

**River Area Council of Governments  
May 30, 2024**

**Members present:** N. Dutton, S. Freeman, R. Grunert, J. Jones, J. Monnat, P. Smith, T. Stewart, S. Storms and R. Vary

Chairman Smith called the meeting to order at 6:00pm at the T/Wilna Municipal Building. Eight (8) voting members were present.

S. Storms, seconded by N. Dutton to approve the minutes of January 24, 2024 as presented. Ayes-8, Nays-0. Motion carried.

**Presentations**

Kristopher Reff, NYS DOT presented information regarding the Watertown Jefferson County Area Transportation Council including the boundaries based on the 2020 census and the organizational structure. The local stakeholders group is comprised of seventeen local organizations, including local governments. They meet as a group. Jarrod Radley, DOT, represents the group at the council. The Council is positioned to assist with transportation studies as a precursor to grant and federal aid applications. The Council seeks to produce long range planning, transportation improvements and a unified planning work program.

Cassandra Buell, Lewis County Planning/Transportation, discussed the four fixed bus routes operated by the County by contracting with Birnie Bus. The current estimated annual ridership is 40,000 riders. The County supports routes to Jefferson Community College, Watertown International Airport and Fort Drum and coordinates services with ARC. P. Smith questioned if they can do medical transports. Ms. Buell responded that they do work with NYS DOH for non-emergency transports. Services are limited by the availability of a bus with a lift.

**Circuit Rider Report**

- The response to the Economic Visioning Summit was positive. Motion by R. Grunert, seconded by J. Monnat to hold the summit at Jeff-Lewis BOCES in Glenfield in 2025. Ayes-8, Nays-0. Motion carried.
- Plans for the Civic Service Student Activity Program are proceeding. The purpose of the program is to acquaint students with aspects of local service with a goal of encouraging their participation in the future. The program will be launched with an introduction seminar provided by key leaders followed by activities including conducting meetings, preparing budgets, and local law development in October, 2024. Day 2 of the program will be held in May, 2025 and will include a field trip to a number of sites including a government office, water treatment plant,

and a fire station. Students will be eligible for 12 credits toward a Seal of Civic Readiness on their diplomas. Motion by J. Jones, seconded by J. Monnat for RACOG to pay for lunches for up to 28 students and the panel members for both days of the civic program at a cost of \$5.00 each. Ayes-8, Nays-0. Motion carried.

- Paul Sheppard, THC Fort Drum Intern, has expressed interest in serving as an Associate Circuit Rider. Motion by S. Storms, seconded by R. Vary to approve Paul Sheppard as Associate Circuit Rider on a meeting-to-meeting basis. Ayes-8, Nays-0. Motion carried.
- RACOG members discussed the need to have a quorum of members present at every meeting to conduct business. P. Smith advised that members attendance would improve the dissemination of information.
- Motion by T. Stewart, seconded by J. Jones to authorize the purchase of a high yield toner cartridge for the circuit rider at a cost not to exceed \$470.00. Ayes-8, Nays-0. Motion carried.
- The next meeting will be held September 26, 2024 at 6:00pm at the T/Wilna Municipal Building.

Motion by S. Storms, seconded by R. Grunert to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 7:22pm.

*Christina Vargulick*  
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RACOG Secretary