

# **White Paper #1: Ferry Replacement - How It Got Here So Quickly –**

by Mike Skehan- PLIC Secretary

The short answer is we got here so quickly by many, many citizens working together over the last 9 years in various committees and groups to bring a proposal to the County Council for adoption. The longer answer acknowledges those dedicated individual citizens for sitting through hours of public meetings and devoting many additional hours of their time to gain consensus leading to the next steps.

The County attempted in 2005 to obtain State of Washington funding to replace the Whatcom Chief with a 35 car ferry based on a series of studies in 2001. Some islanders objected to the replacement ferry design for various reasons, and the County Council abandoned the effort in 2008. In 2009 a single event precipitated the need for the County to focus on ferries again. That event was the end of the lease agreement for use of the Gooseberry Dock access by the Lummi Nation. ***What follows is a summary of our 9 year journey to today:***

**2009** - Islanders form Protect Lummi Island Community (PLIC) to raise money and awareness of our plight in keeping our only link to the mainland viable. Over the course of two years a new lease with Lummi Nation was secured at considerably higher cost. At the urging of PLIC, the County Council formed the Ferry Task Force to make recommendations on how to reduce costs going forward. [ [www.plicferry.org/](http://www.plicferry.org/) ]

**2010** – Citizens' Task Force for the Lummi Island Ferry was created shortly after a \$3.00 surcharge on all fares was implemented to cover rising costs. Over the course of six months of weekly public work sessions, the Task Force reported back to the Council multiple recommended changes on how to reduce costs, revise fares, and improve the financial structure so as to allow the purchase of a replacement ferry. They also recommended that a permanent Citizens Advisory Committee be established.

**2012** - The Lummi Island Ferry Advisory Committee (LIFAC) is formed to advise the County on matters of fares, expenditures, long term capital planning for ferry and terminal improvements, and other issues. LIFAC has met monthly for six years to fulfill their duties, making recommendations along the way as to service levels (LOS), fares, costs, parking, and drydock. After three years of monthly public meetings and many hours of volunteer study, LIFAC generated in January of 2016 a Level of Service (LOS) report "Part One" of findings and conclusions. Over the past six years, LIFAC has looked at various vessel replacement options including both new and used vessels.

**2017** – At LIFAC's and PLIC's urging, the County Comprehensive Plan Chapter 6 was amended to include Ferry Level of Service, and the County Council enacted a Resolution for Ferry Replacement by 12/31/26. The following month Council approved \$300,000 to study those needs and make recommendations as to LOS, ferry size, dock Improvements, costs and funding options. The ferry consultants, KPFF-Group, was selected to begin that work in the middle of 2017 with a deadline of June of 2018 to complete their tasks.

To begin listing all the topics, public meetings, and individuals over the years working on our behalf would fill multiple pages. But there's still a lot of work to be completed. PLIC's mission is to provide a forum, promote informed discussion, and work towards community consensus. This article is the first in a series of "white papers" on the facts and issues surrounding the ferry replacement system.

In June 2018, the County Council will receive KPFF's, Whatcom County Public Works and LIFAC's recommendations and decide what ferry alternatives to develop. Making your transportation needs and opinions known at this critical junction will greatly help to insure our future. **Please join us at the Town Hall Meeting on April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at 6:30 p.m. at the Beach School.**

**LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD**