

**Minutes of the Meeting
of the
Board of Commissioners
of the
Fishers Island Ferry District**

A meeting of the Board of Commissioners of the Fishers Island Ferry District was held in the Fishers Island Community Center on **Tuesday, February 18, 2010** at 2:00 PM.

Present were Commissioners: Brooks, Burnham, duPont and Edwards. 5 members of the community also attended.

Minutes of the meeting held on February 2, 2010 were discussed by the Board. After discussion and amendments the minutes were MOVED by Edwards, SECONDED by duPont, AYES all.

A listing of the outstanding obligations of the District was distributed to the Board for audit and discussion. At the conclusion of the discussion, a resolution to pay the outstanding obligations of: **\$39,663.25** as represented by vouchers **#631 through #671**, dated February 23, 2010 was; MOVED by Burnham, SECONDED by Edwards; AYES ALL

Correspondence

1. Commissioners reviewed a letter from Ms. Diane Dexter requesting waiver of the NY State Drivers' License requirement as proof of residency to obtain a Fishers Island Ferry District Year Round ID Card. [Commissioners granted the request for Ms. Dexter. Brooks requested a waiver for Austin and Annie McPhail. Granted.](#) The requirement for a New York State Driver's License will be reviewed by the Commissioners on a case by case basis.

Old Business

1. Captain Mark Easter reported the Munnatawket drydock is complete. A few minor items will be finished at home port. The MU will be back on the schedule for most of March, during which time the Race Point will receive some attention. \$51,079.00 was spent on contract specifications; \$28,542.50 on extras. The replacement of the port reduction gear was \$11,000.00. Total: \$91,254.34. \$105,000.00 was budgeted, bringing the job in \$14,000.00 under budget.

Commissioner Edwards asked if any more repairs were anticipated for the MU; Captain Easter indicated there were none expected and when the budget is prepared, funds are built in to anticipate any unexpected costs. Commissioner duPont commended Captain Easter on the excellent drydock process and for finding a used reduction gear replacement. A new reduction gear would have cost the Ferry District \$22,000.00 plus shipping.

2. Commissioner Brooks questioned Captain Easter on the non-agenda item regarding the length of the uniform contract. The end date was unclear. [Edwards asked that a copy of the contract be provided to the Board.](#) Management was asked to seek other alternatives for review. Captain Easter suggested giving each crewmember a yearly stipend for a prescribed uniform.
3. The Advisory Committee is continuing their review of the rental properties and leases. Deb Shillo will email a list of questions to Tom Doherty and the Commissioners. Brian Egan, Esq. will be asked to provide a sample lease.
4. COLA raises were again discussed at great length as to what information should be used to make a decision. The Board asked for additional info on the last three years of salaries and hours for all employees for the next meeting. Because the Board could not come to a consensus, Commissioner duPont tabled the issue until further info was gathered on the CPI, etc. Commissioner Brooks made a motion to grant a 2% COLA raise to all full time employees excluding management and salaried employees, retroactive to Jan 1, 2010. There was no second. The motion died on the floor. Brooks raised it again, and there was no second. [duPont stated it was not fair to give raises to full time and non-salaried or management.](#) [Burnham stated that the increase would not be just for cost of living, but the crew's responsibilities need to be factored in also.](#) He cited Captain Easter saving the District over \$15,000 on the Race Point drydock. Brooks said that Easter gets paid to do exactly that. [Edwards read the list of requests sent to management on 2/3 along with the info he got back.](#) He asked specifically for a breakdown of each employee not just a lump sum. This would help get an understanding to the employees concerns that they made less money in 2008 v. 2009 due to the cutbacks. He said that he is not opposed to a COLA raise retroactive to Jan. 1st if that is the case and also if it was put in the budget. He would just like to see all other info and numbers on paper to make sure it had been properly budgeted. The response to Edwards' email from Tom Doherty was also read and made a part of the record. The email stated "Below is a rundown of the questions you raised. Should you have any further questions or comments, please feel free to contact me".
5. The Board discussed the upcoming peak season schedule and when to apply summer rates. [Brooks brought up the concept of starting the summer rates May 1st rather than May 15, drop the additional \\$5.00 and year round residents begin paying summer rates July 1st.](#) No final decisions were made and the discussion was tabled.
6. 149 ID cards have been issued; 104 are pending based on the Year Round List. The Senior Lunch ID session is today. March 3 will be the final off site session.
7. The Advisory Committee gave a report. Deb Shillo said no financials were yet available from the Town of Southold.
8. Brooks requested receipts for the PVA conference expenses from Tom Doherty for the next meeting to determine exact costs for future budgeting.

Commissioner Burnham suggested skipping to New Business, Employee Handbook so that Captain Easter could catch the 4:45 pm ferry back to New London. Commissioner Brooks asked if the Town had responded to the offer to sell the backhoe. Commissioner duPont said no new information had evolved. Commissioner Edwards asked if the no parking signs that were paid for had gone up yet and had the freight system been updated?

New Business

- c. Captain Easter reported that in 41 years, he has never seen the work environment at the Ferry District as it is now. There is much friction, anxiety and morale is low. He continues to encourage the crew to remain positive and reminds them that we provide a service. The crew has been receptive to these pep talks, but Easter said the Commissioners need to know that the crew collectively refused to sign

the acknowledgement in the Employee Handbook because they feel threatened by the “at will” dismissal language and history of events over the last year. A discussion ensued regarding reasons why the crew has lost faith in the Board.

Easter suggested the Board ask Attorney Egan if he can re-write the resolution of December 17, 2009, adding a statement of assurance with a time frame of 18 months to two years, where the crew would be assured that their current status will remain static and no decisions affecting their status will be made during that time period without the Board conferring with the crew. The Board agreed to make the request of Attorney Egan and to proceed under his advisement.

Captain Easter made note that the Ferry District employees are the only civil service employees in New York that are not unionized but there is a possibility unionization will occur in the future, which would not be good for the District, the employees or Fishers Island.

Brooks asked exactly what was the problem? [Supervisor Scott Russell had asked back in June why the Ferry had given a COLA raise.](#) Captain Easter answered that they have accepted the cutbacks graciously, realizing the state of the current national economic condition. He listed four things that have tilted the confidence scale: the change in the longevity increase structure, loss of coverage and higher co-pays under the new medical plan, reduction in overtime and the “at will” clause in the Employee Handbook. He also stated that considering that the Ad Hoc Committee predicted a \$300,000 shortfall, and the numbers came in \$170,000 to the good, the crew’s faith in the Board is almost non-existent, having offered to increase their contribution to 20% and pick up the increase in rates in order to retain their old medical plan back in August, 2009. Commissioner Burnham reiterated that this isn’t all about money, but also operating in a spirit of goodwill towards the employees and community.

The Ferry District is not a profit-making entity, it is here to provide a necessary service for the good of the island, and that needs to be foremost in the Commissioners' minds. Edwards said he felt the medical insurance issue was a communication problem.

- a. The dental plan renews on April 1, 2010. Mary Center is gathering quotes from the current carrier, MetLife and others, hopefully for the March 2 meeting.
- b. Captain Easter had to leave, but Ms. Schmid reported he wanted to advise the Commissioners that he felt charter rates were too low. Commissioners asked that he provide a proposal for the next meeting.
- c. Brooks asked if meeting notices had been posted. Ms. Schmid responded affirmatively.

Public Comment

1. Deb Shillo commented on the state of the economy. A long discussion followed regarding miscellaneous items. Marilyn Yakaitis made some comments earlier also on the state of the economy nationwide, [that she had not received a social security increase](#) and applauded Commissioner Burnham's reminder that the District is in the business of providing service, not for profit.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 PM. The next meeting will be Tuesday, March 2, 2010 at the FI Community Center.