noted the need to moderate the raises to be able to add less to the transit deficit for the sake of the long-term viability of the transit system.

c. FY24 Budget Enhancement Progress & Plans: Nelson stated that progress is being made on working with Enterprise to create a vanpool in North Iowa and that Enterprise will present information at the next meeting. Their proposal would allow for Enterprise providing the vehicles, staff, marketing, and rider recruitment with NIACOG being able to claim the miles for federal and state transit assistance and pay Enterprise \$500 per month. This also addresses a need for commuter rides in the region to enhance workforce. She also said that new shop rates will go into effect on July 1, 2024 and that vendors were notified of the change.

7. Other Items from the Board: No issues were raised.

8. Next Meeting: Stone noted that the next meeting is scheduled to be held on Monday, May 13, 2024 at 5:15 p.m. at Bennigan's.

9. Adjournment: Stone adjourned the meeting at 1:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Myrtle Nelson, AICP
Recording Secretary