

Lummi Island Ferry Advisory Committee (LIFAC)

March 2021 Meeting: 6pm, March 10, 2021 on Zoom platform

CALL TO ORDER

Rhayma Blake called the meeting to order at 6:05pm.

ROLL CALL

Present: (Quorum) **Charles Bailey, Rhayma Blake, Jim Dickinson, Mike McKenzie, Judy Olsen**

Others Attending:

Public Works—Ass't Director **Liz Kosa**, Ferry Sr. Master **Rich Hudson**, Communications Specialist **Marie Duckworth**

Gallery— Island residents **Elizabeth Kilanowski, David Kershner, Mary Ross** (Zoom host), **Mike Skehan**.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

OPEN SESSION

Elizabeth Kilanowski, an islander in charge of the new weather station on the Lummi Island ferry terminal, asked to confer with whomever is in charge of operating it for Public Works on ideas of how it will work. "In 50 years a researcher like me will want to know figures on rainfall, the wind, etc." All collected data is provided to Paul Davis for the island archives. She stressed the importance based on climate changes on the island.

All data passed on to Paul Davis to put in archives.

Rich Hudson said the message is "loud and clear" and he will put Elizabeth in contact with ferry captain John Mulhern who's in charge of the new station. One has been identified on EarthNetworks.com and the manufacturer will erect and maintain it on an annual contract. Rich described its features: "stores data, accessible by phone, displays a live camera shot of the Whatcom Chief (crossing Hale Passage) on the web...it has high, robust quality that would suit our purposes well for many years."

Cost is \$5,900 and an annual \$900 maintenance fee. Rich pointed out that the initial weather station cost \$1,000 and lasted just two years so it makes sense to pay more for better quality. (Elizabeth K. from the gallery suggested that outside sources could help if it's a problem financially.)

Liz Kosa said she's already discussed the financing internally and "will talk to Randy (Rydel) to see what the budget can bear" and take a recommendation to the next level. Grant funds also could come into play.

APPROVAL OF AMENDED FEBRUARY 2021 MINUTES

So moved and seconded, motion passed 5-0.

LIFAC INTERNAL BUSINESS

Meeting change: The committee moved the April meeting a day sooner to Tuesday, April 13 at 6pm because of the main agenda item: Public Works financial officer Randy Rydel will present a report on the ferry operations budget of 2019-2020. (He has a conflict with a community board he serves on each 2nd Wednesday of the month.) Randy will send LIFAC financial documents before the presentation.

FERRY OPERATIONS REPORT (Rich Hudson)

Out-of-service periods:

During a good weather window in February an outage occurred on very short notice to replace a "finger flapper." Welders fabricated a new safety guard that counterbalances the flapper on the island side.

They also took advantage of the unscheduled outage to deal with other items on a long-standing list. The road crew sealed cracks throughout parking lot and repaired a hole with a coat of asphalt on the transfer span leading up to the dock. "We're pleased that we finished that 30 minutes early (before the ferry ran again) after starting 40 minutes late," Rich said.

He announced that the regularly scheduled monthly maintenance outage would take place March 17, which involves oiling, lubing, inspecting all moving parts, changing fluids and filters, etc.

Sanican update:

The plan is moving ahead on a pilot trial program to install a portable restroom at Gooseberry Point from the weekends of Memorial Day through Labor Day.

OLD BUSINESS

Update on Replacement Ferry Funding – Liz Kosa

Item 1: Liz reported that Roland (Middleton, project manager who usually delivers this report) is recuperating from a medical procedure. Liz said that regarding the CRAB application, the state is issuing an official “call for projects,” and County Public Works notified the CRAB Board of the intention to make a presentation in their April meeting.

Liz informed LIFAC, “We enlisted KPFF’s help and we got a copy to review of Skagit County’s application from which they received the money. We’re going to do ours better. We will be as successful as they were.”

Whatcom County Engineer Jim Karcher is fully aware of all that’s in the works and is fostering good relations with CRAB leadership under its new director, who was promoted from within.

Charles asked where the CRAB Board is located? Liz: “Olympia. It’s right where we want them, as we can go across the street and get what we want with the state legislature. They’re good folks (CRAB). I met with them just today. They’re operating under a motto of ‘What can we do to help counties, rather than what counties are doing wrong.’ It’s a good mindset.”

Item 2: *Update on the proposed Capital Ferry Fund surcharge ordinance.*
(Liz)

It was introduced by County Council the day before this meeting, March 9, and will be on the agenda for a public hearing and vote at its meeting March 23. Rhayma Blake planned to speak during the open-comments period, possibly Roland, too, and Liz said, “I’m happy to be supportive, as well.”

Charles wondered if we all should attend (on Zoom) and Liz replied that “it wouldn’t hurt...it’s always nice to have support of the group.”

She described an attachment sent to Council, “a pseudo white paper containing all things we’ve done and where we’re at.” All of it was derived from documents that LIFAC has worked on or that Public Works has done over the last decade. Liz: “It speaks to the funding piece: where we are, how we’re going for the BUILD grant, and the surcharge. It’s the financial plan for the BUILD grant itself.”

The amortization schedule also was part of the packet submitted to Council. Liz will send a copy of all of it to LIFAC. She explained how it is simplified to keep Council from having to pour over hundreds of pages of information across the last 10 years.

There is a section on design of the new ferry, Liz reported—how it meets the community needs and why it’s important; what the reliability looks like compared to if we kept using the Whatcom Chief, and what the design does to reduce pollution.

Rhayma pointed out that under “objectives” in the report it mentions battery design...and fuel reduction, and asked, “Is that a reality?”

Jim D responded: “When you put the battery in (you’re) burning more fuel.” He detailed how that happens, *vis a vis* the reduction in power from the diesel engines. Jim noted, “Until we have extra electric power from somewhere, I believe we should build the boat for the diesels and put the other in later.” He cited the problems incurred by a power outage a few weeks before when the island’s primary transformer went down because it was overloaded. “The grid coming into Lummi Island is maximized right

now. Until that comes across from the mainland, we'll be unable to pull power out of anything.”

He reiterated his suggestion that until we have power system innovation, not to build in the conversion to electric option up front. Jim commented that “all my objections are not to become an impediment...I'm looking forward to the future.”

Charles pointed out that the capital surcharge is to build up a permanent replacement fund even though the actual construction of the new ferry is only six years out. Liz explained that the financial plan for the BUILD grant is for six years, but the proposed surcharge ordinance to Council has no “sunset clause,” i.e., expiration date.

Item 3: *Public information and messaging about the surcharge. (Marie Duckworth)*

With a screen share, LIFAC could follow an envisioned flyer with a large image and bullet points on one side, and on the other side a series of FAQs. Marie proposed to build it out on the Public Works website.

The committee went into a series of detailed comments and suggested revisions to the FAQs, such as terminology in some places to make it consistent with existing documentation. Examples: Senior/Disabled as a category for exemptions from the surcharge, and diesel/battery hybrid in describing the new ferry design.

LIFAC agreed to turn around the suggested flyer in time for Marie to publish it before the County Council meeting March 23. LIFAC expressed gratitude for an exceptional piece of work by Marie in getting this prepared.

We also addressed the expedient need to get more information out to all possible outlets (e.g., The Tome, social media sites, about the March 23 action taking place in a 6pm public hearing, and to include the Council agenda, so if anybody had questions or comments they could prepare to speak.

Both Liz and Marie reiterated their commitment to resources, such as visuals or documents, and offering PW's services for concepts, creation, and delivery.

NEW BUSINESS

Mike Skehan presented details of a micro-grid meeting that he planned to facilitate, including participation by Charles Bailey from LIFAC. The session is set for 10:30am-Noon on April 14. (More details forthcoming)

The purpose is to address the possibilities for bringing electrical capability to Lummi Island—local power to help with the new ferry. “It is a public awareness meeting, rather than decision-making,” Mike said. It’s not to “rule anything in or out, but to get a community dialogue going first.”

He reported many specific details that a roundtable group would discuss at a planned brainstorming session. Speakers would include top officials from Alcoa Intalco Works, Puget Sound Energy, and a manager of planning for the Northwest power grid.

A brief summation of the vision: Posing the possibility to charge the new ferry from on-island battery banks during the off-beat hours and, when it's berthed on the island overnight, to top off the batteries for the next day.

Among commitments to attend the meeting, Mike listed representatives from:

- LIFAC.
- Whatcom County Climate Impact Committee.
- Public Utility District (PUD).
- Lummi Island Heritage Trust.
- Fire District 11 (Lummi Island)
- The Whatcom County Health & Wellness Committee.
- Invitations have been issued to County Councilman Todd Donovan and to Public Works to participate.

A video production is planned for posting publicly afterward.

Rhayma pointed out that just three members of LIFAC should attend because if a majority attends then it falls under the open public meetings act.

ADJOURNMENT: 7:32pm