

Maine State Ferry Advisory Board

Meeting Minutes- Draft

Thursday 9/21/23 10:30 AM via ZOOM & in Person

1. Roll Call:

Islands: Jon Emerson/ North Haven, Kathy Clark/ Swan's Island, Duncan Bond/ Jan Keiper/ Frenchboro, John King/ Islesboro Eva Murray/Matinicus, and Phil Crossman/ Vinalhaven

MaineDOT: Bill Pulver, Henry McFerren, Bill Geary, Joel Perry, Bethany Mulcahy, Abby Baker, and Melissa Goocher.

Mainland: Hank Berg/Casco Bay Lines, Dennis Damon/ Bass Harbor.

2. Introductions of Visitors:

Alex Zipparo/ Island Institute, and Peter Drury/ Vinalhaven.

3. Approval of Minutes:

Jon Emerson- asked to move for Approval of Meeting Minutes of July 20, 2023.

Phil Crossman- Moved.

Duncan Bond- Seconded approval.

Jon Emerson- All in Favor? Unanimous vote to approve, everyone in favor.

4. Communications

a. To or by the Board- Nothing formal to mention.

b. To or by MSFS/ MDOT

Bill Pulver-It is appropriate to mention Dan McNichols' email to the Advisory Board and recognize related communications to MSFS and MaineDOT were received from Advisory Board members. Just wanted to put it on the record, didn't feel further discussion was necessary.

Bill Geary- Official communication to MSFS were from Martin Grimnes— specifically on attending the Norway trip for understanding electrified ferries. Unable to attend, but we are fully engaged with electric ferry integrator ABB for propulsion design for the new Electric Ferry (for the Smith Replacement). Additionally, on communication regarding emergency runs. And we'll also discuss the winter schedules later in the meeting.

Jon Emerson- Clarifying if the Emergency runs were an old problem or new problem.

Bill Geary- A run was made after normal hours, therefore cancelling the first trip in the morning. Has a date set up with the USCG in Portland, to discuss the letter from 2018 regarding the requirements of rest and clarification moving going.

Peter Drury- With your meeting with the USCG, could they make island specific outlines?

John King- A few years ago, there was a bunch of emergency runs, but the demand has dropped back.

Bill Geary- We are open to discussing possibilities with the USCG and looking at all possible aspects.

Bill Pulver- Could you be more specific on what you mean by island specific?

Peter Drury- The demands- for trip request-crews response- work requirements, etc. Dependent on the way the USCG asks the customer.

Bill Geary – I will look into this more.

Jon Emerson- Anything to add?

Phil Crossman- Electric Boat people in Norway- regarding the boat charging. Hopefully someone from MSFS/MDOT will be able to attend that, making it a successful possible outing for everyone. I'll look at getting the new date for this meeting.

Bill Geary- we'll be looking into it, but unsure if able to attend currently.

Jon Emerson- Is there anything additional to add?

c. Legislative Review

Bill Pulver- Nothing new to report.

John King- Any updates?

Bill Pulver- Some research and information came out of a KPF report that was commissioned by the Island Institute. Some of that information may be useful.

Eva Murray- We're are still in the process of changing the wording of the Matinicus trip limits on the statutes and Frenchcore's archaic, policies for rewording them policy so it doesn't put a standard number on the amount of trips.

John King- Nothing formal but got some feedback from others regarding revenue options.

Bill Pulver- the 50-50 discussion is proposed topic later in the meeting. Are we discussing now or later?

Eva Murray- Just want to make the board aware that we are going to work with legislature on changing the way it is written for Matinicus.

Jon Emerson- Can the schedule be increased without the legislature.

Bill Pulver- No, it's a state statute.

Jan Keiper- Frenchboro would like to change the language from may to shall.

Bill Pulver- Discusses the history of the original legislative rule of 12 trips per year to Matinicus, which was changed to 24, and then changed to the current 36 trips. It appears that having a limit on trips to Matinicus has been intentional by the legislature, not an arbitrary decision.

Eva Murray- Having the hard number of trips and wants to make the change, so we aren't stuck with that number.

Bill Pulver- How much more money will it cost with more runs will also need to be a consideration.

Eva Murray- Get the legislature part of the trips out of the way, because it's just a matter of changing the wording so we can have the possibility of more trips, not the old distinct of only a certain number of trips. Potential for availability and Frenchcore feels the same way.

Jan Keiper- It's the term of *May* versus *Shall*, wanting some service.

Jon Emerson- Both requests seem reasonable.

Jon Emerson- Tried hard for the committee, something that can be discussed further.

Eva Murray- Time to move forward.

Bill Pulver – At the time of the submission of the bills for Frenchboro and Matinicus, it was pre-Covid and both islands were asking for more service. MaineDOT/MSFS are not in the position to expand or increase ferry service given budget and personnel constraints.

John King- Review of the MSFS- Arguing about the 50-50 thing. Election time is coming. Getting politicians on the transportation committee. (Gives examples of how so many committee members have little ties to the island communities currently.)

Jon Emerson- Someone speaking on the island's behalf will be important and need to get elected officials on the transportation committee.

5. Reports of the Board

Jon Emerson- Does anyone have anything to report? *No one responds, the meeting moves forward.*

6. Reports of the Ferry Service

a. Ridership

Joel Perry- were up 2000 riders from last year. Now have over a year of ridership data specifically from Rocket Rez. *References the PowerPoint.*

b. Staffing Report

Bethany Mulcahy –

Assistant Port Engineer- Candidate Declined

Relief Captain- New Position (2)

Able Bodied Seaman- New Position (2)

Yes, both of those positions, are additional.

North Haven Terminal Supervisor- Posted today.

Customer Service Representatives- Bass Harbor, Swan's Island, North Haven all have positions posted.

Joel Perry- Can update on Bass Harbor, we just offered a position to someone for Bass Harbor.

Bethany Mulcahy- Contractually we must leave postings up for two weeks. But we're doing more outreach to applicants immediately.

Peter Drury- Posted Assistant Director position has closed. Any update?

Bill Geary- Yes, Derek Dostie has accepted the offer and was an external candidate. Graduated from Kingspoint. He's a 22-year veteran of the USCG and retired as a Commander from Portland, that did a lot of regulatory work, including some COIs for the MSFS vessels. After the USCG, he worked in the private sector as a vessel inspector in the US Great Lakes. Moving his family from New York to Hope, Maine and reports on 10/16.

c. Vessel Status Report-

Thompson- in service on as the Vinalhaven boat. No issues.

Smith- No issues

Philbrook- No issues

Burgess- Nothing to report.

Lee- Sewage issues. Will be replaced with the Philbrook, probably this weekend. (Comments were asked about the size of the Philbrook vs. Lee. Confirmed it was the same, sister boats)

Libby- No issues in service.

Spear- Ran aground. Rudders, shafts, wheels, all have damage, and additional damage has been found upon inspection believed to be unrelated to the grounding. A 3rd party auditor is writing a report with findings. Estimated time back in service is another month.

Dinsmore- we (Bill Geary and Henry McFerren) did go down and visit in Rhode Island. There is a delay for switch board. The date went from November 2023 to February 2024.

Shay- Going to see boat in person around the beginning of November. Should be able to launch in April 2024.

Smith Replacement- ABB is helping along with all the designs alongside with Gilbert Design.

John King- Would love an update on the design when available. Work with CMP and DOT on possible power issues. There is a site visit next week.

Bill Pulver- A quick background- Grants were obtained for the new boat. We are also looking at terminal upgrades and increased parking, for Lincolnville and Rockland locations. Islesboro has some information and Lincolnville wasn't fully aware. The project manager, Mackenzie Kersbergen, presented to the Lincolnville select board on the new ferry with options on the grid enhancements and parking upgrade.

John King- Open lines of communication.

****Subject Changed to Vessel measurements****

Bill Pulver- The Dinsmore is going to be the sister ship to the Spear.

Eva Murray- Asked about the aisle width on the Shay.

Peter Drury- Height under the wheelhouse.

Jon Emerson- Asked about the red patch on the Shay.

Bill Geary – Will get answers to those questions and report back.

Phil Crossman- New ferry should have designed extra space for the vehicles. Passengers not being able to get out of their vehicle in on the Spear.

Jon Emerson- When North Haven gets a new boat hopes that concerns with space, elevator, width of aisle ways will be taken into consideration.

Peter Drury- What about main deck space for baggage?

John King- Open deck- being able to move in and out of vehicles.

Peter Drury- Design on Thompson- Baggage- width of vessels, if additional width would allow for them to move into pens.

Jon Emerson- With this Spear class of boats, have some flaws with size.

d. Variance Report

John King- Revenue robust 28% Change, busy period, with number of 414,000 from last year.

W/O taking in 50%, contribution from highway fund.

15% expenditure

Other didn't amount to much, overall.

Bad news, it seems Repairs are suspiciously low, possibly a timing issue.

15% increase YTD only 11% in last year's anomalies.

Specialty Pay- Tutorial

Health insurance is 100% up with a \$100,000.

Unfunded Liability, line item 39.60. fast approaching \$1 million a year (this should be addressed). With last year being at \$55,000 and this year at \$122,000.

Professional Services- not by state.

Budget of 0- 1st quarter?

Insurance- curious if it's the timing issue.

IT Costs- sudden hike in costs. Again, last year it was \$38,000 and this year its \$8,300.

Bill Pulver – pointed out that while the ticket revenue is up considerably compared to last year, it is the same as it was 2 years ago at the same point in time. As well as the decrease is due to RocketRez contract work being completed.

Melissa Goocher- Rocket Rez contract Costs- for modifications.

Bill Geary-RR is answering questions about reservations and testing on able to provide more. Making online reservations for customers.

John King- Everyone should benefit from that.

Jon Emerson- Getting a reservation for 30 days ahead at 930.

Joel Perry- It will need to be a slow roll and fully vested out.

Phil Crossman- Every instance someone will jump up and scream and learn how to cheat the system.

Melissa Goocher- Professional Services, it depends on the coding for the reason for the services being made, and what's being paid.

John King- 4000 were \$0 always something doesn't seem right, there's always been something there.

Melissa Goocher- Totals for the future. Personal services, Retro pay (raises), A boot allowance, Cell phones, etc.

Bill Pulver- I have a slide on the question about pay and the differences.

7. Island Specific Issues

a. Legislative recommendation on increasing states shares of 50/50% expense.

Jon Emerson- Who would like to speak on this?

Phil Crossman- Naive of the greater contribution would have to wait to have that on my behalf. Can an argument be made?

Bill Pulver- Bill referenced the communication received from Frenchboro suggesting the 50% state subsidy should be higher. The letter suggested there were many other state-run ferries that have a higher state subsidy. Bill asked for the list of those other ferry systems that are higher, because MaineDOT is only aware of North Carolina. KPF's report showed that other ferry service's get revenue from a specific local tax...

Jan Keiper- Frenchboro has no list, it is just something that was said at a meeting. Just trying to educate the select board with a general discussion. Logical reasons.

Eva Murray- Are there any ferry services that resemble us. Washington state Ferry, Staten Island, then rinky-dink. Not many similar.

b. Increase wages for boat crews and island terminal staff.

Bill Pulver- Asking about the letter that was sent to the Governor.

Jon Emerson- not easy to do that between meetings.

Phil Crossman- Sending serious consideration to wages. DOT has said over and over about hiring and retaining staff. Government could offer support. Not appealing. Back in August to encourage support.

Bill Pulver- At the tail-end of covid everyone was dealing with a nationwide mariner shortage... We have increased staffing, adding additional Able-Bodied Seaman, and Captains. We can go over pay rates in more detail later in the meeting.

Jon Emerson- Support concept about email, pay gap between private and state. Discusses a letter received by Phil Crossman and him.

John King- Read a Beacon article about a loss. The collective report for the ferry service.

Bill Geary- Watch the screen for presentation regarding pay at the State.

Bill Pulver- DOT doesn't get to determine pay, the State Department of Financial Services has that authority. Speaks of pay and pay grades, and ways to increase pay.

Bill Geary- (Shares a PowerPoint). Asks if everyone can see and hear.

Bill Pulver- Talks about his slide show, bringing up the following points.

You have the traditional methods, for retaining staff.

Reclassification of certain jobs- FJA- upgrades.

Reevaluate existing job duties, responsibilities.

Recruitment and retention adjustments, i.e.. Steps of pay.

Incentives, bonuses- are easier to get versus changing the pay scale.

General increases for bargaining with Union.

Different parts of state government can determine the Union's bargaining unit.

Alex Zipparo- Asking about the 5% rule for employees to transfer from state agency to state agency.

Bill Pulver- Recruit and retain, and how to do it, depending on the state agency, you go up a step, no more than 5% of the current step of pay you're at.

Phil Crossman- Encouraged, after hearing this.

Alex Zipparo- This is very coagulated, thank you for explaining it better.

Bill Pulver-There is no floor or cap to that 5% rule. Also, something you can get for state statutes, recruitment, and retention state (2D Section S7506, Part 17).

This is what happens- Brianna Brissal, Director of Human Resources. Gets Justifications, vacancies, and turnover rates. Geographical data. And the methods that have been used in the past for recruiting staff.

Peter Drury- Used to be a Shop Steward for the Ferry service, who is collectively grouped together.

Bill Pulver- Goes on to explain the FJA- Functional Job Analyst. Ex. A captain job was looked at and created at higher pay range. Increase for Position- and age. Increase in the wages.

Bethany Mulcahy- Job fairs, educational outreach, with local schools, and good documentation of unsuccessful retainment are all considered, attempts have to be year-round as well, just not seasonal.

Bill Pulver- The director will act on the report, like last fall.

John King- Under section 75- trades paper with information regarding the basic bargaining unit.

Bill Pulver- Concludes slide show.

c. Frenchboro Schedule

Duncan Bond- Wanted the schedule change to bring back afternoon runs like they had before Covid.

Peter Drury- Vinalhaven winter schedule- no lunch break and was a management decision.

Jan Keiper- Being out on Frenchboro year-round the 1st and 3rd expanding to a long Wednesday or Thursday afternoon, and possibly Sunday to. I realize it not easy sharing boats with other islands.

Jon Emerson- I am sure it's not easy sharing a boat with another island.

8. New Business

a. Bill G- Winter Schedules

Bill Geary- please keep in mind these schedules are drafts. Nothing official yet. But would like to get all the schedules consistent.

Matinicus Schedule

Eva Murray- I realize there's a lot that goes into this. But if we can please avoid early Monday mornings in the winter. To add at least one trip to match for a Tuesday/ Thursday in July or August, due to freight issues. And with March and November schedules if we could put them more back-to-back for people going back and forth.

North Haven Schedule

Bill Geary- This schedule still has the three runs, More consistency with the other locations. No holiday schedule, some boats go, and some don't. Biggest change is the times of two trips, North Haven is the only boat leaving after dark in winter months. Discusses safety concerns for reasons for the change.

Jon Emerson- Push back and hour and quarter though? Pretty drastic change in service- not useful with the new times. Most of the residents understand that the late boat departure, comes with a higher risk of last boat being cancelled due to weather and conditions.

Phil Crossman- You said about captains being able to safely see the seas, because of visibility.

Jon Emerson- Not speaking for the captains, but it's simple of 20-30 minutes of the trip is in protected water.

Bill Geary- These again are proposals, not official schedule changes. We are opening conversation to the island residents for feedback, so we can come to a middle ground. My hope in these changes is to just have a summer and winter schedule, that changes across the board. But again, the other islands are all in their port by this time. Swan's Island, Islesboro, and Vinalhaven.

Jon Emerson- Doesn't fly for me though, and I assume there won't be with others either. Certain variables are different though. It is late to be giving us this proposal, though.

Vinalhaven Schedule

Bill Geary- No Fall schedule, just a winter and summer schedule. Changes with Daylight Savings, time. And not having any Christmas or New Years Day Service.

Phil Crossman- USCG encountered lights of the narrows, Safety concerns of this change don't hold any weight, and our last boat regardless of the time of the year it was always 4:30 pm, the 3:15 pm is a newer schedule.

Bill Pulver- The date of implantation and a couple other changes.

Peter Drury- Since 2010, we've had a New Years Day Schedule. I used to be captain on this routed, and again, the schedule, meant possibly more cancelled trips, but very few trips were cancelled due to weather conditions. And as far as the lights, I don't see any reason why they can't be turned off, during our times.

Islesboro Schedule

Bill Geary- Explains the schedule.

John King- Thank you for the feedback. Dropping and adding the Morning, and Night trips might be helpful. I'll give this to the selectboard and give feedback to you with their thoughts. But to add, this schedule might affect the magnet and other students as well.

Swan's Island/Frenchboro Schedule

Bill Geary- I changed the formatting of the schedule lay-out like the others, as it is one of the trickier ones to read. Made the adjustment recommendation for the school as requested. I've left the wacky Wednesdays, and Sunday schedule alone. Captain Bob Morehouse helped with this.

Jan Keiper- We really want the Sunday Schedule. Hoping there's more flexibility with the schedule.

Kathy Clark- Thank you for the adjustment for the school kids. And the Christmas departure was used.

Bill Geary- I'll investigate those questions, about the Sunday schedule.

Duncan Bond- The 1st and 3rd trip on Wednesday leave less time on mainland which is concerned.

Jon Emerson- Reached a point where details need to be worked out more. Is everyone in agreement to move the meeting to the next point about the Tariff.

b. Bill P- Winter Tariff Presentations

From the feedback we've received, we have developed another conceptual fare scenario that provides more of the increase on peak season prices, particularly for the vehicles and truck tickets. Leaving the passenger ticket prices with no or very small increase, especially for the Off-Peak, and bringing the price increases, more to the ones for Peak season. By paying more attention to the amount of deck space used for vehicles and trucks, etc. The scenario was shared with the Board. Proposed a special meeting with Commissioner Bruce Van Note in attendance.

Jon Emerson- We should figure out meeting dates, for anyone that have questions.

John King- What about commuter books for residents.

Bill Pulver- Vehicle prices are the biggest complaint, due to the prices going up on everything.

Jan Keiper- Frenchboro is in a weird spot with getting some service but not full service yet being looped in with the other main islands.

Bill Pulver- We welcome feedback and your recommendations.

Jon Emerson- I've talked more about putting more people on during the peak season, a 60-40 rule. Seems like it would fit the peak season.

Eva Murray- I am happy with the scenario as proposed.

Bill Pulver- The overall rationale of the concept is to put the increased revenue on demand on the space of the boat. At least the concept of this is the rate increase is where the demand is.

9. Old Business

Phil Crossman- Navigational Equipment on the Maine Port Authority, about the one voice abandoning the Drunkard. Getting on the board to get this equipment replaced (just inside of the point going into North Haven). Dennis, are you still on the Maine Port Authority? - Confirmed.

Jon Emerson- Three Captains are discussing the importance about getting that replaced, it doesn't seem like it would take much to keep this going.

Bill Pulver- Have you received notification they'll no longer be maintaining it.

Dennis Damon- Pen Bay Pilots Association, and the Captain of the USCG.

10. Next Meeting (s)

**Monday, October 30, 2023, at 10:30 am – Special Meeting with the Commissioner regarding
Tariff.**

Thursday, November 30, 2023, at 10:30 am- Next Advisory Board Meeting

Jon Emerson- Does that conclude our meeting.

John King- Move to Adjourn the meeting.

Eva Murray- I second.

John Emerson: All in favor? Unanimous