

## **Lummi Island Ferry Advisory Committee (LIFAC)**

April 13, 2021 Meeting: 6pm, on Zoom platform

### **CALL TO ORDER**

**Rhayma Blake** called the meeting to order at 6:02pm

### **ROLL CALL**

*Present:* (Quorum) **Charles Bailey, Rhayma Blake, Mike McKenzie, Judy Olsen, Jim Dickinson, (Absent) Gregory Rice.**

*Others Attending:*

*Public Works*—Ass't Director **Liz Kosa**, Project Manager **Roland Middleton**, Ferry Sr. Master **Rich Hudson**, Communications Specialist **Marie Duckworth.**

*Gallery*— Former LIFAC member **Cris Colburn**, Island residents **Bill Fox, Elizabeth Kilanowski, David Kershner, Bill Lee, Mary Ross** (Zoom host) and **Mike Skehan.**

### **MOMENT OF SILENCE**

### **OPEN SESSION**

Mike Skehan: Speaking on behalf of the MicroGrid forum April 14, at 10:30 a.m.  
Rhayma, Charles, and Judy (non-quorum) planned to participate on behalf of LIFAC, and Roland on behalf of County/PW.

Mike's statement: "As we go down the road we're going to see more and more demand placed on our electric grid, both on mainland and on Lummi Island. We have electric cars coming. We want to be resilient to deal with power outages, climate change, fires, and things seen in other parts of the country. Hopefully, one day we'll have an electric ferry. Microgrids are a way to generate power in place--solar, wind or water--and to store it in place on LI and use for three purposes I mentioned...charging different places in short-term power outages just to get us over the hump. And there's ways to isolate portions of the island to provide a central services for small geographic areas. Thanks to LIFAC for helping to bring this together. Mary Ross will make a video of the forum to distribute. Program: Charles will make introduction of keynote speaker who is GM of

Orcas Power & Light. He will turn over to his chief of ops and planning, their recently installed microgrid on Decatur Island to provide resiliency. They will then turn it over to PSE and 7 representatives of all their different departments; good partners to have. Also attending: County Councilman Todd Donovan, representatives of LI Community Assn, County Climate Advisory Committee, Health & Wellness, LI Heritage Trust, County Public Works & Planning, County Public Utilities District (PUD). Take notes and ask the hard questions. What are obstacles and opportunities for making this happen? Great brainstorming session.”

## **APPROVAL OF MARCH 2021 MINUTES**

Moved and seconded, motion passed 5-0.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **Rich Hudson update:**

Sent public notices for some more on-call employees on the ferry. We’ve got busy season coming, some crew members with injuries, so time to open up and see if anybody wants to work on the ferry.

The two on-calls we use do the lion’s share of the work, but they’re bumping into thresholds of allowable time to work as an on-call employee. That means soon Annie Justice and Morgan Shermer possibly take a leave of absence until the end of October. Then the year starts over and they can swoop back in. It’s an unfortunate circumstance, but something we deal with occasionally.

For deck work, we have three Dan Olms, Annie and Morgan in jeopardy. We need a deeper bench. Good news is, we posted openings for a couple of weeks and we got 8 people interested. We’ll vet and interview them soon and we’ll see some new faces on the ferry deck.

Charles: Can the on-calls begin a career ladder?

Rich: The only possibility for folks to move up is when somebody either retires or quits, and moves on to other pastures.

We’re busier on the ferry. We’re curious about how the evening schedule has been working? Seems like we have an uptick in traffic; what does it look like to you all?

Judy—Don’t know that we have any commuters coming home in the afternoon. Have noticed off-going traffic backing up mid-mornings.

Rhayma likewise. Not riding it much, but usually holding my breath when I leave to go on it.

Rich: There's not much wiggle room in the morning schedule. It's the evening schedule between 3 and 7, not overly concerned but seems to be backing up a bit. When you're talking to folks, maybe take their pulse on that so I can see if there's something we can do about it. Like amending the schedule. Need some ears to the ground on that subject.

Judy—Are we still on a COVID version of the schedule?

Richie: We went back to our regular schedule during day shift because it's a clock-facing schedule—meaning it leaves the island on the hour. The schedule before COVID was a little mucky for the crew and the public so we amended the evenings to that same clock-facing schedule. Seems like it's more on-demand just like weekends, which are clock-facing.

**Sanican update:**

Committed to install one from Memorial Day weekend (May 31) through Dry Dock (ending Oct. 3). We'll then see if any other expense occurred beyond the bid price of about \$4,500. If we get charges because of vandalism or overuse, we'll revisit it. Our pilot program for a restroom on Gooseberry Point was heard loud and clear and we're dedicated to providing it.

Judy: Did you find a budget line to pull the expense from?

Rich: Yes, and you'll hear it in Randy Rydel's report next. There's not a specific place to find it yet, but we'll find it. Given the state of the budget, there's probably other issues at hand that take precedent, but we'll certainly provide the pilot program and then take another look.

**Weather Station update:** Put that on pause until we chew on Randy's financial report, then we may need more discussion. It's a different kind of ask and quite a bit more money.

**RANDY RYDEL FINANCIAL REPORT**

He detailed many highlights and questions about the Fiscal Years 2019 and 2020 budget and provided a link to the entire document.

Examples: Notes about voluminous numbers...such as unrealized gains & losses on investments that are now included in the interest calculations for farebox recovery. It actually helps numbers on fare box calculations—it increased the yield over the years.

**Snapshot:**

2019 was a great year--almost \$200,000 operating gain in the fund balance. But 2020 lost about \$300,000. (Revenue \$2.9 million...Operating expenditure \$3.2 million). COVID really hit fare box numbers hard in the midst of free rides (cost about \$100,000 in lost revenues at the fare box).

Other highlights: While revenues went down, expenditures did not. High collection year in 2018, then about a \$70,000 drop in 2019 with a little less ridership. Factors since 2012--new ferry contract negotiated...some repairs and maintenance...many of shutdowns and slowdowns did not impact lowering the expenses.

Budgeted 2021-'22 numbers, compare with what we've spent. They're very much higher—about \$240,000. A lot of it is equipment and space rental that has nothing to do with the Lummi lease (for Gooseberry Point).

It's purely rental of and operation of the ferry boat in equipment fund at County, per state law requirements. We're owner of the ferry and bulldozers, dump trucks, etc. they pay to provide the fuel, dry docking expenditures, and all repairs throughout the year. In return, they charge the ferry a rental rate every year.

Randy's report, highly detailed across many pages of graphic charts, covered such topics as ferry rental equity, dry dock expenses, fare box equity and reserve, dockside annual maintenance (that saved a lot, about \$156,000), ridership stats, and much, much more. Projections going forward are too iffy to predict until the projected 2026 arrival of a new ferry.

One last thing, ridership stats by month. I like stats, looking at numbers, so I've included it in the spreadsheet. January through March year-over-year is down about 2,000ish. Let's hope for the big summer months again!

[Go to the County website for all the details.]

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*[Rhayma left the meeting at 7pm. Vice Chair Charles Bailey took over lead of the meeting.]*

*[Randy left at 7:01 after taking questions on his report.]*

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**ROLAND MIDDLETON REPORT:**

CRAB (County Road Administration Board) grant application is moving forward, as is the BUILD grant application. Staff from CRAB is coming up to look at ferry, I'll get to talk to them about your (LIFAC) years of work on this.

We plan on impressing current staff (the past staff loved it). They'll take a ride on the boat.

We went through a presentation with the county engineer, and he'll report April 22<sup>nd</sup> to the County Road Admin Board. He'll ask CRAB to make an ask to the State legislature for a call for projects. We'll submit our application for the next biennium.

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We don't know about a public meeting about the design yet. We've worked on some format options. We'll have something for you at the May meeting.

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Overall funding: In the State legislature the House passed Bill 1564, creating a new motor vehicle fund for the Miles Ahead Washington account—a laundry list of large projects statewide. LEAP—Legislative Evaluation & Accountability Program—in both House and Senate looks at all the different projects and funds those that are viable and shovel ready,

Good news: The Lummi Island Ferry Modernization and Preservation Project is in both House and Senate list of projects for \$30 million. That is the ask, and we may get a portion. The County Exec pushed hard to get that locked in by the 40<sup>th</sup> and 42<sup>nd</sup> Districts that we're represented in. Got support from both districts for our BUILD app, and we suggest writing thank-you letters to all of them for getting into the LEAP documents the last two months. AND, ask for our project as funded when appropriation and budget are done.

Roland drew an excellent analogy that he used with (PW Director) Jon Hutchings to illustrate the funding situation:

We don't count our chickens before they hatch, but at least when we look in the nest there's eggs. In the past, when we've looked, all we had were chicken droppings.

There's two eggs. A third one is a transportation and infrastructure program through U.S. Congress. They've opened up member-designated projects. They're tired of the executive branch taking all the credit for building things when they (Congress) are the ones signing the checks. They're going back to straight-up earmarks and not even being bashful about it.

So word went out to our congressional districts 1 & 2. We submitted a request for this project to be one of their projects to earmark. On top of that there's funding for local

transportation projects. One is in appropriations, one in transportation—two different committees, two different processes, two different opportunities.

Add two eggs from the Feds. That's four eggs in the nest.

Those are 80% funds, 20% match, so for the total \$33 million, we're asking for \$26 million.

A 5<sup>th</sup> egg is the BUILD grant anticipated in mid-May. The best news we've heard for a while: I had a question about one of the applications, so I called Rep. Rick Larson's office. I talked to staffer Jen Rogers who had just heard from Rep. Larson when he came out of meeting with U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg. She said one of the topics they discussed was the Lummi Island ferry! The guy deciding on the BUILD grant is Sec. Buttigieg and he really needs to keep Congressman Larson happy. Jen was almost giddy and so thrilled that Whatcom County happened to call her so she could tell us that he's fighting for us, even though he's not even in our district anymore.

So, we can't count the chickens yet. But there are some big, gorgeous eggs in our nest.

LIFAC has done the job in letting people know the honest need for this ferry project, straight up why it's important and gone through the public process. It goes back to beginning of LIFAC and all of your work. It's going to get funded, not sure from where—maybe 12 different sources all added altogether.

Want all of our government representatives who, when they bump into Sec. Buttigieg, to say, "You remember ferry grant we talked about, the grant application is on your desk...do you need a pen?"

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The BUILD grant payroll announcement will come in October. And if everybody said yes, we get \$148 million.

**PUBLIC AWARENESS:**

Rhayma will prepare an article for the Tome.

**MOTION TO ADJOURN**

Moved, seconded, passed 5-0.

Meeting adjourned at 7:24pm