

# PIERCE COUNTY FERRY COMMITTEE

January 10, 2008

## Minutes

### I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was opened by Toby Rickman.

### II. INTRODUCTIONS

Toby Rickman introduced the new Ferry and Airport Administrator, Michael Esher and staff.

### III. STEILACOOM II LEASE

Mr. Rickman stated that according to the State, the Steilacoom II would be with the State until April of 2009. He noted that the shipbuilders stated best case they could build the State's new boat in 12 months, it was suggested that the County allow for 18 months as the maximum term. This would be amendable in the future if needed.

All but two items from the letter of suggested terms received from the Anderson Island Ferry Advisory Board (AICAB) were incorporated into the lease with the State. The language is a little different but the concepts were there. The two exceptions were the seating on the Christine Anderson and the parking in Steilacoom.

Two changes made by the State that the County will be keeping will be the Automated Draft Indicator System and the addition of a Radar System, and more advanced radar system than the current.

The backup ferry will be the Hiyu, available April 4, 2008, it was noted the Christine Anderson will be without backup for two months but also mentioned that the ferry system has currently been without backup for five months due to challenges with the Christine Anderson. The County does not expect time loss with the Christine Anderson but if it does happen, we will call the Steilacoom back. It is in the contract that we can get it back within eight hours if catastrophic failure occurs; however, it was noted that the Christine Anderson has ran for 13 years as the only boat, the chances of this type of event are probably remote.

Mr. Rickman went over the amount of training etc, the State has had with the Steilacoom II and the details of the training and contract specifications in regards to damages, inspections, etc.

#### Fares:

Discussion on the suggested fare reduction during the State contract period. The County will see a savings of normally spent ferry revenue per year, fares/rental, roughly 2.7 million; plans are for a ferry reduction. This is open to executive conversation, it was noted that whatever reduction is put into place, when the boat is returned the fares have to be put back up. This could be 10, 15, 20 percent fare reductions. The County has heard arguments pro and con, average 50/50. Councilmember Muri will propose a rate ordinance if that is the decision.. The suggestion was made to bring this issue to the Islanders via the AICAB and to have the AICAB make a recommendation.

Other issues discussed were the **Youth and 3-Wheel Commuter fares**. The Youth Fares were discussed at length.

**Conclusion:** It was suggested these items be brought before the AICAB Committee once more for review and presentation to the County. Mr. Michael Esher, the County's Airport and Ferry Administrator noted that this was a good window of opportunity to discuss due to the possibility of a fare reduction due to the State Agreement.

**IV. HARD LANDING (s)**

Jerry Bryant explained the condition of the dock and the necessary repairs, giving a time frame of when repair completion could be expected.

**V. COMMUNICATIONS**

It was recognized by the County that they have received a great deal of correspondence in regards to communication issues with the ferry, from late departure times to communications with ferry employees. Members present noted that the crew members were friendly and courteous.

The issue of name tags for the crew was presented to help with communications, it was noted this would be helpful in all aspects, as well as providing positive feedback. It was agreed that this was a valid request.

Other issues brought forth had to do with loading of the vehicles on the ferries as well as the lighting on the car deck.

**Conclusion:** Mr. Esher noted that these were issues that he had been reviewing and had several ideas to help improve communication efforts. His office is looking into erecting electronic reader boards at each dock to allow for posting of real time delays. Additionally there will be bulletin boards put on the boats for informational notices to be posted. It was also noted that name tags would be provided to crew members in the near future.

**VI. FERRY TIMES**

Residents from Ketron Island brought forth the issue of the need for additional runs to Ketron Island. Arguments for the additional runs were the ability to attend Sunday Church services, and the addition of a school age child now living on the island. It was also noted that the run times were extensive to get to Ketron Island vs. Anderson Island. It was suggested that residents of Ketron Island meet with the AICAB to discuss their punch list.

The issue of late departures was addressed. There was some discussion around early departures being 4 to 5 minutes early. It was noted that the schedule reads that riders must be in position 20 minutes prior to the departure time or they risk the possibility of not being boarded. Steve Caputo, Marine Superintendent noted that their policy was not to leave early.

**Conclusion:** In regards to departure times Mr. Esher noted this was under review, Steve Caputo noted that departure times can be delayed due to train crossing, stalled vehicles, or large loads among other reasons. The discussion thread was to have the schedule reviewed keeping in mind the items listed on the punch list.

**VII. COMMUTER RATES:**

The 3-wheel commuter rate was discussed along with the youth rates.

**Conclusion:** This issue will be brought before the AICAB at their next meeting for discussion and possible recommendations to the County.

**VIII. TICKETING ISSUES**

A lengthy discussion was held in regards to different ways of changing the way the tickets are read and/or distributed might help in departure times. The discussion also focused on the new ticket system and whether it was reading correctly.

**Conclusion:** It was explained to members that the ticketing procedures fall into the guidelines of security measures and therefore have to be handled accordingly. There was no conclusion to this discussion at this time. The new ticket system recently had additional antennas installed; this should take care of the scanner rate problems.

**IX. DOCK CAMERA**

The need for cameras at the ferry docks was discussed. Offered as an example for the need for cameras was a recent incident of vandalism at the Anderson Island ferry dock.

**Conclusion:** It was noted that the Anderson Island dock camera has been funded and is in the implementation stage. This will occur along with the County's airport camera system. There was no definite date of implementation.

**X. CUSTOMER SERVICE ISSUES**

The issue of customer service was discussed throughout the meeting in how it pertained to each topic. It was noted by several members present that they felt the ferry crew members did a very good job and that they had not had any problems. However, it was noted by the County that they had received a large amount of correspondence in regards to customer service issues. A lengthy discussion on this issue was pursued.

**Conclusion:** It was noted by the County and Hornblower that customer service is a huge priority and efforts are being made to maintain and enhance customer service performance. One noted item was the discussion of rumors. It was noted by the County that the hope of improved communication between the County and island residents will diminish this issue. The beginning stages of improved communications will be the implementation of informative bulletin boards on the ferries as well as the overhead lane reader boards.

**XI. TEMPERATURE OF FERRY**

The temperature of the ferry was discussed. Steve Caputo explained that the cold temperature could partially be due to the huge doors and having to have them remain open for a period of time to allow passage. He recognized the problem and assured members that they would like passengers to be comfortable. It was also noted that it takes time in the am for the temperatures to warm, an option would be to leave heaters on overnight, however, this is a safety hazard and cannot be done.

**Conclusion:** The issue of the doors is being discussed with the vendor.

## **XII. DATA REQUESTS**

The County has been putting together performance measures on several aspects of ferry uses.

**Conclusion:** The performance measures are available on the County internet system.

## **XIII. OPEN/PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Cell Phones: It was brought up by a citizen present that they noticed the use of cell phones on the ferry even though it is posted to turn cell phones off. They noted that people talking on their cell phones delay loading times and also present the danger of accidents while loading. **Conclusion:** The rules for the use of cell phones are posted, there are signs asking that cell phones be turned off. Crew members do their best to remind riders of these rules when they are seen using cell phones while loading.

Emergency Response/Rider Alerts: A lengthy discussion occurred in regards to the emergency response 911 system as well as the rider alert system. It was noted the email, rider alert system seems to be working but many expressed they would like a more advanced real time alert system. Mr. Bob Bartro from the County Emergency Management Department was present and discussed different options. **Conclusion:** This is an issue that the County will be looking into further and will report back to the islanders at a later date.

Continued Open Comments: The meeting continued after members of the ferry committee departed. The discussions continued surrounding the youth rider rates, additional Ketron Island runs, security issues, as well as communications between island residents and the ferry committee members. Additionally it was presented that the title of this meetings agenda was incorrect. **Conclusion:** The County listened to all concerns brought forth. It did note that the title of the agenda should have read "Pierce County Ferry Committee Meeting." This will be changed on the next meeting agenda. Mr. Esher noted that he understood the discussion thread presented and offered that in his new position as Ferry Administrator he was conscious of the need for improved communications and was appreciative of the informative correspondence that he has received. Conclusions to the issues brought forth were not forthcoming at this time.

## **XIV. NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting date and time will be announced at a later date.

## **XV. ADJOURN**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:43 p.m.