

Maine State Ferry Advisory Board

Meeting Minutes

Thursday, March 23, 2023

10:30 AM via ZOOM and In-Person

1. Roll Call

Islands: Jon Emerson/North Haven, Sonny Sprague/Swan's Island, Kathy Clark/Swans Island, Eva Murray/Matinicus, Duncan Bond/Frenchboro, Jan Keiper/Frenchboro

MaineDOT: Bill Pulver, Robert (Henry) McFerren, Greg Goggin, Melissa Goocher, Ravi Sharma, Joel Perry, Abby Baker.

Mainland: Hank Berg/Casco Bay Lines. Dennis Damon/ Bass Harbor. Alex Zipparo/ Island Institute

2. Introduction of Visitors

Alex Zipparo/Island Institute, Holly Fields/Islesboro, Peter Drury/Vinalhaven.

3. Approval of the Minutes

Chair Jon Emerson- asked to move to Approve Minutes from meeting on January 19, 2023,

Jon Emerson- Asked how many board members were in the meeting today, March 23, 2023.

Eva Murray- 3 Members in Rockland.

Eva approved the minutes from the meeting minutes for January 19, 2023. Duncan Bond seconded, and Dennis Damon agreed.

Jon Emerson, asked again with the approval of the minutes. Three people total of five board members approved the minutes.

4. Communications

a) **To or by the Board**

Eva Murray- Asked about her letter?

Jon Emerson- We'll talk about that later in the meeting.

b) To or by the MSFS/MaineDOT

Nothing to report- quiet on the DOT side.

c) Financial Subcommittee

Jon Emerson- Brought up changing the meeting agenda, so the Sub Committee could have questions answered at the same time with the variance report?

Gregg Goggin- Agrees, to go over the variance report with the Financial Subcommittee all at once, to better answer questions.

Jon Emerson- John King still hasn't joined let's continue to Legislative Review.

***** See Report down in with Financial Reports (Later in Meeting) *****

d) Legislative Review

Jon Emerson- Moving to Legislative Review.

Dennis Damon- Doesn't have anything to add, but asks **Bill Pulver** if there was anything new, or should be aware of.

Bill Pulver- A request from the Transportation Committee for the Legislature to do a review. It's been on hold due to Federal Legislature Funding. As there is also Legislature on transportation. Senator Curry, 'Money to Maine Maritime Academy- MMA for Cadets to work as A/B or O/S at MSFS after receiving a \$1750 Scholarship per student, particularly at the Bucksport campus. This money would come from the general fund (Megan Russo).

Dennis Damon- Interesting concept. Thinks that it would skew to be something a little more locally. Highway fund, touchy subject- doesn't see as something negative.

Bill Pulver- General Fund, will get the LD # to share.

Jon Emerson- John King just called- won't be attending today's meeting. I'll go over the Subcommittee notes, like previously stated.

Bill Pulver- LD 620- Standard Supplement Budget- MSFS- Staffing- Diesel money, monies also include added positions, and diesel costs which is an additional half million.

Gregg Goggin- Confirmed what Bill Pulver said.

Bill Pulver- LD1139, *An Act to provide Ferry Service reliability by providing scholarships to MMA Cadets/Students*, is the title of the bill for the MMA scholarships.

Jon Emerson- Alex Zipparo. has posted the link in the chat box for the information regarding the MMA Scholarships.

Eva Murray- Asking about wording change for Matinicus and Frenchboro trips, a request that was made a couple years ago, pre-COVID. May-to-shall. Curious as to where this request has ended up and the status of such. *It was completely supported by senators and legislators.*

Jon Emerson- Does anyone have anything?

Bill Pulver- Bills don't sometimes survive.

Eva Murray- Wasn't addressed.

Dennis Damon- Doesn't have to be voted down.

Eva Murray- Re-submit requests, for language change that is obsolete?

Jon Emerson- How do we follow through - anything else?

Alex Zipparo- Testify from afar. Does the DOT know? Through afar public hearing?

Bill Pulver- Isn't aware of any public hearings.

Jan Keiper- How do we proceed forward again?

Bill Pulver- Resubmit a bill through the local channels.

Eva Murray- How do we start this process again?

Bill Pulver- Not advising. Just saying that's how it must happen.

Alex Zipparo- Maine Islands Coalition on Wednesday Eva.

Jon Emerson- All legislative review... Knows people looking into MMA.

5. Reports of the Board

Jon Emerson- Any reports from members of board, nothing new to report.

6. Reports of the Ferry Service

a) Vessel Status Report

Robert 'Henry' McFerren- Currently is having the repower done, the current completion date for the Thompson is May 1, 2023.

-COI's- for Burgess and Lee went well.

-Everything is currently operating, with no issues.

-Senesco/ Dinsmore is currently scheduled for October of 2023. Still under welding and painting. Boat is being completed in Rhode Island; all seven pieces are welded together.

-Gen Sets were tested last week in Georgia, Jim Savoy went down on behalf of Ferry Service to observe.

Dennis Damon- Question- asking about the confirmation of the launch date for the Dinsmore.

Robert ‘Henry’ McFerren- Unable to say- due too so many unknowns, with supply and demand.

-Libby Replacement, is due to be flipped right side up in April. This vessel is in Alabama. More progress as well.

Jon Emerson- But the progress, it currently looks like a ferry.

Robert ‘Henry’ McFerren- Yes it currently does look like a ferry.

Eva Murray- Yes, the pictures I’ve received from Jim, for the Libby replacement are great. Jim Savoy has sent me these photos.

Jon Emerson- Would you be able to forward these photos to the Board?

Eva Murray- I will forward them the best I can.

b) Staffing Report

Robert ‘Henry’ McFerren- gives the following: Four Applicants for Engineer Positions on Wednesday. And had three A/B interviews today.

Joel Perry- I can talk about Shoreside Staffing.

-Rocklands Full time Position just closed, and an additional intermittent position is posted.

-Islesboro and North Haven are having a hard time, applicants on islands are hard to find.

-Bass Harbor Just posted.

Robert ‘Henry’ McFerren- MSFS Directors Position (Mark Higgins position) is posted and will close on 03/31/2023.

Jan Keiper- when did Mark Higgins step down- we never received word back about our inquiry.

Robert ‘Henry’ McFerren- the date is 03/10/23

Bill Pulver- will confirm a response but do know a response was drafted.

Duncan Bond- Confirmed a response was received.

Holly Fields- Has three applicants for her position open on Islesboro, two have replied unable to make commitment of being available for first boat, due to living off island. Have yet to contact the one applicant.

Jon Emerson- We could use another person on North Haven.

Joel Perry- Had a position on North Haven close, neither of the two applicants responded. That position will be reposted. So again, we have the following open CSR positions, Islesboro 1, Rockland 2, North Haven 1, Bass Harbor 1.

Jon Emerson- Swans Island is solid.

Dennis Damon- What are the qualifications?

Joel Perry- Customer Service Representative- It's a basic entry level position. I can get you information...

Jon Emerson- Does that bring us to the end, regarding positions??

Joel Perry- Be aware the ridership reports, trucks and drivers, and how they're accounted for in the report. (Trucks don't count people neither do Bicycles)

Jon Emerson- It's a little low on population- it's the lowest it's been in a while.

Eva Murray- Yes looking at Matinicus, our winter population has been at its lowest it's ever been in quite some time.

c) Financial Reports

Jon Emerson- Can we go to the Financials if Gregg Goggin wants to start. Then I'll go over the Financial Sub Committee Notes.

Gregg Goggin- Sounds good. This Financial Report Exceeds the Fair Bucks numbers in the past.

- \$600K in Discrepancies, between this month and last month. Did audit to create 10 new positions. 5 New Deck Hand positions, and 5 new A/B Positions.

- When you allow- in hindsight.

- Highway Contributions is \$2.4 million has been transferred on February 28th to the State Fund.

- \$1 million in Cares Act in November 2022- which was the last one.

- On March 8th, \$1.8 million was transferred, bring it to, \$1.3 million to \$1.4 million cash balance this morning.

- Fuel Prices have increased - \$600K more this this year versus last year. Currently paying \$4.02 per gallon. Roughly we're paying about \$3 a gallon for diesel last year.

- Cost of diesel and repairs are the two biggest items of expense this year.

- ~ That is all the reporting he had. ~

Alex Zipparo- What was the locked price of diesel per gallon last year?

Gregg Goggin- I will look that information up and get it out to the group.

Jon Emerson- Looking for the Sub Committees notes - stating again it'd be better to have the variance report sooner rather than later going forward. As we only had the report for 30 mins prior to the meeting with the Sub-Committee meeting.

Unfunded liability is half a million right now, \$70K more than last year.

Gets a lot bigger quickly.

50% Revenue and Customers to settle.

Jon Emerson- Wants it on Record for Unfunded Liability, is still a major concern is the take of the subcommittee's notes.

Jon Emerson- asked if there was going to be any additional million-dollar deposit for Cares Act.

Gregg Goggin- That is the last one as far as he knows of, and the last deposit was a surprise.

Jon Emerson- If that is all, we can move to the island specific issues.

7. Island Specific Issues

Jon Emerson- Eva that might, be you?

Eva Murray- Asked if there were other issues that might be shorter.

Kathy Clark- Is May 1, 2023, the start of the summer schedule, for Bass Harbor/Swan's Island.

Joel Perry- It's in the office, I believe that is correct. But let me confirm first.

Sonny Sprague- Asking about ferry parking signage ordered, Drainage concerns. Mentioned he'd call Rick Gradie if need be.

Mentioned things are going well.

Replacement for Mark?

Robert 'Henry' McFerren- Said when out looking at the crews house in Swan's Island, he'll also look at the issue Sonny brought up.

Sonny Sprague- Will you call when you're coming?

Robert 'Henry' McFerren- Absolutely.

Jon Emerson- Any other issues, or topics.

8. New Business

Jon Emerson- Nothing new, not hearing any new business.

9. Old Business

Jon Emerson- immediately brings up the next point.

Eva Murray- Last Meeting Mark Higgins had asked I communicate with the Community of Matinicus in deciding the name for the Vessel that is replacing the Libby. The letter I had sent, went down through several options, but again this is something way beyond my pull.

- Strong Feelings-Customary Names.

- Islands have no historic name stake; but some examples are George Mitchell, Josh Chamberlain, etc.

- Understands and welcomes thoughts and questions.

- Penobscot Tribe, if we possibly had gotten a response from them, everyone would be happy (I did try to reach out to them in several different formats - six weeks ago, without any response)

- But can we get verification from them anyways?

Alex Zipparo- Said she'd being willing to help getting contact information. The Island Institute is already working with Tribal communities in other matters.

Eva Murray- Doesn't want to make anyone upset with not having a name yet or be the reason the boats name gets delayed in being decided. But I feel I've done as much as I can with what I have.

Dennis Damon- Wait until next Meeting to have a decision?

Jon Emerson- Where does the name, 'Matinicus', come from?

Eva Murray- I don't know.

Jon Emerson- We could take off the 'Native American', to be continued?

Bill Pulver- The Commissioner looks for recommendations from the board.

Eva Murray- Waiting to go forward, Burgess Grant, Matinicus, etc. Sounds fine with any of this, not any more resources.

Bill Pulver- Let's wait for the Island institute and see what happens.

Eva Murray- Job doesn't sound done- we can wait.

Alex Zipparo- I'll help in reaching out to the Penobscot Nations.

Dennis Damon- We could name it "*Eva Murray*".

Jon Emerson- do we have any additional old business?

Bill Pulver- Although it didn't make it onto the agenda, we need to talk about rates. Projections for four years of rates, would like this so new rates start October 1, 2024. We're looking for recommendations, to a new rate structure that'll last four years. And to collectively work together on it.

Jon Emerson- Next board meeting we'll discuss rates, and tariff. We look to our towns people for suggestions.

Joel Perry- I think John King, suggested that in the past.

Jon Emerson- I think you're right.

10. Next Meeting/Adjournment

Jon Emerson- asked everyone was in agreement to move to next meeting. And what the date of that meeting would be. **Next meeting will be Thursday, May 18, 2023, at 10:30 am.**

Jon Emerson- Meeting adjourned unless anyone disagrees. Dennis Damon agrees, and Duncan Bond seconds.