

Lummi Island Ferry Advisory Committee (LIFAC)

May 2021 Meeting: 6pm, May 14 on Zoom platform

CALL TO ORDER

Rhayma Blake called the meeting to order at 6:02pm

ROLL CALL

(Quorum) **Rhayma Blake, Charles Bailey, Jim Dickinson, Mike McKenzie, Judy Olsen.** Absent: **Gregory Rice.**

Others Attending:

Public Works—Assistant Director **Liz Kosa**, Ferry Sr. Master **Rich Hudson**, Communications Specialist **Marie Duckworth.**

County Council—**Todd Donovan.**

Gallery—**Cris Colburn, Bill Fox, Tobey King, Mary Ross (Zoom host), and Mike Skehan.**

MOMENT OF SILENCE

OPEN SESSION

Cris Colburn, former member of the LIFAC from Bellingham, opened with the revelation that tomorrow is Stevie Wonder's birthday! He also commented on the [Future of Electricity on Lummi Island and the Ferry](#) webinar hosted by LIFAC on April 14th. Cris also suggested a name for the new ferry: Blue Heron.

Rhayma informed the Committee that Greg Rice was in recovery from surgery, that he sent regrets, and that it is unknown whether he will be able to continue serving as the only off-island representative.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Moved and accepted minutes of April 13 meeting, 5-0.

LIFAC INTERNAL BUSINESS

Mike Skehan, organizer, reported on the April 14 webinar conference on a microgrid initiative, hosted by LIFAC. The conference presenters identified (a.) obstacles to obtaining an electricity microgrid and (b.) other backup opportunities—solar, wind, water, and wood.

Two LIFAC members—Rhayma and Charles—participated in the two-day webinar that featured 30 individuals from 10 different organizations. May and June sessions were planned and the eventual goal is to produce a white paper on the takeaways. Mr. Skehan said, “It’s a big mountain to build.”

Councilman Donovan commented on a similar project on Decatur Island and offered to assist if and when code changes would be required by the County.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Update on Operations (Rich Hudson, Senior Master, Whatcom Chief)

Rich called on Cris in the audience—because he was an administrator many years at the Whatcom Transportation Authority (WTA)—to comment about very early preliminary discussions of reworking the bus routes and schedule at Gooseberry Point. Cris pointed out many factors that would go into such decisions, some complex, and he said it would take a great deal of time and planning to implement any changes. One factor, for example, is that Islanders and residents of Lummi Nation travel in many different directions from Gooseberry Point.

SaniCan (portable toilet) at Gooseberry Point

A plan was set for Sanitary Service Company of Bellingham to install a unit on the Thursday before Memorial Day weekend and remain at least through the duration of dry dock (Oct. 3). Public Works will then assess the situation. “You know we're going to check,” Rich said, referring to damages and abuse. The cost is \$400/month, including twice-a-week cleaning by SSC, “which was by far the lowest of the comparisons we got.”

Local Weather at the Lummi Island Ferry Terminal

Based on Public Works financial manager Randy Rydel's budget report (in April minutes), the possibility is iffy in terms of funding from the ferry budget. Public Works is exploring all possibilities for funding, such as grants. Mike McKenzie mentioned possibilities of getting some funds together that would get it donated to Public Works. Mike said he planned to meet with ferry captain John Mulhern, who has identified a durable, long-term solution and they would explore what grant and sponsorship possibilities. The price of the unit John centered on would cost between \$8-10k plus regular maintenance fees.

New on-boarding of ferry employees

Rich reported that they received 8 applications for new on-call positions to fill personnel needs during the peak summer season, and beyond. Six received consideration; the other two did not meet the required qualification of residing on the island. Interviews by staff and crew were set for early June.

“All the applicants were really good,” Rich said. The department didn’t add any last year because ridership was down because of the pandemic. After interviews, at least two or three will continue to provide an extra deckhand. “All the indicators are that it's going to be a busy summer and we want to make sure we're keeping our schedule and that we're keeping everybody's personal safety and property at the forefront of our minds.” Plans called for using an extra deckhand from Memorial Day weekend through right before dry dock. Besides safety, the extra service support “is going to be good for income, so there’s that, too.”

Reduction of signage at terminals

Communications specialist Marie Duckworth assessed the Gooseberry Point and Lummi Island terminals signage and joined Rich to devise a plan to minimize the signs and information. “She looked at the 341 signs or whatever it is that we have out there.” That included putting up some signs with QR codes to scan at Gooseberry leading up to the vehicle lines with details on how to get in the queue and how to merge and get on the ferry. The QR codes would take passengers to an informational video detailing everything they need to know while in line before they get there so. “We're looking forward to getting that project off the ground very, very shortly—like, in the next couple of weeks.”

Capital Surcharge Implementation

The announcement about and transition to a \$1 fare surcharge on most rides went smoothly with very little negative pushback. The surcharge will take effect in mid-May.

2. Update on Replacement Ferry Project (Liz Kosa, Asst. Dir., Public Works)

Funding Update

The financial packages “look really good.” The grants are both sources of federal funding. One has changed names, *i.e.*, acronyms from BUILD to rebranding as RAISE.

The first submission for a grant comes at the end of June and “we hear back in either the very end of September or the first part of October.” Roland Middleton, project manager who missed this meeting for medical reasons, will advise LIFAC and islanders when letter-writing to government representatives is most effective. The intent is to keep them aware of our applications.

Public Update Meeting

Mike McKenzie met on behalf of LIFAC with Public Works officials (Liz, Roland, Rich, and Marie... and Rhayma joined in mid-session by remote) about two matters. The main one was a proposed informational, public meeting on the island (with a Zoom option).

PW staff feels that since it's been quite some time since we've engaged the public, timing is good to give them an update on where everything stands. Funding status. Where the surcharge is headed and why. A presentation of what all we're getting in the new ferry. "And sort of educate them on the new vessel and all of its attributes," Liz said.

Marie put together a flyer that PW would make public soon. The flyer would help avoid delaying the purser from getting around the boat to collect fares without lingering to explain the surcharge to each car. "They can just hand the flyer to the driver or walk-on, and off they go."

Much discussion evolved around whether to have a public meeting and, if so, when and where and who all would be involved and at what level--LIFAC, Public Works, KPFF (the ferry consultants on the design of the boat), *et al.*

The give-and-take centered on whether such a meeting is premature, coming before results of the grant applications. Also, whether it would be at a venue, by Zoom, or a combination of both. LIFAC learned that Beach School as a venue would not be an option.

Some committee members were reluctant to have the meeting before funding is approved. PW's viewpoint is that much new has occurred since we've engaged the public together. For example, "Now there's a surcharge, so it's not that we're worried about blowback, because we would have seen a lot of that by now, but the concern is that we hear, 'OK, we're paying the surcharge. So what? What have you guys been up to? It's time to get folks excited. Show them what we've done and tell them where we're headed.'"

Consensus is clear that it would not be a technical presentation. The design is set. Rich summed up the purpose: "To get excitement generated. To catch people up on where we are, how we got there. And get a can't-wait energy going."

The component parts in PW staff's vision for the public presentation:

- Host and presenters
- Date, time, venue
- In-Person and/or Zoom format
- Handouts

NEW BUSINESS—NAME THE FERRY!

Mike proposed a Name the Ferry Contest. He learned that laws and regulations override one of his suggestions: sell the naming rights. He said, "A contest would make the naming interactive and create some fun and excitement."

He made it very clear that the public would NOT make the final determination of the name of the ferry by way of the contest.

His proposal calls only for entries of suggested names, then a method of deciding the best entries and having the name ultimately selected by a panel of “experts.” That would include the obvious—Public Works/Ferry Department, the captains and crew—and possibly LIFAC, and perhaps the KPFF reps who have been directly involved throughout the process.

The naming of the ferry has been a front-burner issue for Roland Middleton for about two years. The reasons center on having a specific identity (not just a generic boat) for legal documents, grant applications, public relations and so forth. A name gives the boat life.

Mike said, “A name really helps the messaging. This whole project is a P-R campaign and marketing campaign and an educational campaign to continually keep the public informed and excited.”

A preliminary outline of how the contest might be structured:

FERRY NAME CONTEST

- A. Solicit entries (define the parameters...i.e., how many entries per person). Marie said this would be easy to set up online.
- B. Emphatically, the public would not select the name by popular vote. Participation is the point, not decision-making.
- C. Determine “finalists”—a collection of the best suggestions.
- D. A panel to pick both the “best suggestions” and the final name: Public Works, Ferry Crew, LIFAC (including the two County Council reps), perhaps KPFF reps.
- E. The panel could decide on a name other than any of the entries.
- F. Give prizes. Finalists. And, if there’s a winner among the entries, a ferry pass. (We would solicit other prizes from the private sector)

Public Awareness

Rhayma will prepare an article for The Tome; deadline Friday, May 14.

ADJOURNMENT

Moved and passed 5-0.

Meeting adjourned 7:58pm