

Minutes for PLIC Annual Meeting January 22, 2013

Lummi Island Grange Hall

To celebrate the retirement of Board President Mike McKenzie cake was served before the meeting. Board Members Mike McKenzie, Rhayma Blake, David Wing, Stu Clark, Mike Kmiecik and Mary Ross were present. There were 28 PLIC members present and 4 nonmembers in attendance.

Board President Mike McKenzie called the meeting to order at 6:40 PM. Mike announced that this would be his last meeting as PLIC board president. He has served on the PLIC board for the past three years and has decided to resign from the board because his duties as LIFAC (Lummi Island Ferry Advisory Committee) President could present a possible conflict of interest at some point in the future. Stu Clark will also be stepping down from the PLIC board because he is also currently Vice President of the Ferry Advisory Committee. Both Mike and Stu will remain involved members of PLIC. Mike introduced the board and recognized the board for working very well together for the benefit of Lummi Island community.

PLIC Treasurer Mike Kmiecik reported that at the end of 2012 PLIC had \$4,013.07 in the checking/savings account. This is down \$645.58 from the balance that was on hand at the 2012 Annual Meeting.

Review of the Year 2012

Mike McKenzie provided a review of the past year. The \$3.00 ferry surcharge will not be going away. Public Works dept. and county council feel that it has been doing its job stabilizing ferry revenues and at this time there is no plan to take away the surcharge, to raise ferry fares, or cutback operation hours. Naomi Jarvie questioned the surcharge saying that she remembered that it was only supposed to be a temporary measure, March – October, for six months until the county determined what the fee would be.

During 2012 Whatcom County Public Works targeted 21 out of over 100 recommendations of the LI Ferry Task Force to take action upon during the year. Mike provided a brief summary and update on some of these items.

- Elimination of Parking lot and security at Gooseberry Point has saved a significant amount of money annually.
- Non drivers 18 years of age and under ride free year round. This has resulted in slight decrease in revenues but has helped alleviate burden on families with children living on and visiting the island during summer months.
- A permanent Lummi Island Ferry Advisory Committee (LIFAC) was appointed by County Council. It consists of seven members, four of whom are island residents and three are off island county residents. The Committee has had several meetings and has been addressing recommendations brought up by the LI Ferry Task Force and by County Council members. Recently LIFAC has been investigating how 55/45 fare split accounting is done and also studying options for implementing an electronic ticketing process which could improve accounting and make ferry ticket sales more user friendly in the future.
- Some task force recommendations have been rejected at this time because no changes can be made until labor negotiations with three unions are concluded.

Ferry is not currently a hot button issue for Public Works Dept. or County Council. Ridership is stable; surcharge and implementation of some recommended cost savings measures have balanced some cost increases in other areas of operation keeping things stable at the moment. Mike reported that Public Works Director Frank Abart said that service cuts are currently off the table for 2013-2014 budget discussion. Construction on the new Wing Walls (bumpers that the ferry nudges up against when landing) at Gooseberry Point terminal should begin this summer. County received a \$400,000 federal grant to pay for a large part of this \$600,000 project resulting in savings to County ferry and road funds. 55/45 fare box recovery formula is being looked at by the council. Public works has made a recommendation for consideration of changes and LIFAC has been directed to study the proposal and come up with any recommendations it has.

Future of PLIC Discussion and Recommendations

Since the Ferry Lease Agreement was signed and a permanent Lummi Island Ferry Committee has been appointed by the County Council the PLIC board has been discussing whether there is a need for PLIC to continue as an island organization.

Stu Clark: PLIC acts as a funnel for island ideas and opinions to LIFAC and to the county. Stays on top of ferry related issues that will impact island. Can help LIFAC gather data and take pulse of island community on issues so LIFAC can make informed decisions.

Jerry Anderson: Member of PLIC has attended all PLIC meetings since it began and feels strongly that if it were not for PLIC's efforts there would still not be a lease agreement for the Ferry. Feels strongly PLIC should continue in active mode.

Wynn Lee: Not a member of PLIC feels that PLIC needs to be more transparent on what council is being told by the PLIC board and board needs to be better about communicating with the community especially now that the legal negotiations are not an issue.

Michael Schneider: Asked whether the function of "PR" with county officials and funneling of information between island and county that PLIC has been doing is outside of the mandate of the ferry advisory committee. Mike McKenzie clarified that PLIC's role is solely to work to represent the island and to provide a channel for an "island voice" to be heard. (Our voices do not all have to agree). LIFAC is appointed by and directly accountable to the county council and it needs to consider county interests as well as island interests when making recommendations to the council on ferry issues) Michael then stated that he favored PLIC continuing as an active organization but also favored Wynn's recommendation on more board transparency going forward.

Naomi Jarve: New member asked where petitions and letters should be sent, to LIFAC, to PLIC or to the county? Mike said that she could send them to any or all of the above. If turned over to PLIC the board would meet and decide how and when to proceed with petitions. Rhayma Blake, added that PLIC was not restricted as to who petitions letters on behalf of the island were sent to. During lease negotiations when letters and meetings with local officials were not effective, PLIC organized an island wide, county wide, and nationwide petition drive and letter writing campaign to take our voice to the state and federal level as well.

Bill Lee: PLIC member encouraged PLIC to continue to remain active. He also recommended that community members become more involved in PLIC. The more people actively involved in staying on top of issues impacting the ferry and our island community the stronger the organization and our community will be. He also felt that communication with the community is a vital link in this process.

Carol Chaudière: Member stated importance to her that when signing a petition she feels that it is very important to know who the petition is going to and why and how it will be used.

Dave Wing: To clarify Carol's and Naomi's comments, presented a hypothetical case in which an island based petition were presented to PLIC board the board would consider and forward it on to LIFAC for consideration. If LIFAC, after considering the petition made a decision that went against the wishes of the islanders submitting the petition and PLIC felt that the petition had merit and deserved further consideration then PLIC membership could help organize further action on behalf of the island community.

Paul Davis: Advised that it is important for PLIC to schedule regular meetings if it is to continue. Without regular meetings Island organizations tend to die.

Stu Clark: Many LIFAC members hope that PLIC will continue to remain active to help them determine general Island feelings on ferry issues they will be dealing with now and in the future.

A vote was taken by acclamation and all present voted that PLIC should remain active and not go into freeze mode at this time.

Election of Board Members

Board Secretary Mary Ross announced we have a quorum present so that a legal election of board members could take place. Current Board Vice president Rhayma Blake has consented to become Board President. Mike Kmiecik will continue as treasurer, and Mary Ross will continue as Secretary. David Wing has agreed to remain on the board. Tess Winds-Johnson and Janet Lutz-Smith have both consented to have their names placed into nomination for the PLIC Board. PLIC's by laws allow up to 9 board members so members present at the meeting were invited to put their name into nomination from the floor. Jansen Pierce volunteered to serve on the board. No further nominations were made. Bill Lee motioned that we vote by acclamation rather than paper ballot. Jerry Anderson seconded and motion passed unanimously. Tess-Winds Johnson, Janet-Lutz Smith, and Jansen Pierce were all elected by unanimous acclamation to serve on the PLIC Board.

Looking Forward 2013 - 2014

Electronic Ticketing: Public Works has \$30,000 budgeted for implementing electronic payments for fares onboard. This will allow use of credit cards on board the ferry, and will improve accounting practices. Hopefully it will eventually allow online pass purchases. Kathleen Gallagher suggested that something like the ORCA Pass program that links State Ferries, busses and possibly light rail regional transit programs together be investigated. Kathleen will investigate and turn information over to LIFAC. Plans are still not clear but county is pursuing.

LIFAC may be revisiting the need for night time security during operating hours of ferry. Parking is probably not going to change.

Wing Wall construction likely to take place during the summer, should not disrupt service, may be some delays but they should be minor.

Right now no immediate plans for cuts in service

The task force recommended summer surcharge has been rejected by county so rates will likely not change during upcoming budget cycle.

Special Needs fares: Rhayma Blake handed out a [written summary](#) of the discussions of Needs Based Fares that have occurred to date.. There are a large number of islanders that are in favor of the county continuing to make needs based fare discounts available to qualified low income island residents. Debi Roth and Connie Hahn presented the PLIC board with a petition signed by well over 100 island residents which supported continuing to offer needs based fares. The signature gatherers had the petition at the Islander Store and gathered 100 signatures in just one week. Many people in attendance spoke up in favor of needs based fares continuing. Betsy Schneider, who had gathered research for the Ferry Task Force to address county concerns about administration of needs based fare program, attempted to clarify the basis of the Task force recommendations. During the discussion it became evident that further discussion and more information are needed. Debi Roth read a letter from Cedrus home owner Pat Wales citing many reasons for continuing with the current needs based fare program and presented the letter to Rhayma Blake to accompany the petitions. It was decided that a small group of interested community members form a committee to study and further discuss the Ferry Task force recommendations and the Public Works Department options and present its recommendations at a future PLIC meeting. Debi Roth, Connie Hahn, Steven Thomas, Lorraine Dukes, Bill Moye, Kathleen Gallagher, Jean Kershner, Naomi Jarvie, Don Adanon, and Betsy Schneider signed up to be on the committee.

A suggestion was made that PLIC might try to meet at school some time and provide child care to get more involvement from young families in the community because families with kids are having a difficult time affording high ferry fares. Mike pointed out that PLIC has documented 13 families that have left the island since the surcharge went into effect.

Mike McKenzie announced that a subcommittee of LIFAC has been investigating alternatives for a backup or replacement ferry for the Whatcom Chief. They have asked to present their proposal to LIFAC at an upcoming meeting. He then stepped down and handed the presidency of PLIC over to Rhayma Blake.

Rhayma and the audience thanked Mike again for his service to the Lummi Island community and adjourned the meeting. The next meeting will be announced on the PLIC website, in the Tome, Brown Betty, PLIC reader board, and other Island Announcement Forums.