

MORONGO BASIN TRANSIT AUTHORITY

**Facilities & Real Estate Advisory Ad Hoc**

Thursday, August 6, 2020 3:00PM  
Morongo Basin Transit Facility  
62405 Verbena Road  
Joshua Tree, CA 92252

MINUTES

**1.0 CALL TO ORDER** – Called to order at 3:00pm by Mark Goodale

**ROLL CALL** - On call of the roll the following were present: Merl Abel, McArthur Wright and Mark Goodale.

**2.0 PUBLIC COMMENTS**

NONE

**3.0 NEW BUSINESS**

**3.1 Land Acquisition**

Mark Goodale updated the Ad Hoc Committee that the parcels MBTA were looking to acquire in Twentynine Palms had stalled out; no one had budged in wanting to sell. Mark recently met with Frank Luckino, McArthur Wright and Karmolette O’Gilvie since the City was having trouble moving forward with their projects without this land being available. Mark relayed to Frank Luckino the last direction he was given from the Ad Hoc Committee. Board Member Wright then suggested it would be more appropriate to have the Facilities & Real Estate Advisory Ad Hoc Committee meet to include Merl Abel.

Mark said it sounded like the City would like MBTA to do eminent domain. Board Member Wright’s understanding was the City would do the eminent domain but felt the full MBTA Board should make the decision. He would only lean towards eminent domain because he was told they could stop at any time.

Regarding the parcels, Board Member Wright said 1 person said yes, 1 person was unresponsive, 1 person was stalling and the last guy called Board Member Wright once and said he owed more on the property than what was offered. Frank Luckino told him if he could produce proof, they could work with that but no proof was submitted. That last guy had a tenant, but Attorney Patrick Munoz said they could pay to relocate the tenant.

Mark agreed the land acquisition should go before the full Board and they should decide if the City should move forward with recommendation to the City Council for eminent domain. He was previously given a \$315,000 budget but would request a clear threshold so it did not end up costing a half a million dollar or more to acquire the properties. While he understood the importance of it for the City and the partnership that could create, MBTA’s future needs

have changed a lot. Mark reported that MBTA had lost 55% of their ridership and was nearly 100% on-time because there weren't many people traveling, which changed MBTA's needs for a larger transit center.

Board Member Abel wanted to know how the properties would help the City if they were trying to get affordable housing funds and what was the expectation of them doing eminent domain. Would the City purchase the property and then sell it to MBTA at Fair Market Value? In addition, would the City be expecting MBTA to develop within a certain time frame in order for them to qualify. Board Member Wright did not believe there would be a time frame for development and clarified that what would help the City was if MBTA or the City owned the property, it could justify putting a light at the intersection. Mark believed those things would need to be negotiated with the City.

Board Member Abel was OK with the City taking the PR risk of doing eminent domain but wondered if there were a certain number of parcels that were already willing to sell. He suggested MBTA could purchase those, allowing MBTA to have a footprint there and possibly help the City with their funding, then the City could purchase the remaining parcels.

Board Member Abel agreed this should be taken to the Board, especially if this could be a win to the citizens by having a transit center and signal there since the affordable housing there could be our riders. He also agreed that an understanding of expectations on our end would be a must because a blank check was not what we would want to write. He also wanted to know if the City could still use the parcels or if they had a backup plan if the eminent domain fees got to be too high and MBTA chose to stop.

Mark agreed the Board should make the decisions, especially since the land would be tied up as Capital and there was no funding for building, nor would this be the right time to do so when MBTA was already depreciating another transit center in Twentynine Palms for another 8+ years.

Mark asked their thoughts on who would pay the legal fees. Board Member Abel felt the City of Twentynine Palms should.

Board Member Abel suggested Frank Luckino check with Legal to see if a municipality took over by eminent domain, they could sell to another municipality.

Board Member Wright recommended Mark get further details from Frank Luckino and take to Board in Closed Session.

#### 4.0 ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 3:20pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Mark Goodale, Board Secretary