Resolution Finding Need to Conduct January 15, 2021 Meeting Electronically

WHEREAS, on March 12, 2020, the Governor of Virginia declared a state of emergency in Virginia in response to the spread of novel coronavirus, or COVID-19, a communicable disease of public health threat as so declared by the State Health Commissioner on February 7, 2020 (“COVID-19”); and,

WHEREAS, in subsequent Executive Orders, particularly Executive Order Nos. 53 and 55, as amended, the Governor of Virginia, among other measures designed to ensure safe physical distancing between individuals, prohibited public and private in person gatherings of 10 or more individuals and ordered all individuals in Virginia to remain at their place of residence, with limited exceptions, to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 and prevent its spread; and,

WHEREAS, the Virginia Railway Express Operations Board finds that it has a responsibility to demonstrate to the public, through the Board’s conduct, the importance of maintaining proper physical distance from others and to avoid gathering in public where the risks of infection are highest, and to take measures that promote physical distancing in order to protect the public health and mitigate the impacts and spread of COVID-19, including, among others, conducting meetings electronically whenever possible; and,

WHEREAS, on April 22, 2020, the Virginia General Assembly adopted, and the Governor signed, budget bill amendments to HB 29 that expressly authorize “any public body, including any state, local, [or] regional body” to “meet by electronic communication means without a quorum of the public body . . . physically assembled at one location when the Governor has declared a state of emergency . . ., provided that (i) the nature of the declared emergency makes it impracticable or unsafe for the public body . . . to assemble in a single location; (ii) the purpose of the meeting is to discuss or transact the business statutorily required or necessary to continue operations of the public body . . . and the discharge of its lawful purposes, duties, and responsibilities” among other provisions; and,
WHEREAS, jurisdictions of the Virginia Railway Express Operations Board have adopted continuity of government ordinances pursuant to Va. Code Ann. § 15.2-1413 which ordinances, among other provisions, authorize regional bodies of which the locality is a member to meet electronically to transact business to assure the continuity of government;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Virginia Railway Express Operations Board hereby finds that meeting by electronic means is authorized because the nature of the declared emergency makes it both impracticable and unsafe for the Operations Board to assemble in a single location on January 15, 2021, to discuss and transact the business of the Operations Board listed on the January 15, 2021 Operations Board Meeting Agenda; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Virginia Railway Express Operations Board hereby finds that meeting by electronic means is authorized because the items on the January 15, 2021 Operations Board Meeting Agenda are statutorily required or necessary to continue operations of the Operations Board and the discharge of the Operations Board’s lawful purposes, duties, and responsibilities; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Virginia Railway Express Operations Board hereby finds that the items on the January 15, 2021 Operations Board Meeting Agenda are encompassed within the continuity of operations ordinances adopted by several member localities of the Virginia Railway Express Operations Board to assure the continued operation of the government during the disaster posed by the public health emergency resulting from COVID-19.

Approved this 15th day of January 2021

______________________________
Elizabeth Bennett-Parker
Chair

______________________________
James Walkinshaw
Secretary