

GATEWAY officials: Finances improving

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After experiencing financial turmoil in the past, GATEWAY's finances are improving and on track to be the healthiest they have been in five years, said Paul Nunn, a certified personal accountant with Nunn, Brashear and Uzzell, when presenting GATEWAY's audit at the GATEWAY board of directors meeting last week.

"Things have turned around and are looking real positive, so you can feel good about that," Nunn said.

Nunn said GATEWAY saw a \$150,000 increase in operating expenditures during this fiscal year, a 21-percent increase in administrative expenses and an overall increase in expenditures of more than seven percent.

"Everything in the urban side of the budget was spent on expenses, but no fund balance was used," Nunn said.

GATEWAY saw a \$175,000 increase in its bottom line over the last year, Nunn said, but owed the city \$200,000 for fuel costs at the end of the year.

Regardless, policies implemented by GATEWAY director Fred Fontana allowed the bus system to greatly improve over previous years.

A chart provided by the auditors displayed total revenues and total expenses represented by a blue line and red line on a graph, respectively.

For the first time since 2008, the total revenues line crept above the red line for total expenses.

"GATEWAY is the healthiest its been in five years," Nunn said. "Policies implemented by (Fontana) should help keep the blue line above the red line."

Projections for the end of this fiscal year are equally as positive. GATEWAY's urban operations are set to either break even or make a slight profit, Fontana said, and the rural side of bus operations will be approximately \$70,000 to \$80,000 in the hole.

The Wayne County government has agreed to help curb the costs of rural operations, paying for a significant chunk of the system's rural operations debt, bringing the rural operations debt level down to \$30,000 to \$40,000.

"What it comes down to basically is that the \$12 per trip on the rural side just wasn't enough to cover our operating costs," Fontana said.

After the audit was presented at last week's meeting, GATEWAY director Fred Fontana also unveiled GATEWAY's new logo, completed by Quest Corporation of America as part of the bus system's rebranding.

Prior to the rebranding, GATEWAY's logo depicted a road curving between "Goldsboro-Wayne Transportation Authority" and the name "GATEWAY."

The new logo switches the name to "GWTA" and adds the tagline "We are your Gateway," removing the name GATEWAY from the logo.

Instead of relying on the old color scheme of black and blue, the colors have been updated to red, yellow and green.

Fontana also revealed that tablets to track driving routes and times have been fully implemented on every bus now, and every driver has been trained on how to use them.

"It seems that the drivers really like them and our service has improved overall," Fontana said. "We can track where each vehicle has been every minute of every day, as well as how fast they're going. It's a little 'Big Brother' like, but it really has improved our operations."

Questions were also raised at last week's meeting about the discrepancies between urban and rural bus drivers' salaries. Urban bus drivers currently make slightly more than rural bus drivers -- but the difference is warranted, Fontana said.

"Urban bus drivers have a slightly higher starting salary than rural bus drivers because they have to go through a more intense CDL training and their buses are bigger and harder to drive," Fontana said.

With no other business, the meeting adjourned. GATEWAY's next meeting will be on Thursday, March 26.