

Maine State Ferry Advisory Board

Thursday 1/23/25 10:30 AM via ZOOM

1. Roll Call

Advisors: Jon Emerson, Dennis Damon, Alan Barker, Peter Wilcox, Marjorie Straton, Duncan Bond, Kathy Clark, Eva Murray, Hank Berg, and Jamie Laney- Hersey

DOT: Bill Geary, Bill Pulver, Bruce Van Note, Abby Baker, Matt Higgins, Joel Perry, Henry McFerran, Beth Getchell, and Missy Goocher.

2. Introduction of Visitors

Sonya Leach, Charlie Yarnell, Tammy Brown, Rebekah (NH), Gary Farley, Peter Drury, Genevieve MacDonald, and John Hyde

3. Election of Officers

Jon Emerson wanted to say thank you and share his appreciation for his time as Chair of the Ferry Advisory Board. Making note of how much Commission Bruce Van Note has attended these meetings and appreciative of that. Thanks, Bill Geary, for all the access and communication received.

Jon Emerson noted that there's the disagreement of berthing the ferries on the mainland. Want to make sure that it's understood islanders cope with change, are resilient, and changing this would negatively affect the island way of living. I believe it's a radical proposal, and it's not in the best interest of the ferry service. No one should be allowed to make decisions without spending a winter season on our or any of the islands. References a video that North Haven put together about the struggles of moving medical patients, in difficult positions. Brought up concerns on the schedule impacts and school children as well. Finished up with making sure that the leadership understands and feel the issues with these changes.

Bill Geary opened the nomination of the election of officers per the by-laws to be conducted on the first meeting of each new year. Bill Geary asked for a nomination for the Chair of the Board. Jon Emerson nominated Dennis Damon and Kathy Clarke seconded. Unanimous approval from the voting board members.

Dennis Damon made a motion to nominate the Vice Chair and nominated Jon Emerson and seconded by Eva Murray. Unanimous approval from the voting board members.

Dennis Damon made a motion to nominate the Secretary. Jon Emerson nominated Bill Geary and seconded by Peter Wilcox. Unanimous approval from the voting board members.

4. Approval of the Minutes

Unanimous approval of the meeting minutes as drafted.

5. Communications

Both points are to be discussed later in meeting.

To or by the Board

To or by the MSFS/MDOT

6. Reports of the Board

Financial Subcommittee Report was reviewed with highlights given by Jon Emerson and any clarifications were made by Melissa Goocher.

7. Reports of the Ferry Service

a) **Ridership**

All ridership information was provided on YTD vs LY and MTD vs MTD LY. Can reach out to Joel Perry if wanting more specific information.

b) **Vessel Status Report**

Overall, the fleet is in good shape. Information was provided about all vessels, including the update of M/V Margaret Chase Smith in Dry Dock Status. As well as an update on M/V Almer Dinsmore in Rhode Island.

c) **Staffing Report**

Information was provided about Staffing for MSFS. Talked about the open positions, and where they were, in the hiring process.

d) **MaineDOT Mainland Berthing Concept**

- **Reliability expectations**

It was asked of each advisory board member what the expectation is for reliability for the MSFS outside of weather cancelations. Jon Emerson stated 100% but then later clarified he needed to speak with his select board. Allen Barker stated 100% for VH, Cathy Clarke stated 100% for Swan's Island and Peter Wilcox stated that he would need to speak to his select board. Discussion was also had regarding how now we are currently "overstaffing" the vessels with extra relief crewmembers and that this is needed to deliver upon 100% reliability expectations.

Contracting

The Advisory Board members were asked about their thoughts on Seaward contracting and if they were in favor of this. Consensus was this is viewed favorably by the Advisory Board. It was noted that another contract was signed with them to extend until the end of 2025, however they hadn't been used since December 2024. This contract allows the MSFS to utilize their services on an as needed basis.

- **Emergency transport**

Emergency transport was discussed and that the costs associated with providing this service need to be relooked at. It was also noted that waiver to perform these emergency runs outside of the 12 hour rule is up to interpretation of the Captain of the Port. A meeting with the new Captain of Sector Northern New England is scheduled and will be held before the next advisory board meeting.

- **Municipal communication/input process (future)**

Discuss was had on how to best communicate in the future with the Advisory Board, the Select Board and Town Managers. Dennis Damon suggested that each

advisory board member go back to their respective communities and get feedback and be able to bring a greater voice to the discussion.

- **Board/municipal official feedback**

8. Island Specific Issues

Frenchboro- No concerns currently.

Matinicus- The proposed legislature about changing the wording for the 36 trips maximum trips.

North Haven- Still concerned about the boats leaving the islands, and the great crews we have. Why is the transfer bridge being refurbished vs replaced?

Islesboro- Nothing that hasn't been discussed already.

Vinalhaven- Concerns on the winter schedule and revisit this before next year. Look at additional equipment and/or training for the captains on the runs in the dark.

Swan's Island- Concerns on the transfer bridges and the plan on upgrading both electrical and mechanical.

9. New Business

Tariff 11 – Toll increase

Bruce Pulver discussed the need for another increase due to additional positions, incentives, Seaward contract amongst other expenses and are targeting a 15% increase is needed to get to the 50/50 split. A handout was provided on the illustration of a 15% increase across the board on all rates. Commissioner Van Note commented that he would like to put this increase where the demand is on vehicles and trucks, however, knows that this was not favorable by the Advisory Board last time and is good with a 15% across the board illustration. Dennis Damon recommended that each advisory board member get feedback from their community on the illustration.

10. Old Business

Bill Geary discussed from the last meeting the proposed bylaws changes to be voted on: 1. Annual report changes/dates. Currently due in June and recommended change it to August. 2. Update the term Ferry Manager to Ferry Director. 3. Posting the Proposed Ferry Agenda on the website.

Bylaws approval

Dennis Damon- Do we have an agreement on these, who wants to motion for each.

Proposal 1- Alan Barker- Motions for the changes. **Duncan Bond-** Seconds. (all in favor)

Proposal 2- Alan Barker- Motions for the changes. **Duncan Bond-** Seconds (all in favor)

Proposal 3- Alan Barker- Motions for the changes. **Duncan Bond-** Seconds (all in favor)

Legislative Review –9 bills on the MSFS have been introduced to legislature and will update as needed.

11. Next Meeting/Adjournment

It was agreed that the next Advisory Board meeting will be on **Thursday, March 20, 2025 at 1030.**

The Meeting was adjourned at 1:16pm.