

A meeting of the Maine State Ferry Service Advisory Board was held at 10:30am on Thursday, May 7, 2020, via Zoom.

- A) Role Call: Matinicus, Vinalhaven, North Haven, Islesboro, Frenchboro, Swan's Island, Bass Harbor, Mainland
  
- B) Introduction of Visitors/List of Attendees:
  - Eva Murray, Matinicus, Chairperson
  - Bill Pulver, MDOT
  - Dave Bernhardt, MDOT
  - Mike McKenna, MDOT
  - Mark Higgins, Manager MSFS
  - Joanne O'Shea, MSFS
  - Dennis Damon, Bass Harbor
  - Duncan Bond, Frenchboro
  - Phil Crossman, Vinalhaven
  - Jon Emerson, North Haven
  - Kathy Clark, Swan's Island
  - Sonny Sprague, Swan's Island
  - Lindsay Davis, Vinalhaven
  - Tom Groening, Island Institute
  - Maggy Wilcox, Islesboro Island News
  - Andrew Dorr, Vinalhaven Town Manager
  
- C) Approval of Minutes from March 12, 2020-moved, seconded, no discussion or disagreement, all in favor, approved
  
- D) Communications to the Board – Since the last meeting, Mark has received some documents entitled “Summer Letter and Guiding Principles” from North Haven town manager
  
- E) Reports of the Board - none
  
- F) Reports of the Department
  - 1. Financial Report—Mike McKenna presented a 3-year variance as of the end of April 2020. The report was included in the agenda packet.  
Highlights:  
Revenues: Farebox down \$72k, parking up \$25k, contributions from highway fund up \$532k, total up \$470k.  
Expenses: Expenditures up \$1.2M, includes one-time retro lump sum payment line #3616. Other Expenses down \$572K, includes professional fees 4099 down \$240k— employees moving from temporary (Maine Staffing) to permanent employees. Repairs to equipment is up \$7k, which is confusing because a partial bill to Rockland Marine was

made—we're juggling 2 budgets. Overall expenses are up \$650k over last year at this point in time.

The cash balance is \$120,000. However, \$2M is expected Mid-May from the Federal Transit Assistance CARES Act (Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act). This is a federal credit due to a stimulus payment. It is a grant that does not need to be repaid.

Mark stated that we've applied for a supplemental grant for \$1M. Haven't heard on it yet, but it should help with reduction in income due to COVID19. This \$3M in total, is to be used for operating costs.

Bill reiterated that transit agencies are receiving this money after having put in an application for loss in revenue due to low ridership.

G) Vessel Status Report—Report included in agenda packet.

1. Mark reviewed the report for the Board.
2. Eva asks about passenger protocol for trips to Matinicus this summer, due to COVID19. Mark stated that MSFS is following the latest policies: 5 or 10 people per cabin depending on the boat, etc. In the summer we'll have the weather decks which will be helpful, but MSFS will review as we progress as time goes on.

H) Island Specific Issues

1. Vinalhaven: Phil asks for an update on the standby/line number policy following the meeting on the island in February and discussing it at the last FSAB meeting. Mark stated that the MDOT has determined we are going with a straight stand-by line as it is safest for employees and customers. This is a first come first serve system and it is replacing the current standby/line number system.  
Phil asks about extending parking payment for annual passes. Mark says we will take any form of the contract, like a picture, scan, email, etc but we are not extending the time period for taking payment.  
Jon shared his experience about getting information on renewing passes earlier this week—he was happy to see how quickly the Rockland terminal responded and made it easy for customers.  
Mark stated that we will not tow cars on the day the contracts expire—we will be accommodating.  
Mark thanked the island communities for their grace and flexibility when we had to change our operations within a very short time period.
2. Frenchboro: Duncan stated that a lot of people are worried about not having the Sunday ferry and asks when the schedule will change. Mark said that the current schedule is based on ridership data which the MSFS reviews daily. He suspects there will be an increase in the schedule in June.
3. Islesboro: Eva stated that no one is representing Islesboro during this meeting and that she heard someone from that island talk about the complexity of work schedules, commercial business schedules etc and wonders if these are considered as well as the

ridership data. Mark said we've worked with Janet (Town Manager on Islesboro) to address that island's needs and based on that and ridership data, the MSFS has adjusted and accommodated.

Dennis says that at the last meeting Gabe had said he would develop a resolution regarding ferry vessel propulsion. Mark said he hasn't seen it yet.

I) Old Business- The MSFS is moving forward with plans for a hybrid ferry.

J) New Business

1. Ridership Numbers: Mark will send 2 charts showing decline in April ridership. We will be able to see the decrease in April 2018 due to the tariff 8 flat fee. In April 2020 we will see the decline due to COVID19. 2020 is 3.5 times the decrease from 2018. Vehicle ridership is down over 50%. Passenger ridership is down over 60%.  
Mark described the other spreadsheets he had sent ahead of the meeting. Dennis asks if the graphs are for ridership only, not income. These are just ridership data.
2. MSFS COVID 19 Response Update: Marks says the schedule adjustments will match the Governor's state opening phase approach. MSFS will continue to review ridership and commercial vehicle traffic and seeks feedback as schedules are put together through June and then July/August—we'll work in phases like the Governor's plan.  
Dennis asks about doing temperature checks. Mark says no, this is not in the plan. MSFS requires face coverings for customers as well as for line attendants/crew. Customers in vehicles do not need to wear masks.
  - Eva asks if Mark participates in other meetings in the industry. He stated that he attended a meeting the Island Institute hosted Tuesday which included those from Isle au Haut to Casco Bay. He described their precautions like skipping rows and taping off areas—how everyone is handling segregated areas. He said he has lots of discussion with Casco Bay, many times per week. When Governor Mills came out with phased plan, they discussed how it applies to this industry and how to implement things like face coverings. Casco Bay has more walk on passengers but there are a lot of similarities, so they are a good resource. Mark stated that he attends Coast Guard meetings and other worthwhile meetings too.
  - Andrew asks about how the MSFS will track the phases of the re-opening with the reduction of walk on passenger count. He's getting questions from summer residents and would like to be able to communicate to public. Mark asked that he refers them to our website. Mark says in first 6 days of May, compared to last year, vehicle ridership is down 40% over last year and walk-on ridership is down 60%. He stated that we are considering commercial truck needs and we are open to any proposals concerning the schedule. Andy asks about the center line—UPS and trash trucks especially, and that they are looking for a guaranteed boat. He suggests that the center line is a commodity, separate from ridership numbers and that the 8:45am boat is critical. Mark states that these are all considerations when it comes to adjusting the schedule.

- Lindsay asks about ripping the tickets, stating that customers may be cheating the system. Mark said we are working with captains to make sure crew is witnessing customers ripping tickets and that he hopes customers aren't taking advantage of this situation.
  - Jon wants to commend the crew. He's on the waterfront and he sees them working on the boat/doing safety drills/cleaning door handles/wearing masks, etc. He suspects that the whole situation takes a toll on the crew and he asks about the crew quarters. Mark says crew houses are professionally cleaned weekly at turnover. Everyone has their own bedroom and they each share a bathroom. There's a schedule of when they are using the kitchen, and they clean and sanitize rooms after use.
3. Subcommittee: Phil stated that at the last meeting we decided we'd make a finance subcommittee. He moves that there be a motion is to amend the by-laws to establish this subcommittee. Dennis asks if the intention is to provide the board an analysis that would differ from Mike's report. Phil says the function is to provide counsel to the board who will decide what to do with the information. Dennis asks about how members will be selected. Jon says it was Gabe, John and Jon in this committee per the last FSAB meeting and that it should not be limited to that number necessarily. Dennis restates that the proposal is to change bylaws. Phil says a vote is the majority of those present. The vote was seconded, and voted 6-0 (Dennis, Jon, Kathy, Eva, Duncan, Phil) to approve the change.
- Eva reminds us that items do not need to be on the agenda in order for them to be voted upon.
  - Jon says one more meeting might be needed for the finance committee before the next meeting. He says FSAB should get minutes from the subcommittee when they submit a recommendation to the FSAB. Dennis' expectation is that when they meet, they provide minutes which will become part of the packet of materials that the rest of the board gets. He says the subcommittee will need to reach out to Mike to get the information they need. Eva re-iterates that it's not the duty of the FSAB to audit the DOT or agencies—this should not be a massive workload for anyone.

K) Motion to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 11:49am.

Next meetings via Zoom: June 18 (workshop) at 10:30am and July 9 (regularly scheduled) at 10:30am.