

Executive Kremen is in Mexico on a long-planned vacation with his wife in celebration of their 39th anniversary. He has assured the PLIC Board that he will cut that short and return on the weekend of April 9-10 if necessary, but he reminds everyone that negotiation talks have been progressive, some traffic & safety settlements agreed to, and that another session will take place this week.

In a long conversation with Kremen by phone, he remained steadfast on the point of running the ferry:

"If the lease is not resolved Wednesday, and if the deadline has not been lifted or extended by the 9th (Friday), I'll be home on the 10th. I stand on my commitment and hold to the position that we still intend to run the ferry, come April 11th."

This is consistent with remarks made publicly by U.S. Representative Rick Larsen, and jointly by Larsen and U.S. Senators Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell that said that shutting down the ferry is an unacceptable action.

Friday, Kremen asked Chairman Cultee (LIBC) to either lift or extend the deadline for ceasing ferry operations April 11. The request was sent in a letter that detailed the specifics of an oft-repeated LIBC message that Whatcom County must address traffic and safety concerns in a ferry lease. Kremen then confirmed with specific details how the County has responded favorably to those requests, confirming details that an LIBC representative provided last Monday (3/28) at a dinner Lummi Nation hosted for Lummi Islanders. (You can read Kremen's letter here: <http://lummiislanders.com/ferrydocs/userfiles/20110402-014613.pdf>)

Kremen said in our phone conversation, "Here's my commitment: if there is any indication that an attempt will be made to prevent us from running the ferry, I'll be back because we intend to run it. And, I'll be back earlier if there is any opportunity to solidify or strike an agreement, anything that I could do to move things forward, I will jump on the first plane to come back."

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This is an important message for Island full-time residents because of ambiguous statements at the dinner at the Lummi Nation's community building that they refer to as their "home" last Monday. Repeatedly, LIBC representatives that night used terms such as "creative" and "ingenious" solutions offered by the County's negotiating team during resumed talks in two sessions that led to scheduling this week's session.

They repeatedly made complimentary remarks about the progress made in the talks and County's willingness to meet traffic and safety enhancements on Haxton Way, from the ferry landing northward, spelling out details (confirmed in Kremen's letter). However, these Lummi reps also went into in-depth details about their plans to build a luxury marina, either at Gooseberry Point "...if we can get it permitted..." or elsewhere. They told of several options they have explored, and stated that payments for the marina would be expected from the County in order to seal a deal.

As the dinner ended, Lummi Island residents asked what would happen on April 11? This is why Kremen's comments by phone are important: the responses were ambiguous and uncertain. The LIBC reps said things like "probably not" in addressing a blockade, or preventing students from attending school and afternoon activities. They indicated that emergency service vehicles would be allowed. They also said "probably not" to "a 9:20 (pm) ferry" and to "18 hours of continuous service."

They also said that their comments were not official, because the governing council had not made decisions about April 11. And one conjecture included that LIBC might seek an injunction to stop the ferry from running.

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Kremen has held frequent communications on the ferry issue since he left after the negotiating

session March 28. He said that it is his understanding that Chairman Cultee of the LIBC also is on vacation, and that he might not even be in the negotiating session this week.

His statement of the County's intention to run the ferry is a repeat of when he met with PLIC Board members, of when he and County Attorney Dan Gibson and Public Works Director Frank Abart attended a Lummi Island Community Association (LICA) meeting, and in an interview with PLIC when he returned from a trip to Washington, D.C.

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For comprehensive coverage: Dialogue continues actively on the Lummi Island Ferry Forum, and on Facebook pages for the Ferry Task Force and Lummi Island Friends. A repository for ferry-related documents has search features: <http://lummiislanders.com/ferrydocs/> The Brown Betty also provides vital information updates by email.

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Your efforts toward a unified goal -- to keep our ferry running -- are much appreciated. Solidarity is vital.

Thank you,
The PLIC Board of Directors

A SUMMARY of VIEWPOINTS on FERRY SHUTDOWN:

A legal representative of LIBC has stated frequently, as recently as a community dinner hosted for Lummi Islanders by Lummi Nation last Monday (3/28) that the governing council has "no plan for day 61...."

LIBC representatives at that dinner indicated no probability of a barricade of the ferry, nor shutting it off for school attendance and afternoon activities, emergency and other service vehicles, or commuting workers. They did, however, say there probably would not be late night runs allowed.

Kremen, accompanied by County Attorney Dan Gibson and director of Public Works Frank Abart, visited Lummi Island. He said that night that the County intended to continue running the ferry. Gibson stated that the County had contingency plans in place, but was not at liberty to divulge them.

Kremen had made the same statement in a private meeting with three PLIC Board members ("Whatcom County intends to continue to operate the ferry to Lummi Island from Gooseberry Point, and we have informed Lummi Nation of our intent...."). He again repeated the statement in several interviews, and to LIBC and Congressional delegates during a trip to Washington, D.C.

Joint letter from Congressional delegates:

"Termination of ferry operations would mean a major disruption for close to 900 Lummi Island residents who rely on the ferry to commute to the mainland for school, work and essential services," the elected officials said in the letter.

"The bottom line is, we cannot cut off access to the island for residents who depend on the ferry to go to school, shop for groceries or commute to work. Shutting down the ferry is not a solution to this problem."

Whatcom County Council Chairman Sam Crawford, in the Bellingham Herald:

"We can't see the federal officials sitting by and allowing the closure of a ferry that endangers public health and safety."