LUMMI ISLAND FERRY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (LIFAC)

Eleventh Meeting

September 03, 2013

CALL TO ORDER

Committee Chair Mike McKenzie called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. in the Lummi Island Fire Hall, Bellingham, Washington.

ROLL CALL

Present: Mike McKenzie, Greg Brown, Charles Antholt, Robert Busch, Stu Clark, Crispin Colburn, and Josh Zender.

FLAG SALUTE

MINUTES CONSENT

1. Approved minutes of July 2, 2013 LIFAC Meeting

ANNOUNCEMENTS / SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

Rhayma Blake talked about the Plattsburgh Ferry presentation by McKenzie and Brown at the PLIC General meeting on May 28th. She reported that based on the responses to the presentation survey the response was very positive. She felt that the meeting had been pretty well promoted on the Island and the positive feedback was that we should look further into this option.

She pointed out that the next PLIC meeting is Thursday Oct. 3rd, so if LIFAC has any item that they would like more public input on, she would be happy to put it on the agenda.

One item that she indicates will be on the agenda is the item on the suggested $30 penalty fee that is scheduled for a Whatcom County Council “Public Hearing” on October 8th.

In the last couple of weeks they had a PLIC Board Meeting and discussed this penalty fee. The PLIC Board totally objects to the penalty fee. They would like to find a way to track “no pays” and be able to deal with it in a less formal, less paper intensive, and less administrative way. She pointed out that the original Ferry Task Force had considered this option and decided against it.

Finally she commented that the PLIC Board does not know where they stand on the 45/55 topic as they are unsure of the issues to include the current Ordinance being discusses in Council.

Comments:

Antholt asked how big a problem was the “no pay”. Rhayma responded that that it is an issue and that some people take advantage or the “easiness” of the crew. She felt that the general though is that the electronic ticketing will take care of this problem.

Antholt asked if anybody knew how big a problem this is? Rhayma responded that she thought the crew kept a list of some “IOUs” to share at shift changes, but some people take advantage of that. Not knowing how big a problem this is, she did not feel that all of the work with a penalty fee may be too much. She did not feel that crew members had signed on to hand out “tickets”.

Several commented that they hoped that electronic ticketing would be a means to highlight and
solve this issue. Some thought it was mostly delivery folks who were uniformed. Colburn pointed out that since there is no record and no data about this is the underlying problem. Zender commented that he had just come across on the ferry and was given no receipt, and Brown said he had a receipt. McKenzie pretty much tabled further discussion as the 44/55 topic would be brought up later in the meeting.

OPEN SESSION (There were 10 members of the public attending the meeting – see the sign-in sheet)
(During open session, audience members can speak to the council on any issue. Each speaker should state his or her name for the record and will be given three minutes to address the council. Council staff will keep track of time limits and inform speakers when they have thirty seconds left to conclude their comments.)
Bud Jewell felt sarcastically that the penalty fee is a good idea and that it should apply to all of the committee members on the County Council who miss meetings that they get paid to attend. When they do that then maybe they have justification for the ferry penalty. He points out that there have been occasions when he was unable to pay and that he had always paid the fare back and he felt it was a courtesy. He stated that the penalty fee is a bad idea and that there must be a better way to handle it. He also commented that some pursers spend the whole trip talking to one truck or one car and then they race around at the very end trying to get fares while the other crewmember has to handle unloading alone. This is not a good idea and everyone sees it. Along that same line nobody knows who has a fee ferry pass and you just see the pursers go up to the window and walk away.
Bill Lee commented that the thing that bothers him about the whole discussion of implementing fines is that he has heard no description on actually how it would be done. He could not imagine a way where the crew could be doing anything more that they are doing now. The Council needs to be very careful about enacting something without careful consideration of what the consequences are going to be. He also comments that the State Auditor of Washington who discovered that the Crew is keeping "no-pay" lists and was quite upset about it. The County Council is aware of this and it is one of the drivers for this penalty fee.
Michele Morrissey commented that if you find a way to accept credit cards that there should be no problem. She commented that she just got a new "swiping" thing for her phone that costs her 3% and the County is charging whatever, 10%, or something. They must have a phone on the ferry...
She commented that the main reason she was at the meeting was to discuss the queuing lines for the ferry. It has gotten worse over the last weeks with the long lines. She felt the easy way to fix this is to fill the right lane first and then the left lane. They will also need to paint wide stripe lines where the lines meet the road, remove the existing sign and make a sign saying right lane then left lane. Busch also commented that the double lines going around the bend and out onto the road will become a problem and if not straightened out right away will become a problem with the Tribe. (see attached letter to LIFAC)
Mike Schneider commented that before you switch a right lane first system, you would have to overcome the problem with everyone stopping at the first stop sign. He felt that maybe a "pictorial" sign should be made pointing out how the cars should queue and load, and making sure people fill up the dock first.
Bill Lee commented that the only signage on the dock on payment is printed in the smallest lettering of all the signs and this could be changed.
Mary Ross suggested that if you started with the left lane first then the right lane could load and to on forever.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Ferry Replacement

- Brown commented that he and McKenzie had met with Councilmember Brenner on the 16th and that the reason for the meeting was a call from her. She had called Brown because after the last WCC Meeting she still had some question about the 44/55 issue and the Ordinance that was pulled regarding it. Brown had suggested that were some other things and that maybe we should meet. At the meeting we general discussed two items, i.e. communications between LIFAC and the County, and the Ferry Plattsburgh. We showed her the presentation on the Plattsburgh and she was exited before we got half way through it. She felt that this was new information that she had not seen before. She wanted to get us on her Committee Agenda for a presentation. We explained that LIFAC was not quite ready yet for a formal presentation but were anxious to complete our work and appreciated her response. Brown then moved to discuss the comments that indicate that Executive Louws in against the purchase of the Ferry Plattsburgh. Brown felt that the Executive’s opinion had been based on erroneous information provided to him by the Staff in 2008. LIFAC has addressed these letters and recommendations (attached) in their April 2013 meeting and are aware of their overestimates. Brown reviewed each of the recommendations and corrected them in terms of correct and sometimes more recent information. Topics addressed were transport costs to Bellingham, an additional crew member, ferry classification, ADA facilities, ferry modifications, draft/length, and wingwalls. Antholt felt that Brown had made this presentation and represented it as from LIFAC and that this was out of line. Antholt made his presentation using the model that he and associates at WWU had developed. For his example he ran the three options (keep Chief, purchase Plattsburgh and a new ferry) using net present value and a 20 year time frame. Any cost you want could be used, but he used costs provided and some assumptions. He felt that because of uncertainty in many of the cost estimates that the model should not be viewed as definitive, but as a way of opening discussion as a way to talk about the choices. The presentation slides are attached. Antholt explained the model by going through it and changing various cost options and assumptions and showing how they affect the comparisons between each of the options. After his presentation he commented that it seemed clear to him that we needed expert opinion beyond the capabilities of LIFAC. Antholt felt that from his starting point and assuming the County Marine Expert was correct and prices for the options were reasonable that the prudent thing to do for tax payers and fare payers is to try and keep the Chief in service. Brown commented that he felt this was more reason to push this on to the County. LIFAC should take our presentation and the model to the County and then ask them to find the “hard” numbers to let the model provide a correct answer. The County could add in other options that may provide other savings/costs. These could be reduced trips, improved emergency services, having a “back-up” ferry (Chief), and other opportunity savings. What would be the cost of “not” being able to replace the Chief if it went to the bottom? Clark commented that unfortunately that in order to get hard numbers, it
was going to cost "somebody" some money. And, he was not sure there is willingness for some to listen to reality. He further commented that the loss of a ferry by the State is a different issue than the loss of a ferry for this County. Assuming that the Plattsburgh is still available he felt the opportunity cost is infinite under the circumstances of the loss of the Chief. Zender was not compelled by either of our presentations as to if there is any kind of a rush to make a decision. We also need to take into account some of the benefits of the options, i.e., increased capacity, efficiency in scheduling, etc. He would also like to explore additional alternatives and options such as grants for passenger only and/or vehicle transport vessels. He is aware of some for agencies such as the WTA. What types of grants may be available and what are the matches. Perhaps there are other used ferries' to look at or some type of hybrid model. As a committee we should continue to explore and he does not feel LIFAC need to act on this today. Colburn commented that this brings this back to the County. If the County is not prepared to get serious about having a professional opinion on this matter from a credible/reputable firm, that we can't substitute for that. Antholt comments that if the county is set and believes that the Chief is going to go for another 30 years, then they will not be persuaded to do anything else at this time. Clark says that we, as a committee, have done sufficient work in order to make a decision as to whether we recommend to the Council that this is an opportunity for them to pursue a "Plan B" which for the moment they are not even considering. Our recommendation would be that they should consider a Plan B. Colburn says the even if the probability (for loss of Chief) is extremely low, that the evaluation of some sort of event (to the Chief) needs to be taken into account as to what the County would tolerate. The odds may be marginal, but the results so extreme that they are applicable. Antholt suggests that maybe we should have a list of opportunity costs in order of magnitude above the cost of the ferry. Given the County acceptance of a thirty year time frame, there should still be a Plan B that should be a backup of some type of contingency. Brown again pointed out the bad numbers being used by the County, and that it does not take the sinking of the Chief to be the cause an extreme problem. All that has to happen is that the Coast Guard will walk up and enforce the existing regulations on egress and ADA. McKenzie comments that although he will support consensus from this group that his feeling from all along are that the crew is against it, the County is against it and he does not want to spend LIFAC time bunging its head against the wall. It is also troublesome to him that this entire issue is based on a huge "if" and "when" the Chief will go away. He also would like to know how the US Coast Guard would weigh in on this issue. He had a new thought from outside that said whatever you do, you better make sure you have a vessel that is capable from running from the Island to Fairhaven because that is where our back-up dock is. Clark asked about how soon Councilmember Brenner would want the presentation and Brown answered that he had said that LIFAC was not quite ready. She was ready to move ahead at our request. Clark recommends that LIFAC defer any action on the presentation until we have more opportunity to review the options for actions by the Committee. Dickenson spent three minutes explaining the various issues with the ferry, dredging issues, the dock preparation, and the CFR for storage of vehicles on the ferry, crew requirements as discussed with the Coast Guard, availability of other used ferries, tonnage, etc. He feels that we should move this along and let the County revisit the options. After some general comments from McKenzie, Clark made a
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1. **Motion:** that LIFA postpones any further action on whether LIFAC is going to move forward with this program or not with the information we have in hand until the next Business Meeting scheduled in November. After no discussion the motion passed with a 3 to 2 vote (2 member left for an earlier ferry).

- McKenzie did not report on the discussion with Councilmember Brenner regarding communication. (running out of time)

2. **Report for LIFAC on County Activity (Attached)**
   - McKenzie reviewed the with the members and audience the status to date on 45/55, the non-payment fee penalty, on a beta-test program for electronic ticketing without commitment or obligation, administration of special needs fares, and Council declining to issue a 10-ride pass. He also address some issue from letters or other comments to LIFAC, i.e., Ferry outage for repairs to wing wall, ferry running consistently late (engine issues and amount of traffic), electrical work at the Island Dock (complete overhaul), traffic Line-up (not going away), and Gooseberry Lake (can’t be fixed-politics).

3. **LIFAC Meeting Schedule**
   - Work Sessions and Meetings are to be held at the Lummi Island Fire Hall on Tuesdays at 6:30PM:
     --October 1, 6:30-7:40, Work Session
     --November 4, 6:30-7:40, business meeting

**NEW BUSINESS**

There was no new business

**OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business

**TENTATIVE AGENDA FOR THE NEXT WORK SESSION**

The date for the next meeting is **Tuesday October 1st**

**CALL TO ORDER**

**ROLL CALL**

**FLAG SALUTE**

**MINUTES CONSENT**

**PRESENTATION**

  - Demonstration on Handheld data collection device

  - Discussion of the Presentation

**ADJOURN**

Lummi Island Ferry Advisory Committee, 5/21/2012
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ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

The Committee approved these minutes on Oct. 1, 2012

ATTEST:

Michael McKenzie, Committee Chair