

# **PLIC Position on Gooseberry Point Parking**

## **February 25, 2012**

### **History:**

**Protect Lummi Island Community (PLIC)** is a grassroots based organization of over 520 members affected by ferry operations to Lummi Island, WA which acts to build consensus about ferry issues.

**The Whatcom County Citizens' Task Force for the Lummi Island Ferry** (Ferry Task Force) was established by the Whatcom County Council after a \$3 surcharge was added to ferry rates on January 23, 2011. It was tasked with examining the future of Lummi Island ferry service and making recommendations to the County Council for its ongoing operation. Those recommendations were provided to the County Council on August 1, 2011. One of those recommendations was to reduce Gooseberry Point parking expenses.

### **Parking on Gooseberry Point:**

Having mainland parking reduces ferry car traffic levels and line lengths. It also allows drivers to park and then pay a lower pedestrian fare.

Mainland parking is an operating expense covered 55% by fare box recovery and 45% by the county road fund. Annual expenses for mainland parking in 2010 were:

Security	\$77,000
Lease	\$18,000
Maintenance	\$20,000
Miscellaneous	<u>\$ 1,000</u>
TOTAL	\$116,000

The public's consensus at Ferry Task Force meetings was that those who use parking should bear the cost. Therefore the Task Force evaluated two methods of paid parking: 1) monthly rental and 2) a central parking meter for hourly use such as those found in downtown Bellingham. However both options made parking and walking onto the ferry as expensive as driving onto the ferry.

In addition, it was learned that Lummi Nation had informed the County administration more than a year ago that they are not interested in renewing the lease for the 83 parking spaces within the fenced area when it expires on April 16, 2012.

### **Ferry Task Force Recommendations:**

Therefore, in order to reduce parking expenses borne by every ferry user, the Ferry Task Force recommended not attempting to renew the parking lot lease. To reduce the major expense of security, they also recommended that the County substitute cameras and emergency phones for the current security service for mainland parking.

### **Conclusion:**

PLIC encouraged the County Council to form the Ferry Task Force and has consistently recommended that the County Council adopt the Task Force recommendations as a whole. Currently, the County Council has chosen to not lower rates, but PLIC supports a policy of lowering operating expenses identified by the Task Force wherever possible in an effort to reduce ferry rates as soon as possible. Therefore, the PLIC Board:

- Stands with the Task Force recommendation to no longer pay for leased parking spaces since it appears the county will be able to provide ample public parking and
- Supports security measures that ensure ferry riders' personal safety after dark during ferry operational hours.