

LIFAC Meeting Recap April 29, 2014

Introduction

Chairman Mike McKenzie welcomed new LIFAC member Byron Moye, who fills Josh Zender's position.

Report from Public Works

James Lee reported that Whatcom County Public Works was eliminating the position of Assistant Director and creating a new position called Ferry Program/Special Projects Manager with responsibilities primarily for the ferry. They are advertising the position internally until May 13th and then will open it to the wider public if necessary. James plans to continue his responsibilities with bridges and not apply.

James also updated LIFAC on the dolphin replacement project at Gooseberry Point. Permits and design are complete and funding will be requested from County Council at its meeting on May 6th.

Lummi Nation is pursuing construction of a roundabout on Haxton Rd. at Smokehouse this summer and the county has issued the revocable construction permits necessary.

In answer to funding questions raised at the previous LIFAC meeting, he said most of those details had been addressed in a public records request from PLIC and shared with LIFAC on February 5th. Items not addressed were the \$12,500 spent on fuel for the passenger-only boat during dry dock and Professional Services, which are almost entirely spent with Elliott Bay Design for planning and design.

James also indicated that due to the island's interest in the HIYU ferry, Whatcom County has filed to be included on the interested parties list when it comes available, most likely in June 2015.

James also commented later in the meeting that Elliott Bay Design is working on a feasibility study for both Whatcom (in September) and Skagit (October) counties to use the TREK (a smaller car ferry) during dry dock. He doubted that this would happen in time for the 2014 dry dock. Dry dock will be only two weeks long this year.

Public Comments

In the Public Comment period, Bill Lee thanked James Lee for his recent dedication to ferry issues.

Councilwoman Barbara Brenner inquired whether the HIYU would fit the current dolphins and was told it might fit the Gooseberry Point dolphins.

Nancy Ging asked LIFAC to analyze future ferry dock locations on the mainland before spending time studying specific ferries. She feels that the draft of the resolution asking the county to study the HIYU is too forceful. She suggested that the HIYU is too old, too big, and too wide, making it inappropriate for island needs. The same money needed to rebuild the HIYU might be better spent rebuilding the Whatcom Chief. We should not feel pressured to get a new ferry.

Mike Skehan asked for a Gooseberry Point to Smokehouse sidewalk update. James Lee of Public Works said he was unaware of any work there. Mike also suggested that the HIYU is too old for our needs.

Jim Dickinson commented that the draft of the HIYU is not too deep and could be accommodated at our docks.

Candy Jones said she needs to pay pedestrian fare when riding over to accompany her grandchildren under age 12 over to the island and requested LIFAC consider free passage for all adults accompanying small children. She also asked if LIFAC was working on unsafe queuing at Gooseberry Point.

Jansen Pierce also asked for a queuing update with changes to signage making it more visible from the road and restriping. He also wondered why the dolphin project is designed only for the Whatcom Chief and not a future ferry. James Lee said procedures call for designs that meet the needs of what we have now and then tweak in the future if necessary. Bob Bush commented that tweaking has cost up to \$10,00 per dolphin in the past. James Lee replied that they are moving quickly since the current dolphins are not capable of handling emergency situations.

Ken Swanson asked how crews would have island access in an emergency situation if the ferry is down. James Lee and Bob Bush assured him that the county and the Lummi Island Fire Department and sheriff's office have appropriate protocols in place. Further information is available through Duncan McLane or Michael Lish.

Resolution for the Washington State Ferry HIYU

Mike McKenzie said the draft asking the county to study the feasibility of the HIYU as a replacement for the Whatcom Chief if the HIYU comes available in June 2015 was moved and seconded in LIFAC's previous meeting and was now open for further discussion at this meeting. Mike can't support the resolution since the county has already added its name to the state's interested parties list and there will be ample time to study the option then. He said that Public Works is already in discussion with Skagit County about their Ferry Replacement Study and Jim Dickinson's report has already been sent to the County Executive. Mike

indicated that it is not appropriate to do a ferry replacement study until a ferry becomes available.

Greg Brown explained that the resolution's intent is to ask the county to explore an option that is beyond LIFAC's expertise to evaluate.

Chuck Antholt thanked Jim Dickinson for bringing the HIYU to LIFAC's attention, but is concerned that without exploring the benefits and costs of a new ferry, there is nothing with which to compare the HIYU option except the Whatcom Chief. LIFAC needs to know 1) the costs of maintaining the Whatcom Chief 2) the costs to modify the HIYU and 3) the cost of a new ferry in order to make clear recommendations.

Stu Clark asked what the County Council would need to do when the HIYU does become available in 2015. He agreed with Chuck that the resolution as written "is overkill" and agreed with Greg that the County Council should be asked to start thinking about the option and understand the activities required to go forward especially with interest rates due to rise. James Lee said he did not know how much time would be required to study the HIYU in 2015. Mike McKenzie said he understood from another source that there would be ample time to study the option in 2015. Stu believes political momentum will be lost and the Council won't react positively if they are not aware of the possible benefits of the HIYU until then.

The resolution was voted down unanimously.

Update on Ferry Fares Model

Chuck Antholt reported that 85% of ferry revenues come from 5 categories. He is reconfiguring and simplifying the model using growth assumptions similar to those between 2012 and 2013. The model will be presented at the next LIFAC meeting.

Ferry Contingency Planning

Chuck reported that the county is well prepared for a short-term ferry outage, but not a long-term ferry outage or a dock outage. Councilwoman Brenner said she would like to see more details on contingency planning and understand in detail what is needed to move forward. She thought an outline of needs sent through the County Executive's office would be sufficient.

New Business

Mike McKenzie suggested that a LIFAC subcommittee on long-term strategic planning would help move some issues forward and that Rhayma Blake had volunteered to chair such a committee. Mike asked Chuck Antholt to prepare a

scope of work document that outlines what would be helpful for such a subcommittee to address.

Mike also reported that Councilman Mann would like to know how ferry users feel about reduced vehicle service and passenger service to Fairhaven. Chuck commented that it would take a lot of effort to do such a study correctly. The committee agreed to not fulfill that request.

Mike said John Gibb had requested special runs during dry dock to transport Willows Inn supplies. It was decided that there was already a Special Trips fare on the rate card and no further discussion was necessary.

The next LIFAC meeting will most likely be June 10, 2014.

NOTE: Official documents and minutes of LIFAC meetings can be accessed [online](#) on the county's website.