

PLIC General Meeting Minutes

March 1, 2012 Lummi Island Grange Hall

Board Members Mike McKenzie, Rhayma Blake, Stu Clark, Dave Wing, Michael Kmiecik, Mary Ross, and Joan Moye were present.

There were 25 community members in the audience

Board President Mike McKenzie called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM

WILLOWS INN UPDATE

Mike and Rhayma introduced John Gibb, the new Managing Partner of the Willows Inn. John grew up in Tanzania where his family operated a coffee farm and” safari inn.” He has a lot of experience in the hospitality industry and business management, having helped take the Semiahmoo resort out of receivership. He is one of 10 partners that have formed West Shore Hospitality, the new ownership group that purchased the Willows Inn last September. Many members of the group have strong ties to Lummi Island and Whatcom County. Both the Willows and the downstairs Taproot Café have been closed for renovations since January 1, “replacing old with new, bad with good” Both the Willows and the Taproot opened for business today and both will be open seven days a week. The upstairs dining room under world-renowned chef Blaine Wetzel will continue to offer the farm to table dining experience that has put Lummi Island on the international gourmet-dining map. The Taproot will now be more like an Internet café. It still will be a place where both islanders and visitors can stop in and enjoy a sandwich, bowl of soup or salad in its less formal space.

John confirmed that West Shore Hospitality is interested in trying to reopen and operate the Beach Store Café as well. He envisions the Beach Store continuing to feature wood fired pizzas, burgers, fish and chips, and chowders. He even mentioned the possibility of pizza delivery as well. He could not give a date for when the Beach Store might re-open.

When questioned about the rumor that the Willows Inn had made agreements to sublease or rent some additional homes on the island he confirmed that arrangements have been made to rent rooms and whole homes at a few select properties along Legoe Bay and Westshore Drive as well as Nettles Farm. The idea in doing this is to help lessen the parking, water and space demands on the Willows Inn site. Willows currently employs 40 people, with all but 3 being Lummi Island residents. During the recent construction that number was more like 60 persons. He cited several reasons why the management has a strong preference to hire islanders. He is interested in ferry related developments especially reductions in service and fare issues and is looking at options to keep the business thriving during dry dock.

REPORT ON FORMATION OF LUMMI ISLAND FERRY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Mike and Rhayma provided an update on efforts to recruit candidates for the newly approved Lummi Island Ferry Advisory Committee (LIFAC). Mike said that as of this morning Stu Clark, Jim Dickinson, Steve Luke, Chuck Antholt, and Jack Mulhern had submitted applications. By ordinance the seven-member committee must have at least

four and no more than five members who are residents or property owners on Lummi Island.

PLIC, LICA, and Civic Club board have been asked to reach out into the community to find good candidates to fill all seven of the positions. Rhayma had spoken to Ferry Task force Chairperson Barbara Ryan of Bellingham asking for her help in finding strong off island candidates that have contacts and skills needed to do the work of the committee.

Michael Skehan, stated that Geoff Beaumont, currently employed by WTA and previously director of B.C. ferries Tsawwassen operation has agreed to submit his application. Mike also said that he was looking for prospects that were active with the Whatcom County council of governments, and the Port of Bellingham.

Wanda Cucinotta asked what the deadline for submitting an application was. Mike McKenzie replied that the council had not set a deadline for applications. The PLIC board will approach the council chair, Kathy Kershner and request that the council set a firm date for reviewing applications and selecting committee members ideally before the next council meeting.

Dave Wing shared the e-mail response to Nancy Ging from Public Works project manager, Roland Middleton that Nancy posted today on the Ferry Forum website. He stated "The "stakeholders" for this project (Queuing Alternatives Analysis for the Haxton Way Gooseberry Point Traffic Project) will involve the Lummi Nation, Whatcom County Public Works Ferry Operations staff, **as well as the new Lummi Island Ferry Advisory Committee, to the extent that they are functional as the process must move forward to meet lease imposed deadlines.**" Now that the ordinance to form LIFAC has been passed, LIFAC is now a recognized stakeholder that gives Islanders a true voice in Ferry related issues. Many decisions are being made that will impact fares, levels of service, and implementation of ferry task force actionables. Conclusion is LIFAC needs to be appointed as soon as possible and needs to be prepared to hit the ground running.

PARKING AND SECURITY UPDATE

Mike McKenzie reported that Public Works Director Frank Abart says there will still be an adequate number of public parking spaces places at Gooseberry Point for the current number of commuters that have been using the lot on a year round basis. The fenced leased lot will go away on April 16th. Parking on the mainland will be strictly public parking, which like all the rest of the county will be park at your own risk. After researching subject of security, Mike said that he can find nothing which says that county is required to provide security for vehicles and contents parked in public parking spaces. PLIC's Board in meetings with new council member, Pete Kremen, and council members, Barbara Brenner, Kathy Kershner and newly elected County Executive Jack Louws, clearly stated our support for the closure of the lot based on the research and recommendations of the Ferry Task Force last fall. The PLIC Board prepared a clearly stated position paper that outlines the reasons for recommending not pursuing renewal of leased parking any further. Copies have been posted on PLIC's website, and links to this have been posted on the Ferry Forum, Paul Revere's Brown Betty list, and Lummi Island Nextdoor websites. Printed copies were distributed on the back of tonight's agendas, and will be provided on request to anyone by contacting PLIC secretary Mary Ross. PLIC's position supports Ferry Task Forces recommendation to reduce operating costs by

elimination of leased parking and reducing the very high costs of mainland security however possible while continuing to provide security to ferry passengers after dark during ferry operating hours.

Mike said that there will be some big changes at Gooseberry in the coming months as the County, the Lummi Nation, with input from the L.I. Ferry Advisory Committee begin to address changes required in the Ferry Lease Agreement. PLIC will keep the island informed as things develop.

NEW BUSINESS

Michael Schneider presented a proposal for a Flexible Ride Sharing program in which passengers seeking a ride to various areas of town be allowed to walk off the ferry first, go to a designated pick up area, hold up a sign with their desired destination on it and so catch a ride with neighbors. He asked for PLIC's support to pursue the ride sharing idea. The board will discuss it at our next meeting.

Mike McKenzie reported that PLIC board members have had meetings or contacts with all Council members except Bill Knutzen in the past month. Our private meeting with new county executive Jack Louws and his comments at the recent LICA meeting where his message seemed to be high costs of ferry are a burden to the county, need to cut service and keep fares high and stating he was going to request Lummi to reconsider not offering to renew parking lease at an upcoming meeting with LIBC, have lead many of us to realize that he has not had a chance to read the Ferry Task Force Report and may not have the benefit of the Task Force's hard work and findings. PLIC Board is trying to arrange a time for Chandler Johnson to present the Task Force report to new council member Pete Kremen and new executive Jack Louws. Steve Luke suggested that perhaps the applicants for the Ferry Advisory committee would also be an appropriate audience as well. PLIC Board is also requesting that the Council receive an update from Public Works emphasizing the context of the Task Forces recommendations and actions taken so far to implement them.

PLIC's role after LIFAC is formed was discussed, with comments including the possible dissolution of PLIC. Most agreed that PLIC should continue to build consensus and facilitate communication between LIFAC, the county, and the island. Discussed need for a communications vehicle to keep islanders aware of issues LIFAC is trying to solve, as well as providing and distributing accurate and detailed minutes or summaries of LIFAC meetings. The Board will take all of the suggestions under advisement.

Rhayma Blake recognized outgoing board member Joan Moye and extended her thanks to Joan for all of her efforts on behalf of PLIC and the island community.

The meeting adjourned at 8:03 PM.

Mary Ross Secretary