

A meeting of the Maine State Ferry Service Advisory Board was held at 10:30am on Thursday, January 9, 2020, at the Rockland Ferry Terminal.

A) Role Call:

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

B) Introduction of Visitors/List of Attendees:

Eva Murray, Matinicus, Chairperson  
Dennis Damon, Bass Harbor  
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  
Jon Emerson, North Haven  
Kathy Clark, Swan's Island  
Sonny Sprague, Swan's Island  
John King, Islesboro  
Gabriel Pendleton, Islesboro  
Maggie Wilcox-Islesboro Island News  
Lindsay Davis, Vinalhaven  
Peter Wilcox, Islesboro

C) Approval of Minutes from November 14, 2019

D) Communications-none to the Board

E) Reports of the Board - none

F) Reports of the Department

Financial Report—Mike McKenna presented a 3 yr variance of where MSFS is as of the end of December 2019. The report was included in the agenda packet and attached below.

Farebox up \$91k over last year, contribution from highway fund up \$500k. Total up \$610k over last year

Expenses: up \$310k. Staff net goes away as employees brought on as reg employees. Lump sum retro payment for reclasses—will be up whole fiscal year. #4099 prof fees down \$127k as staff net goes away. Repairs \$207k up. Insurance down \$107k but just timing on bill. Expenditures are up \$1.1M (\$900k is an anomaly of \$300k temp employees and \$600 retro payment reclass). There will not be any more reclass payments this year. Cash balance is \$233k up.

G) Vessel Status Report —Report included in agenda packet—attached below.

Vessel questions responded to by Mark from Jon, Dennis, Sonny and Eva

Jon says Patsy does a good job communicating with the public and Town Office at NH  
Sonny-asked about electronic message board for cancellation—Joanne will remind supervisors to use this.

Real-time communication and email/text notifications will be set up on website.

There were questions about 511. It is a manual process, and Transportation Management Center (TMC) sends these out.

Preventative Maintenance system getting in place via a federal grant. Each vessel will have all systems and maintenance documented so that preventative maintenance can be scheduled and put in place.

H) Island Specific Issues

- a. Frenchboro Generator-Duncan asked for update. Mark will check with Superintendent in Region 4. Duncan asks if every island has a generator that is state owned—yes, except Matinicus and Frenchboro.
- b. Kathy asked about 12:45 trip. Deadline was 12/1 per Mark. Notice must be given to all employees well ahead of time/union issue. An extra trip is not warranted with ridership being down. The 12:45 trip has not been run in over 10 years. It's not adding a trip, it's extending the fall schedule. 6 trips in the winter didn't make fiscal sense.
- c. Jon Emerson asked about ramp not working this morning. NH boat was slow coming in. Mark is not aware of a problem. Mark left meeting to ask Dan if there was an issue—Dan said there was not a problem this morning and that Prock Marine would be on call if there was.
- d. Phil reported suggesting to Bill Maxwell on several occasions that news about customer service training appear regularly in the VH island newspaper, The Wind, and offered to help but has heard nothing other than an acknowledgment. He asked about any changes on line up/systems/clip board. He asked that the board of selectman be kept apprised of any changes. Phil will send an invitation for a meeting before the summer schedule starts. Phil asks about ADA walkway. Bill says it's a candidate for change, but it is not yet funded. Bill says it may not be considered a sidewalk, after it was torn up for a sewer line. This is a function of time and budget. Phil says people are walking on it but it is not safe. Phil asks about Verifone devices and phones. Joanne responded with status.
- e. Gabe-asked about new ticketing system. Mark says it should be in place 18 months from today. Commissioner made commitment this past summer. Kick off meeting was in August, we have RFP in process, demos with Casco. Per Bill, Commissioner's desire was 2 years.
- f. Kathy-before Christmas on a Saturday the ramp broke on Swan's. She asks about a plan to be in place when there is a break down. Use of Gott boat? Can we have a contract with Gott, or someone could be hired for this situation. Is Gott's contract for

Frenchboro but not Swans? Sonny asks about transfer bridge and boat being out to bid. Money is in budget for workplan.

l) Old Business

- a. Tariff update for Parking Fees-included in packet and emailed ahead of time. Newest proposal is a straight 20% increase across the board, no limit on passes. 2009 was the last time it was updated.
- b. John asks for monthly ridership information for Islesboro. Asks for monthly data from Feb 2019. Mark will provide this.
- c. John- DOT's response to Board report from July. The report focused on maxing revenue/reducing costs. The annual report states cost strategies—security plan implemented after 9/11, Island rating in Appendix C—homeland security strategy was supported by every island. Revise scheduling of crews to eliminate positions. Report says we need more info. Some items were controversial like eliminating island terminals. Board supported changes, but there didn't seem to be any changes. Mark responded that there are reduced costs in the winter since terminals don't require so much staff. MSFS varies from Casco because we have so many locations. Logistically it's hard to operate different schedules. MSFS operates at efficiency. There's not a lot of overhead, extra crews, etc. Mike says "low hanging fruit" was reviewed and changes were implemented. Mike said he would review old minutes. John doesn't think the suggestions in the report are that unpopular—they should be reviewed again after 10 years. The board report said there should be a finance sub-committee because it's difficult to get the report on the same day of the meeting. A sub-committee could report back to full board.
- d. Gabe-encourages everyone to read the 2010 report. It's a play-by-play of everything that is occurring today. There are great cost savings ideas in the report. There will likely be new-found support of the report in today's environment.
- e. Bill says Commissioner's response of significant cost savings like closing island terminals and shortening runs were unpopular. There is an openness to reviewing the report again due to increased costs/fees, etc. Eva-hesitant to find cost savings by reducing number of employees. Gabe refers to long term viability of MSFS. General agreement that there needs to be a cost-benefit analysis of changing. Sonny thinks funding needs to come from elsewhere than the farebox. Mark—significant change in outside funding Fed Ferry Boat Discretionary fund about 5 years—only for urban areas. Gabe referred to an article in Canada about a ferry needing to close. Sonny is referring to Federal money, not state. Mark-DOT looks for federal funds in the multi-modal finance committee. Bill says there's no fed money to tap into for operating costs. Jon and Sonny described getting money for schools and lobstering and how they'd like something similar for the ferry.
- f. Phil would like a March agenda item of forming a finance sub-committee. Dennis is looking for expected results of the committee. Phil says there's a renewed interest in finance. John wants more granular information and understanding of the retro

payment. Dennis says board needs to be careful not to get too tied into the DOT's finances because board doesn't see the whole picture. He wants the sub-committee formed for the purpose of making recommendations but don't be overly optimistic about the result. Phil thinks the result would be that there would be an overall greater understanding of the finances. Eva-the FSAB and a finance sub-committee does not have authority to tell the DOT what to do, so we need to curb expectations. Those with an agenda might not speak for all—some islands want new boat, some islands want employee costs reduced etc—the subcommittee would need to serve the entire board's opinions. John-the subcommittee would report to board. Eva—we could have sub-committees on anything—IT, parking lot, etc—we should be careful. Jon-says it's a good idea to have the sub-committee so he could understand the finances better. Another difficulty is the increased number of meetings. Eva says members should be willing and able to serve, not have it based on their knowledge. Dennis suggests bringing a mission statement for the next meeting. Having a sub-committee should be voted upon by the entire board after the next meeting, after seeing the statements members will bring.

J) New Business

- a. Board elections in January, for Chair and Vice-Chair. Eva and Dennis were unanimously voted to continue in their positions.

K) Motion to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 12:17.

Next meeting: March 12 at 10:30am