

A meeting of the Maine State Ferry Service Advisory Board was held at 10:30am on Thursday, January 14, 2021 via Zoom.

A) Roll Call: Matinicus, Vinalhaven, North Haven, Frenchboro, Swan's Island, Bass Harbor, Mainland, Islesboro

B) Introduction of Visitors/List of Attendees:

- Eva Murray, Matinicus, Chairperson
- Bill Pulver, MDOT
- Dave Bernhardt, MDOT
- Mike McKenna, MDOT
- Mark Higgins, Manager MSFS
- Joanne O'Shea, MSFS
- Duncan Bond, Frenchboro (FB)
- Phil Crossman, Vinalhaven (VH)
- Jon Emerson, North Haven (NH)
- Kathy Clark, Swan's Island (SI)
- John King, Islesboro (IS)
- Dennis Damon, Bass Harbor (BH)
- Sonny Sprague, SI
- Lindsay Davis, VH
- Phil Crossman, VH
- Gabriel Pendleton, IS
- Hank Berg, Mainland (Casco Bay Lines)

- Bill Banks, SI
- Andy Dorr, VH
- Peter Willcox, Islesboro Island News

C) Approval of Minutes from November 5, 2020 Discussion:

1. John King-asked for clarification on which boat was discussed under section I) 1. Hybrid Ferry Update.
2. John King-suggests that the minutes should reflect the plan for section J) 2. Ticketing System Update. There was a short discussion about the use of mobile apps/kiosks and integration with EZ Pass. John says that the minutes say the system is being considered down the road, but no currently. Mark states we plan to have the ticketing system in place this year and that last meeting he wanted to communicate that we'll have a modern system. Bill states that concerns will be addressed during this meeting.

Proposed amendment to the Minutes: The 11/5/20 Minutes will be updated for item #1: The boat is the one after Spear, to be in place in 2 years.

Eva asks to vote as amended: moved, seconded, no further discussion or disagreement, all voted in favor, unanimously approved.

D) Communications to the Board – Mark shares that there was a Constituent concern regarding cars and egress from Smith, from this past August.

E) Reports of the Board –none.

F) Reports of the Department

1. Financial Report—Mike presented a report entitled FY 2020 & FY 2021 Variance as of December 31st, 2020 which was emailed to the Board ahead of the meeting.
 - a. Mike shared highlights and then responded to questions and comments regarding VDT operator fees, travel expenses (line 4200.)
 - b. Bill had also sent materials ahead of the meeting-slides which illustrates a model based on the new ticket prices. He reviewed this and responded to John’s request for a “global take” on finances. Bill shared that the MSFS is 14% below what the model said was needed to meet the budget. In November 2020, the projections weren’t as positive and Bill confirms that overall, things are better than projected. He states there can be discrepancies on ticket sales vs ridership, that there are more data points as the FY has gone on and that the FTA is not included in the report. John asks about additional federal funds and Bill says there may be more COVID relief money, but the need doesn’t seem as dire.
2. Ridership Reports—Mark presented ridership reports and graphics for Nov 2018-2020, Dec 2018-2020, Jan 1-Dec 31 2018-2020 and March 28 – Dec 31 2018-2020. These were all emailed to the Board ahead of the meeting.
 - a. Mark reviews reports on November and December 2018-2020 ridership which show that vehicles are essentially flat and walk on passengers down. The thought is that people are choosing to take vehicles instead of walking on. He says that the first 11 days of January are down 4% for vehicles and down 26% for walk on passengers.
 - b. Hank shares ridership information from Casco Bay Lines, saying that at the end of their Sept FY walk on ridership was down 44% and vehicle ridership was fairly flat. He said they are close to a regular ferry service schedule at this point and that their schedule was very reduced in April/May.
 - c. Eva asks him about freight and Hank says they have carry on, cart and cage freight. They have no easy way to track quantity, but revenue was down about 18%. They had extended winter rates, so the revenue data was skewed.

G) Vessel Status Report—Mark reviewed the Maintenance and Status of Vessels Report which was emailed to the Board ahead of the meeting.

- a. Spear update: 2/26/21 new launch date, delivery date 5/1/21. Mark will communicate updates as his observation and experience makes him think the launch and delivery may be 4-6 weeks beyond these dates.
- b. Mark shares a spreadsheet of the Capital Plan, stating that some money is programmed in and some not, as work plan goes out 3 years.
He will share the spreadsheet which includes the design work of ferries and other capital expenses like ticketing and dolphins.
Bill says some of this data hasn’t technically been published and that we are monitoring Casco Bays plans for electric ferries.
- c. Hank shares that they are in the middle of replacing a car ferry to Peaks Island and transitioning to a double ended, all electric ferry, charging every time it gets to Portland (it’s a 15-17min

passage.) He explains that these types of boats are used in Scandinavian countries and that local builders/shipyards aren't so familiar with them here. Their design package will go to their board in February with construction to start in March. Their challenge is that charging must happen in 10 minutes and that CMP is cost prohibitive, so they may run diesel in peak season. He states that electricity is an issue for busses and is a nation-wide problem, not just for CMP and/or Maine.

- d. There are some commentary/questions about the Capital Plan Mark shared. He explained that items with a PIN are programmed in place and that items with "n/a" are future items. COVID, etc may cause delays, but this is the projected plan.
 1. John says this is a vast improvement over other documents. He shares a story about Czech ferries delivered to BC—they are built hybrid but are ready to convert to electric when onshore logistics are able to accommodate. Mark responds saying that we're involved in the PVA (Passenger Vessel Association) and with other states, to keep in touch with new information as it's available.
 2. Jon asks how much local feedback as Mark had. He thought it would be good to not use more crew than is necessary, as that is a major expense. Mark says it's a subchapter K boat and that the manning requirements will be 5 person crews. Jon asks about NH boat and Mark says there will likely be a public listening session—that boat is about 6 years off so there may be technology updates to consider. There is a 2-3-year period for design period which is beneficial, and communities will be involved.
 3. Eva said she's under impression Libby replacement will be used for overflow..Marks says yes, and that it'll be faster and could be used for freight like propane and gas trips which currently impacts our customer schedules. We don't want a new boat to be constrained by how we do business now.
 4. Gabe says that if we can design boats to take less crew, that is the most important thing we can do (financially). If boats are to be used 30+ years with fewest crewmembers, we need to understand what the cut off is for how many people can ride with one more or one fewer crew member. For the life of the boat, we should consider the number of vehicles it can take, vs manning requirements.
 5. Andy asks about short term boat usage—how they get rotated when a boat is out for maintenance. Mark says we try to do hull exams/maintenance outside of peak season. We extend exams to ensure they don't impact peak season. COI exams happen dockside and take 5-6 hrs. We respond to Coast Guard issues and "835" which is a repair that usually doesn't need to be done immediately. Andy asks about the Thompson being in IS while the Smith is out for an extended period, stating that he fields a lot of questions from the VH community when Libby is put into service. He asks for an explanation of how the decision is made on where boats are put in service. Mark says he considers ridership and crews—with current crew constraints we don't have enough crew to leave a full 6th crew. Financially, it was a \$70k commitment to have the Transporter last time and the MSFS doesn't have the means to do that now. We try to meet the needs of the most, as much as possible. Andy shares concern for his ability to plan VH capital projects.
 6. Eva asks if there will be an additional substitute boat when the new boats will be in place. Mark says that the Philbrook will be the main spare instead of the Curtis which will be a 29yr old boat vs 52yrs old.

H) Island Specific Issues

1. Vinalhaven

Phil—3 fuel deals on VH now. On tariff, he wants to know why only one company has a priority.

Mark says we will work with others on priorities. Phil will direct them to Mark.

Asks about end date of Winter schedule. Mark says we will update the website.

Phil asks about the 2008 Safety Assessment. Mark says that a peer review was performed and that for any going forward, we'd look at it internally or with a state auditor. Peer reviews involve customer service, ticketing, seasonal rates, coast guard guidelines, etc.

2. North Haven

Jon asks about leaks in Burgess. Mark says they were in fire main system and were repaired.

3. Matinicus

Eva states that it has been in statute for years that there are 36 max trips for Matinicus. She says the max serves no purpose and that legislators are looking into getting more.

4. Vinalhaven

Lindsay suggested reducing the 30-minute wait to 15 minutes and asked about the terminal being open to the public again. Mark responded that the terminals (NH and VH were opened again earlier this week.)

5. Swan's Island

Kathy Clark stated thanks for fixing ramp. She asked about when schedule will be changed again, and Mark says we cannot be sure due to COVID.

I) Old Business

1. Spear update—no other info than what was already stated. Mark says there's lots of painting and welding yet, but that maybe they'll hit the targeted dates. He will share info when it's concrete.

J) New Business

1. Ticketing System update- Joanne shared a recap that the project started in August 2019 with OIT and that we are working side by side with Casco Bay who is going through the process too. We have 7 departments involved to develop the RFP. We've put lots of time in and put the RFP out to bid.

All bids on the ticketing software were due 12/22. They were reviewed by the IT planning group and all but 3 companies out of approximately a dozen, fully responded to the RFP and were otherwise deemed as appropriate to go to the next step. The next step was to demo the software and interview the companies. We met with each company for a 2.5-hour meeting. After that, the companies were scored on their Organization Qualifications, Proposed Service, Ease of contracting and Price. We are currently finishing the follow up processes to the scoring and hope to announce who will be the vendor in the next week or two. The goal is to have the new software in place and training done by mid-May.

It will allow our customers to purchase tickets online as well as at the terminal. Customer tickets will be scanned as they board with the goal of making the process easier for both customers and staff, and it should dramatically improve our reporting functionalities.

Mark discusses the importance of updating the vehicle line up in RK, which is thought to be simplified by the new tickets which will be scanned. He reminded everyone that the first part of the change in the line-up already occurred this past summer: a drop off/pick up area was created in front of the building and the bus and taxi areas were moved near the sidewalk. By doing this, we removed the overflow area so there are approximately a dozen

fewer overflow parking spaces. Once the second part of the vehicle line up is in place, there will no longer be “line-soaker” cars and there will be a 30%-40% increase in the number of vehicles that will be able to line up.

Bill says EZ Pass is not part of the ticketing software implementation at this point.

Jon asks if line numbers will stay in place and if tickets may be printed and scanned. He asks about the parking study saying that the MSFS needs as many cars in line as possible and that the system is user friendly.

Peter Wilcox asked for a date when we expect the software to be in place. Mark replies the goal is for peak season / June 15.

John King—asks for a revisit to the commuter fare structure. He asks for this to be loosened up, suggesting it will enhance sale of tickets.

2. Annual nomination and election of board members

Phil moved to nominate Eva and Dennis for another year. It was seconded, no further discussion or disagreement, all voted in favor, unanimously approved. [One vote per community.]

3. Mark suggests scheduling meeting dates for the full year. After discussion, the following tentative dates were chosen: 5/13, 7/15, 9/9, 11/18

Next meetings via Zoom: Thursday March 11, 2021 at 10:30am

K) Motion to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 12:22 pm.