

PLIC- Summary of LIFAC's 4-26-18 Meeting- What You Need to Know

by Stuart Rich- PLIC President

At the April 26th LIFAC meeting attended by Whatcom County Councilman Todd Donovan, the KPPF ferry consultants discussed with LIFAC their seven tasked reports which included their recommendation for the largest 34 car ferry as the best option. The estimated range of costs for the entire project including the replacement boat with menu features, a major makeover renovation for the Lummi Island dock facility, repairs to the existing Gooseberry dock, and the relocation of the Gooseberry dock is very high-in the many millions of dollars.

The competitive funding process for the ferry project is a moving target dependent upon what local, state, and federal transportation funds are available, when there is public consensus and a shelf ready project. Councilman Donovan remarked that the Council's initial sticker shock reaction to the high costs might well be: " Why are we building the Taj Mahal?" Councilman Donovan discounted the idea that the Council would approve an all County Ferry Tax district to raise revenue which leaves open a Lummi Island Tax District raising a maximum of \$200,000 per year. Fare Surcharges for pedestrians and vehicles to capitalize the project were also discussed.

In the end it comes down to what do we want for the ferry system project, how much are we willing to spend for it, what capital improvements are most affordable and necessary, and if cost saving measures are warranted, what level of services are we willing to accept?

Given the high estimated costs, KPPF asked LIFAC to identify those projects that need to be given the highest priority for completion. The two projects identified were: 1. the boat replacement for the Whatcom Chief. and 2. the need to rebuild the current Gooseberry dock's trestles by 2026 at the cost of approximately 4- 1/2 million dollars. There was also an initial discussion on how the various components of the ferry project could be phased in over an extended period of time in order to defer the funding impact on the County.

The reality of these two priorities is that large amount of funds will have to be spent on the current Gooseberry terminal (including possible dock changes for the replacement boat) before a new terminal at Gooseberry can be completed.

Roland Middleton, of Whatcom County Public Works Department, stated at the meeting that Option 3- private property- for the new Gooseberry terminal location has been removed from consideration.

Instead, the County will consider the acquisition of adjacent private property as it becomes available for purchase over an extended period of time which can then be used to enhance queuing and provide parking for a new Gooseberry Terminal location.

LIFAC, wisely, postponed the scheduled KPPF's second public meeting for two weeks until May 22nd in order for LIFAC to evaluate KPPF's four recently released reports and to prepare LIFAC's final community questionnaire giving you, the consumers and taxpayers, an opportunity to voice your preferences for the ferry project.

PLIC made an offer to LIFAC to pay for an all island and off island mailer with a hard copy questionnaire to supplement the online electronic questionnaire in order to reach out to more Lummi Island residents and to off island property owners so as to increase the potential number of responses to the questionnaire.

At the meeting the LIFAC Advisory Committee declined PLIC's offer and voted instead to rely solely upon the online electronic questionnaire, with announcements about the questionnaire, and a postcard reminder to off island property owners for which PLIC has agreed to underwrite the costs.

The new LIFAC schedule means that you will have 18 days from May 23rd when the LIFAC questionnaire is released to complete this questionnaire on or before the deadline of June 10th. It is very important for as many people as possible to complete the questionnaire so that your preferences will be considered by LIFAC before they make their ferry alternatives recommendations at the County Council's meeting on July 24, 2018.

PLIC's request for the KPPF reports from LIFAC was declined. PLIC will file a Public Records Act Request to Whatcom County. PLIC will continue its role as an advocate and watchdog for ferry related matters in order to promote dialogue and build community consensus.

PLIC's Town Hall meeting for the community to discuss KPPF's reports and recommendations scheduled for 5-16-18 has been cancelled. The Town Hall meeting has been rescheduled, after KPPF's 5/22/18 public meeting for May 29th at 6:30 p.m. at the Beach School.

LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD

For more information, please go to plicferry.org