Emergency Ferry Service Task Force
Regular Meeting
Town Office Meeting Room & via Zoom
Thursday, April 17, 2025 @ 4:30 PM

☑ APPROVED
4/24/25

MINUTES

Members Present:

Chair Gabriel Pendleton, Shey Conover, Peter Willcox, Earl MacKenzie

Members Present via Zoom:

John King, Fred Porter

Others Present:

Murt Durkee

Others Present via Zoom:

Genevieve McDonald, Dan Tutor, Doug Welldon, John (surname unk)

Call to Order: Chair G. Pendleton called the meeting to order at 4:30 PM, and a quorum was established.

Minutes of April 3, 2025, Regular Meeting.

MOTION BY S. Conover, seconded by P. Willcox, to approve the minutes of April 3, 2025 Regular Meeting, as written. No discussion. Roll Call. Motion passed, 6 yes, 0 no.

LEGISLATION UPDATE

- Genevieve McDonald reported that the work session on LD 841, the resolve to study the delivery of EMS services to islands and the interaction between that and the Maine State Ferry Service (MSFS), passed unanimously out of Criminal Justice and Public Safety yesterday. Thanks to Fred for sending the flowchart; that was very helpful for committee members to help them understand the process. She also sent them a copy of the tariff showing them that this is a State process; there are big things to weigh in on. Nick Batista also sent committee material and information about the work that the Island Institute has been doing. DOT went into the Public Hearing with the position that this bill is completely unnecessary, because if they're not moving the ferries, there's no problem with emergency medical services, which, as we know, is not true. This has been an issue for a number of years. While overnighting the ferries on the mainland would make this issue harder, it is not the only challenge, especially because this bill included unbridged islands that are not served by the MSFS. DOT introduced an amendment that would change who oversees the study from the Maine Office of Community Affairs (MOCA) to the Dept. of Public Safety, Office of Maine Emergency Services, which made sense. Genevieve sent a picture of the amendments. There were also some other minor changes, except the DOT did try to narrow the studies so they are focused on cost.

To Senator Curry's credit, he did not stand for that and said that he wanted to make sure that sustainability of island communities was considered in the criteria that would be studied. There was a representative from Portland that would not let go of having Portland Fire & Rescue participate, so that's included in the amendment. The committee will review the language and then that amendment will be public. Genevieve will share that when it's finalized.

- Genevieve added that we were waiting for Senator Grohoski's and Representative Eaton's bills, which are about regulatory oversight of the MSFS, to be released from the revisor's office. They have been released, and signatures gathered. Rep. Eaton's bill was referred today, and Genevieve anticipated that Sen. Grohoski's bill would be referred today as well, but she doesn't believe it was. It should be out on the next session day, which is Tuesday. Ferry Day could be April 29th, but we haven't received confirmation from the Chair yet.
- Fred stated that Genevieve has done an amazing job. It has far exceeded what he expected when we went into this. He would like to thank everybody and thank Genevieve for her hard work.
- Genevieve had to sign off.

STRATEGY DISCUSSION

- Gabe stated that there are bills about emergency response, creating a new oversight committee, and giving additional authority to the Advisory Board. We don't have all the final drafts yet, but we're very close. Gabe suggested that this group have another meeting in one week when we have all the legislation. We can try to come to a consensus about the bills we support. It might be worth reaching out to interested parties before that. Once we know when Ferry Day is going to be, we ought to let the Town know, so people who want to be involved in the process and show up in person can do that.
- Gabe is happy to hear that the study to evaluate emergency response on unbridged islands is going forward. That will inform future legislation and perhaps our own position in terms of what we request in the future.
- Gabe is waiting for the other bills to be finalized before thinking about what he wants to support.
- Members agreed that we should push out discussion for another week when we have more information.
- There's a lot up in the air right now with federal funding, which may impact the MSFS.
- John asked if there's been any discussion on the island as to why LD 841 was moved from MOCA to the Dept. of Public Safety at the request of DOT. Gabe replied that this request was made by the DOT, thinking that they were in a better position to conduct that study. John will follow up with an email to Genevieve.
- Fred added that Islesboro EMS has had a total of three runs after hours, and we have not had any problems getting the ferry crews to run for us. It's been a good joint partnership recently, and Fred feels positive about the direction it's going.

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PUBLIC COMMENTS

- None.

NEXT MEETING DATE

Thursday, April 24th, 4:30 in the *Public Safety Training Room*

- The Town Office Meeting Room is booked by another committee at that time.
- S. Conover stated that she is anticipating that we'll have more work to do quickly after the meeting on the 24th.
- S. Conover recognized Commissioner Bruce Van Notes comments to the North Haven Select Board. They asked him a series of questions about where he stood on this issue, and he stated he plans to use Islesboro as a test case to see if berthing the ferries on the mainland works. We will want to make sure that we can rally other island communities.

Motion by E. MacKenzie, seconded by J. King, to adjourn meeting at 4:42 PM. No discussion. Roll Call. Motion passed, 6 yes, 0 no. Unanimous.

Respectfully Submitted,

Carrie Reed

Carrie Reed
Secretary