

May 28, 2013 PLIC General Meeting Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 6:34 PM by President Rhayma Blake. Members of the Board were introduced. Board Members Present: Rhayma Blake, Mike Kmiecik, Jansen Pierce, Mary Ross, Janet Lutz-Smith, David Wing. Absent: Tess Winds-Johnson

There were 26 community members present.

Treasurer Mike Kmiecik reported the current balance is \$3,638.37 with no outstanding obligations.

Rhayma Introduced Greg Brown a member of LIFAC (Lummi Island Ferry Advisory Committee). She also recognized two other LIFAC members, Mike McKenzie and Bob Busch that were present. Greg gave a well thought out power point presentation that summarized LIFAC's understanding and research on the Ferry Plattsburg currently operated as a reserve ferry on Lake Champlain as a possible replacement ferry for the Whatcom Chief. This was the first public presentation outside of a LIFAC meeting, and Greg and LIFAC are soliciting feedback and comments from islanders on the content before deciding to proceed with presenting to County.

Three options: 1. Keep Whatcom Chief 2. Purchase new ferry 3. Purchase used ferry. Costs and Benefits of each option over next 20 years. 1. Keep Chief running if it dies then replace up to \$35 million. 2. New Ferry build and operate \$28 million. Purchase used ferry Plattsburg, make ADA and USCG conversion from class T to Class H, deliver to Bellingham, and operate next 20 years \$13 million.

Comparison of Plattsburg to Chief: Plattsburg & Chief have same draft, and width so should be able to use existing docks, both currently not ADA compliant (Plattsburg has space to make ADA compliant, cost to modify is included in 3.5 million cost estimate), Fuel consumption thought to be similar but not definite. Differences: Chief Built in 1962, Plattsburg built in 1984. Chief has run in salt water the whole time, Plattsburg in fresh water. Corrosion in salt water is a much worse problem than in fresh. Plattsburg 80 feet longer than Chief can carry heavier loads, can carry 50 more passengers, almost twice the car carrying capacity, can take vehicles up to 40 tons vs. 25 ton max for Chief. As currently configured Plattsburg is an H class ferry but could be converted to an T class (same as Chief). H class ferry requires 4 crew, T class 3 crew. Cost of conversion to T class is figured into purchase and delivery price of \$3.5 million.

Bonding rates now 3.1 %, very low.

Questions and concerns from citizens:

How frequently does an appropriate used ferry come on the market? Is a council election year an appropriate time to discuss this? ADA compliance in Washington State is important. Wisdom of purchasing a Non ADA compliant (concern if Plattsburg is purchased) what is freeboard of Plattsburg? Looks like it rides lower in water than Chief. Do docks need to be modified and how? Concern length of ferry, modifications needed to dock. Could it take bigger trucks like logging trucks? What is county's position on ferry? Ability to use alternative landings. Longer ferry could do longer run. Could it handle longer rougher route? What is the remaining usable life of the Plattsburg? If 35-year usable life is international standard for use of ferries in salt water, what is the standard for ferries operated in fresh water? How can a bigger vessel have same fuel consumption as a smaller vessel? Cost to run for 20 years on 3 comparisons were quite varied. What is your basis for comparison? (More detail needed) What would happen to the Whatcom Chief if replaced? Why is the Plattsburg being put up for sale? Is there a problem with side wheel house vs. center wheelhouse?

Bottom Line with the information LIFAC has gathered, LIFAC believes that Plattsburg is a reasonable alternative to the Chief. Comment sheets were distributed to all present and 25 sheets were submitted for LIFAC's consideration.

Needs Based Fare Committee report: Rhayma updated membership on recommendation of needs based fare committee. Resolution developed by committee and approved by board as PLIC's current position is on website and copies were distributed for review. Basically no need to pursue this unless the county decides to change fare ordinance. If so PLIC has a position prepared. Concerns were expressed by audience, over fraud and misuse of passes if not monitored

closely. Some felt should have annual review and re-qualifying for all needs based fare passes. Currently Senior/Disabled property tax qualification is only reviewed every 6 years. Low income (not same as senior/disabled discount) in recommendation would still require annual qualification and review. In general people support needs based ferry fares for those who truly need them but some are concerned about fraud and abuse. Rhayma will investigate further.

Mike McKenzie, LIFAC President, on LIFAC's current issues: Thanked for feedback on Plattsburg. LIFAC will use this to decide how to proceed on ferry replacement recommendations.

Dry-dock will begin on the Wednesday after Labor Day (Sept. 4). Public Works Dept. is not willing to change to one or two days later.

Wing Wall bids for Gooseberry Point to go out next week. Public Works is planning work during August and says there should be minimal disruption of ferry service during upgrades.

Lummi Nation Planning is lead for Haxton Roundabout Construction. County Public Works is not in charge. There is lots of confusion about extent of road closures etc. Please direct questions to Lummi Nation Planning Department.

Rumored that county executive Jack Louws is attempting to get ferry replacement funds through federal government. Mike has verified from three sources.

LIFAC will recommend a pedestrian 10 punch card for Needs based pedestrians as a result of the PLIC Needs-based Resolution.

Status of electronic ticketing: LIFAC presented results of their research and a proposal to county 4 months ago, still stalled in county. Possible use of ticketing kiosk on mainland will be discussed at County Public Works committee meeting Tuesday, June 4th. LIFAC is on record as not supporting this.

Mike has heard discussion of county considering creating a new ferry manager position. The group discussed pros and cons of this idea. Major concerns were expressed about creating another level of bureaucracy, extra costs, etc. Possible pros discussed were one person to talk to, better communications, could be more accountable to users if ferry operations were under supervision of a manager. Suggestions came up to consider an elected ferry commissioner or board. Jim Dickinson suggested investigating Skagit County's model which has a Ferry manager that is also a captain on the ferry. Some felt we need more info before giving an opinion. Bill Lee supported a change in managing the ferry. LIFAC is still having difficulties getting information from county for making decisions.

When asked about LIFAC's stand on change of 55/45 ordinance, LIFAC has gone on record opposing the proposed change to county ordinance.

LIFAC is in the process of revising meeting schedule to not conflict with County Council meeting nights. They will announce the revised schedule soon.

No date set for next PLIC general meeting. Board will continue meeting and advise the community when scheduled.

Meeting adjourned at 7:54.

Mary Ross, PLIC Secretary