LUMMI ISLAND FERRY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (LIFAC)
Thirteenth Meeting (Work Session)

February 19, 2014

CALL TO ORDER
Committee Chair Mike McKenzie called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. in the Lummi Island Library, Bellingham, Washington.

ROLL CALL
Present: Mike McKenzie, Greg Brown, Charles Antholt, Robert Busch, Stu Clark.
Absent: Crispin Colburn (illness) and Josh Zender (has submitted his formal resignation)

FLAG SALUTE

MINUTES CONSENT
1. Approved minutes of January 7, 2013 LIFAC Meeting.

ANNOUNCEMENTS / SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

Mike McKenzie, Chair –
• Letter to Public Works and County Council w/copy the Executive on behalf of LIFAC regarding the excessive flooding of the flooding of the roadway exiting the ferry landing at the intersection of Lummi View Drive. Engineers in the past had explained that a fix was difficult due to issues with drain pipes flowing through non-County property. Recently Public works has found a solution to the issue and it has been repaired with thanks from LIFAC. The letter also thanks Public Works for repairs to the wing walls at Gooseberry Point without significant disruption to ferry service, for the implementation of the electronic ticketing at the ferry and on-line, and for their ongoing attentions the ferry and roadway needs for Lummi Island. Response to the letter from Public Works Director Frank Abar on 2/10 thanked McKenzie/LIFAC for the positive communication and would pass the letter on to members of his staff. He commented that the letter was a great way to start the week.
• Brief report on appearance at Council’s PW Committee Meeting – McKenzie asked the Council for a defined, solid and ongoing process for smooth communication between LIFAC, Public Works; the County Council Committee on Public Works; the County Council as a whole; and, the Executive’s Office. McKenzie explained some of the communication issues we have had over the last couple of years. There was positive feedback from and action from Public Works (James Lee was there), the County Executive, Councilman Ken Mann (would come to some meetings), Councilman Kremen (said councilmembers representing the first district should attend), Council Chair Weimer (who has attended one LIFAC meeting said he would attend more), and Councilwomen Brenner (who said she would attend a few meetings).

James Lee, Whatcom County Public Works – McKenzie introduced James Lee as the special appointed, maybe interim, Ferry Manager and is the direct contact with LIFAC and Public Works.
Works rather than the Public Works Director. Those writing to Public Works should address
their letters to James for a quicker attention.

- Has been with Public Works for 14 years and for 13 years he worked on the flood
  programs as an engineer. With the flood group he worked with the citizen advisory
  committee and with a number of diking districts. He feels that he has good experience
  working with and being able to communicate and deal with different entities. About a
  year ago James had the opportunity to take and Engineering Manager Position within
  the Bridge and Hydraulics division. There is a group of 8 individuals in this group and
  they do anything and everything associated with the County's 162 bridges. The group
  also do the capital improvements for the ferry as it is considered part of the Bridges
  program. James had his first experience with the ferry last year wing wall and remote
  control projects that were done.

- His involvement now is because in late December, Frank Abart Public Works Director,
  asked James if he would take on, as an interim roll, the Ferry Program Manager.

- James had two quick updates:
  o They are just starting the project to replace the timber dolphins on the Gooseberry
    landing. They are just getting going on this and they have a consultant on board.
    They will be starting on the design and permitting and may not get started this
    summer, but maybe next summer. Brown commented that this is very timely and
    that LIFAC would like some input into this as it may prudent to relocate some of the
    dolphins to accept a somewhat larger ferry. James assured LIFAC that they would
    keep us in the loop. P&D is the Consulting Engineer who also did the wing walls and
    included in their scope is to look at the three timber dolphins on the Lummi side and
    to look at the breakwaters.
  o The second update is in regards to the e-mail from Jim Dickenson through Frank
    Abart regarding the Ferry Trek (formerly the Bob Ellis). This ferry is a 15 car ferry
    located on Lake Union. There may be an opportunity here to look at renting this
    ferry of the dry dock period.

- McKenzie asked about the County Council Introduction Item AB2014-091 and Ordinance
  amending Whatcom County 2014 Unified Fee Schedule to authorize the ferry fund to
  absorb, credit/debit card convenience fees on single-ride ferry fares and incorporate
  credit/debit care convenience fees on multi-ride ferry passes. James said that this was
  presented to the Council back in December and it was generally approved, but that they
  were waiting to kind of codify it based on what the fees might turn out to be. They kind
  of wanted to collect data over a time period to see what the fee(s) looked like. There
  will be a hearing on this at the Feb 25th Council Meeting so folks can comment on the
  Ordinance at that time.

- McKenzie also commented that he had heard that there was a sign posted at the ferry
  indicating that there is a $30 fine being imposed for not having the fare cost. Where is
  the sign? Clark commented that it had been taken down.

Diane Harper, Islander/former member County's Citizen Ferry Task Force — Review Ferry Task
Force Budget Model, Ferry Costs and Fares.

- Chris Colburn, Chuck Antholt, Rhayma Blake (PLIC) and Diane met to do a preliminary
  look at the information.

- Before Diane started to talk about the model (spreadsheet) she went over how this fare
  revenues. In 2010 the Task force realized that the total ferry fares were not enough to
meet the ferry budget. In January 2010, the Whatcom County Council put the $3 surcharge in effect in order to meet the budget. Ridership continued to drop for many reasons. In 2013 it is finally beginning to show an increase in ridership. From 2007 to 2010 the Task Force had data for every kind of ticket sales.

- The Task Force knew that the surcharge was an arbitrary number and they felt that there should be a way to actually calculate what the fares should be. For the 2014 Ferry Budget there is:
  - $2.5 Million Ferry Cost Total
  - $1.5 Million for “Fare Revenue”
  - $1.378 Million which is the 55% of the Total

- Diane moved to a spreadsheet showing current fare prices for 2013 and explained all of the various rates to include how the discounts work. Revenue for the main four areas that make up about 85% or the revenue can make or break the budget were:
  - Passenger Cash $ 181,000
  - Passenger 25 Trip Multi-ride $ 139,000
  - Standard Vehicle Cash $ 372,000
  - Standard Vehicle 25 Trip Multi-ride $ 545,000
  - Total $1,238,000

- Using the total of the more minor ferry rates and if the ridership is the same for 2014 as was 2013, we would be ~$49,000 deficit in comparison to the $1.5 Million Fare Revenue and would be “ok” using the $1.378 Million or 55% calculation.

- Diane reviewed a past practice and option for a summer surcharge. Diane recalled that at $2 this would be about a $50,000 revenue increase.

- Diane then presented a “blank” spreadsheet that will allow the user to fill in various fares, discounts, etc. to determine various options to meet the ferry revenue budget.

- What it cost to ride the ferry has two parts:
  - How much does it cost to run the Ferry, and
  - What to charge to ride the Ferry.

- The fare model (spreadsheet tool) provides a method that allows someone or groups to determine/debate what rates to recommend to the Council. The Task Force gave this spreadsheet on a disc to Public Works and to the Council. Diane suggested that this debate could be done in a LIFAC Works Session.

- McKenzie commented that this would be the subject at our next meeting and that we should work in concert with PLIC to bring in the Island point of view to LIFAC and then LIFAC could have their own input internally on the Committee.

- Brown brought up that the fare calculation with this model is the easy part. LIFAC was still struggling to address the “how much does it cost to run the ferry.” LIFAC still needs the total budget data rather than just the published budget “roll-ups”

- Diane pointed out that there is a tab in the spreadsheet labeled “Parameters” listing every single thing that the Task Force came up with as far as saving money. She said they even came up with some things that might make money, i.e. single engine operation.

- McKenzie discussed the surcharge implementation and commented that it was an “inequitable” decision. For some, the $3 surcharge was a 400% increase while for others it was 33% to 50% increase. It is time to look at these fares again.
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PUBLIC COMMENT: (There were 10 people from the Island at the meeting)

- Rhyma Blake made two questions regarding the ferry fares:
  - Can we make the 55% ferry operation cost a “given”, and
  - Instead of going for the $1.5 Million, should we be going for $1.2 Million?
- Wynn Lee asked James Lee that when designing the breakwaters is there going to be consideration of the rather well known predicted sea level rise. She commented that at some of the existing high tides with high winds the ferry already has difficulty docking. James replied that they would be doing a “meta-ocean” analysis that is a meteorological analysis. The ferry crews report that they have some problems with the southerly breakwater but will be looking at the northerly breakwater as well. Antholt added that they also should be considering a future replacement of the Chief with a longer vessel. Dickenson added that they should also consider the effects of a wider ferry.
- Bud Jewell asked about ferry lines and loading (see written document). He suggested signage out near the road with large letters that can be read. The current sign is not big enough to read in time for the driver to respond.
- Brown asked James if he would send out a Request for Proposal (RFP) to the owner of the Ferry Trek so that we could evaluate if it would be a reasonable cost to replace the Chief during dry dock.
- Jim Dickenson asked if he could talk about the trip he and Brown had taken to see the Ferry Trek. Brown brought up the pictures he had taken of this 15 car ferry that was available for rent to replace the Chief during dry dock periods. Jim has sent a letter to Public Works in this regard in his personal effort (not part of LIFAC). Jim has had response from two council members and Public Works Director, Frank Abart. Brown showed the pictures of the Ferry Trek as the discussion went on about the ferry. With the known ferry dry dock issues this may be a great option to prevent those that are due to a passenger only back-up ferry.
- Wynn Lee wanted to focus on the lack of communications, and the biggest problems the lack of between Public works, LIFAC, Council, etc. and that it has caused some really serious problems. One of the main issues is not letting people know soon enough to make any difference.
- Bill Lee just wanted to thank James committing to the meeting tonight and committing himself to this essential and very valuable activity.
- Bud Jewell commented that the Lummi Tribe is going to put in a round-a-bout on Smokehouse Rd. top of the hill which means you will have a detour from September to around January.
- Wynn Lee commented that there is a lot on the LIFAC plate. She asked that it would be beneficial for her if LIFAC provided a list of their priorities and a possible time line for addressing them.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Draft Letter to Public Works regarding the Lummi Island Ferry -
   a. McKenzie commented on the drafted letter and then moved on.
2. Ferry Contingency Planning
a. Antholt commented that interest rates are going to go up he figured that a new ferry and assumed about $13 Million for a new ferry now and the longer we wait the higher the burden on the taxpayer. (see attached)

b. Antholt asked if there is a need to do some serious planning on a contingency ferry, more than just have a foot ferry waiting in the wings. Should we do some contingency planning? What contingency plans exist know? Would Whatcom County Management welcome LIFAC helping or would it be interference? Who should we talk to about doing this at the County level? Assuming that there would be openness to contingency planning, who would do it from the islander side, PLIC side, from LIFAC, from the County side, etc.? Antholt asked the committee to look at his draft “what if” documents that have been presented at the last two meetings. Is this a reasonable approach? He has had no feedback from the Committee.

c. Brown commented that the document were always last minute at the previous meetings (as this one) and there has been no time to respond. He felt that this was the natural extension from the previous work on the Plattsburgh and we should definitely move ahead on it. He said that we understand the County really does not have any real back up plan other that the foot ferry and that we (LIFAC) really need to do this.

d. McKenzie commented that he had directed the “what is plan ‘B’” question to Abart and the answer was all over the chart. The general answers were hidden in responses such as “it would depend”. The only written plan is based on a temporary breakdown of the Chief and there is no plan for it to break and not come back.

e. Clark commented that the first question that needed to be answered is the Public Works Director interested in having LIFAC pursue this and if the answer is “yes” that this is important enough that it deserves several meeting to develop. Postponement to the end of our meetings is foolishness.

f. Antholt comments that he thinks the first thing we need to do is set up a meeting with Abart and get feedback from Public Works before we spend a lot of energy.

g. McKenzie commented that we should start at the Executive Office.

h. Busch commented that he did not the county had any other options because they could have a complete failure either with the boat or with either of the ferry landings. Renting one of the people only ferries or other are only good if you have a couple of good docks.

i. Bill Lee commented that maybe this should be presented to the Council

j. The Committee agreed that we should start at the Executive’s office and it was decided that this would be on the work agenda for March 4th as well as a letter to Executive Louws by McKenzie.
3. Beach School Students
   a. McKenzie commented that he had read a letter from Rhayma Blake (PLIC) to the school district that dealt with the Gooseberry students who ride ferry to/from school require supervision who have to pay a fare.
   b. Rhayma Blake commented that the school members are pursuing some grant applications to improve the walkways to the ferry, but not anything specific to students riding the ferry.
   c. Carolyn Kmiecik commented that she was asked by the school to find out if there was any progress made. She said that she had an e-mail from Frank Abar (attached) suggesting that LIFAC included this issue with the LIFAC fare structure update.
   d. Diane Harper commented that the Ferry Task Force had recommended that all people under 19 years of age ride the ferry free in order to encourage families to the island. She said that the LIFAC recommendation, if they chose to make it, would be “one adult per trip supervising grade children could ride the ferry free with the children.”

4. Ferry Lines and Loading
   a. McKenzie asked the committee where we need to go with this issue.
   b. Brown commented that Michele Morrissey’s letter regarding this issue is in lifac7@gmail.com
   c. Antholt commented that the first issue regarding signage to prevent two lanes from backing into the roadway was fairly simple to address. Her second issue regarding identifying lane 1 and lane 2 with lane 1 filling first and then lane 2, similar to all other Washington ferries would be more difficult. Some comments were that we should not even consider loading one lane at a time and the other ferries have a traffic conductor to accomplish this.

NEW BUSINESS

McKenzie had received a call from Islander Samua Lutz that cars are crowding the pedestrian access lanes on the bridge. They are lining up too far to the right on the Gooseberry side so that the pedestrian lane is obstructed. McKenzie commented that this might actually be a PLIC issue to warn traffic to stay over and that maybe the lane needs to be better identified.

McKenzie brought up the replacement of committee member Joshua Zender, as he has now submitted his formal resignation. Jill Nixon, County Council Office, is managing the replacement process for LIFAC. A new committee person would be filling Joshua’s term through calendar year 2015. He also pointed out that some of the other committee members are serving a two year term and their service is complete at the end of calendar year 2014.

OTHER BUSINESS

Brown commented that he had some additional slides of the Ferry HiYu that he and Jim Dickenson had also looked at last week in terms of a possible replacement ferry for the Chief. Anyone interested could stay after the meeting to look at and discuss the pictures.
TENTATIVE AGENDA FOR THE NEXT WORK SESSION

The date for the next meeting is **Tuesday March 4th**

**CALL TO ORDER**

**ROLL CALL**

**FLAG SALUTE**

**MINUTES CONSENT**

**PRESENTATION**

   Mike McKenzie – General Update

**OLD BUSINESS**

   Letter to Council Committee on Public Works
   Contingency Plan
   Ferry Fares Spreadsheet Model
   Ferry Fare Recommendation – Issue w/Beach School Students
   Recommendation for Ferry Lines and Loading

**NEW BUSINESS**

**ADJOURN**

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The meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

The Committee approved these minutes on **3/4**, 2014

**ATTEST:**

Michael McKenzie, Committee Chair