

A meeting of the Maine State Ferry Service Advisory Board was held at 10:30am on Thursday, October 3, 2019, at the Rockland Ferry Terminal.

A) Role Call:

Matinicus, Vinalhaven, North Haven, Islesboro, Frenchboro, Swan's Island, Bass Harbor

B) Introduction of Visitors/List of Attendees:

Eva Murray, Matinicus, Chairperson

Dennis Damon,

Mark Higgins, Manager Ferry Service MDOT

Joanne O'Shea, Business Manager Ferry Service MDOT

Bill Pulver, MDOT

Mike McKenna, MDOT

Duncan Bond, Frenchboro

Phil Crossman, Vinalhaven

Lindsay Davis, Vinalhaven

Jon Emerson, North Haven

Phil Seymour, Islesboro

Kathy Clark, Swan's Island

Sonny Sprague, Swan's Island

John King, Islesboro

Gabriel Pendleton, Islesboro

Nick Battista, Island Institute

Captain Joe Curtis, Maine Maritime Academy Director of Career Services

C) Approval of Minutes from September 5, 2019

D) Communications

- a. Letter read by Eva, sent to Mark. No action is expected, just to place the letter on the record. MDOT is urged to provide a vessel for the mission of transport to Matinicus as the Island Transporter only makes sense as a short-term solution and was not designed for walk-on passengers or convenience to those driving on. The letter also indicated that the schedule needs to be tightened up/better communicated.

E) Reports of the Board - none

F) Reports of the Department

Financial Report—Mike McKenna. He referred to hand-out that was emailed ahead of the meeting which is a more detailed account summary than has been provided in the past.

Revenues: Farebox up to a little over \$200k for first 3 months. Total revenue up \$428k.

Expenses: Retro lump sum payment is due to wage reclasses which in effect made

employee costs higher: expenses being up \$800k is a one-time situation and the farebox budget already incorporates it. Bill explained that both years of biennium reflect payment plus ongoing increases to employees.

Professional fees are due to Project Staffing (temp agency) and legal bills. We expect these to drop. OS positions are being converted to State positions.

Diesel fuel is up from \$2.44 (one month last year) and \$1.83 (11 months last year) to \$2.56 this year. We are not yet locked into a rate.

Burgess payment was in July.

Dennis asks how we would deal with catastrophic, international fuel issues. Mark:

There is a surcharge for emergencies for a set period before a review (90 days typically) to address this.

- G) Vessel Status Report—Report handed out and reviewed by Mark and Jim Savoie, MSFS assistant Port Engineer. Jim spoke about our preventative maintenance.

Libby: Waiting on Coast Guard to hear if we can use “Jason’s cradle” as an alternative over a fast rescue boat. It is used in Gulf of Mexico for man overboard recovery. Gaskets around windows are being fixed, steel is ok. Mark doesn’t expect big capital outlay, depending on Coast Guard determination. Boat is safe, going through Hull exam.

No major issues on other boats. See hand out.

New boats:

Thompson had a steering issue. Control amplifiers signals aren’t communicating. We can’t use parts from other vessels, despite trying.

Spear: Jim showed the group some photos. Its profile will look like Smith. Interior more like Thompson. Thompson will berth on VH and Spear in Rockland. Progress meetings are every 2 weeks. It’s beneficial to build the boat in East Boothbay so we can see it frequently and have an impact on how it’s being built. Team effort with Washburn & Doughty (W&D).

Phil asks when Thompson will be installed—once parts arrive, it should be less than a week.

For Spear: W&D will give us a list of critical components and preventative maintenance list, and we are trying to make one for the Thompson.

Kathy: asks about Lee. Mark: we have until 11/9, there’s no rail availability at Rockland Marine

Dennis: says he is unnerved not knowing what critical parts for the Thompson are. Mark said the builder and architect for Thompson are out of business now-this is indicative of the problems we’ve had. Dennis asks if we have determined what has caused the electrical “cooking” –Jim says we don’t know with certainty and we didn’t know it was a critical item, but now we do.

There was a discussion about prevention.

Dennis asks about a change from hydraulic to electric thruster on Spear. Jim and Mark say—less mechanical components, easily adjustable by captain...ease of operation.

Jon: worried about ‘frying’ happening again. Jim says it’s nothing with the vessel itself—lightening strike, etc. we try to mitigate problems as vessel is being built.

Jim-Wheelhouse Technologies (WT) was chosen for maintenance system so we are ready for Cert of Inspection. Engineers will be able to use iPads for daily/monthly/quarterly preventative maintenance. WT has been doing this for 12 year for over a dozen companies. They incorporate coast guard and state regulations. Jim will be able to answer very detailed questions with the database software will allow. Cost is \$156k for 5 years—we are using

federal money, not an operating expense. This should reduce the amount of time and expense boats are down in the future.

Sonny described a major problem with steel/water inside on the Lee. Is there something that can be done in new boats? Mark: steel is all coated and painted. Jim had recommended, and it is implemented, that a two-part coating is incorporated before being put in. W&D uses a certification process. Epoxies are applied appropriately—major effort to prevent issues. Gabe asks about current tracking...Jim says we use a white board.

H) Island Specific Issues

- a. Swan's Island: Kathy-request to keep on summer schedule due to bridge closing, for school kids to get there for earlier boat, for a month. Sonny-Concern about lobster traps and negative impact to boat. There's a 2-month project for bridge in Tremont...would like to get kids home earlier by extending summer schedule.

Discussion will continue after the FSAB meeting

- b. Vinalhaven: Phil asks about putting in an ADA compliant sidewalk. Bill says we will look at the request. This may require concrete barriers, etc but we can consider it a candidate for a project on VH. Phil says it was torn down 3 years ago and not rebuilt as a proper sidewalk. Mark: we will be out there on 10/15 and will look at that as well as standby line.

Mark described an Operational Safety Assessment with Coast Guard—any future assessments would look at routes. We are completing Casco Bay Peer review, looking at their operations, route assessments, crewing, safety, preventative maintenance, business practices to determine if we can leverage off each other.

Request for next month: improve handicap access on vessels

I) Old Business

- a. Rate Increase-Update & Status of October 1 implementation

Joanne said that other than minor issues, like typos, the Off Peak rates were implemented without a hitch on 10/1.

RFP for ticketing software: expected to in place in approx. a year which would include online ticketing/scanning. We will discuss this during the peer review for Casco Bay. Working with Passenger Vessel Association too.

Discussion about issues with credit cards—this is separate from the Rate increase.

Bill to announce the credit card issue on FB.

Sonny commented about commuter ticket use.

- b. Update on Customer Service Training- Safety Days/Customer

Mark met with Bill Maxwell to finalize curriculum for 1.5 days of training which is occurring 10/17-10/18 and 10/24-10/25.

J) New Business

- a. Board Communications expectations—Eva says the agenda has always been a template but there are lots of places where anything can be discussed—FSAB shouldn't feel that every item needs to be on the agenda—it slows things down to have so many emails.

Phil suggests that last item should always be “other old business” Eva says we can adjust template. Dennis: increased amount of email to DOT and the Commissioner—there has never been a commissioner at DOT that has taken an interest like Van Note, we should not take advantage of that by abusing it. Concerns that arise to the level of Commissioner should be addressed at the meeting first before emails are sent. Bill: it’s been difficult to manage requests because it’s unclear where requests are coming from and if the whole board wants to/should be involved. Frustration all around is inherent. Eva: If everything needs to go through Chairman, that is a difficult situation—openness and accessibility might be lost. Concerns about “speaking with one voice”---this might not be true because 9 communities have different needs. Members should not speak on behalf of others but there should not be excessive emails. Bill wants to accommodate the board’s preference. John: suggests meeting be on a date that makes sense according to when reports/proposals/ridership numbers can be reasonably available.

Mark will send FY19 ridership information and present it going forward.

Dennis: re: communications—no one should feel stifled. When we have a consensus, we need to convey via the Chair or a designee to the Commissioner so that he will take the board seriously. Most communication should take place face to face at this meeting.

- b. Tariff Item 23: Special Trips and Emergency Trips and Tariff Item 29: Parking Lot Fees: Emergency trips currently cost \$650, but MSFS cost is around \$1000. The rate has not been addressed or adjusted in a decade. Eva gave an example of what happens for Matinicus when there is an emergency trip. Phil agrees it should be adjusted. Mark will send numbers of what actual costs are. Towns reimburse MSFS. Nick: there is an Island Institute roundtable 10/17 for upcoming rulemaking for emergency transport. Parking: Mark asks for solutions. Rates have not been updated in 11 years. Gabe says parking directly impacts ridership. John: LV morning rush--\$25/day is difficult. Everyone seems to agree that additional parking within walking distance is necessary. A park and ride lot closer than Waldoboro and Nobleboro would benefit the Mid-Coast. Kathy and Sonny are concerned that parking rates would go up at the same time as the ferry rates.
- c. Equitable Adjustments: discussion of Catastrophic Medical, School Staff
- d. Nick: Last week Maine Climate Council kicked off. Carbon reduction goals. He asks DOT’s perspective. Mark: DOT Chief Engineer is concerned and there is an internal meeting soon on that. Meeting with W&D for new boats. There are only 2 electronic ferries: US and Norway. A lot of companies getting in this sector. Engineers and Naval architect join these meetings/discussions about new technology.
- e. Sonny: new boat out to bid soon...do we want to modify specifications? Do we always take lowest bid? Mark: companies must come to a pre-bid conference and meet a minimum qualification. W&D was the only Maine company, and seem to have a “foot up” on specs.
- f. Jon: Engines off issue: How do we make headway between meetings? Phil and Jon have been in touch with Chellie Pingree—she said she has ideas, but he doesn’t know how to quantify that, in light of making sure communications are appropriate. Phil says having one voice to represent the board would make sense. John: we need to have

specific, reasonable proposals. Dennis: suggests having an item at the next meeting for this issue, and Phil will draft a letter asking federal law to be amended so that engines can be off for very narrowly defined situations. Joe: usually when laws are made, it is because of a catastrophic situation—keep the safety aspect. Mark gave safety examples—it is number one on our list of safety concerns. Nick says there is a correlation that for those for those who need engines on, the boats need to be designed so people can get into the cabins.

K) Motion to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 12:55.

Next meeting: Nov 14, 2019 at 10:30am