

**Lummi Island Ferry Advisory Committee (LIFAC)**  
*FEBRUARY 2022 Meeting: 6pm, Jan. 12 [on Zoom platform]*

**ATTENDANCE:**

**LIFAC**--Mike McKenzie (Secretary); Cris Colburn, Jim Dickinson, Richard Frye, Reid Johnson, Todd Lagestee, Judy Olsen

**WHATCOM COUNTY**—Councilman Todd Donovan, Ferry Sr. Master Rich Hudson

**GUESTS**—Mary Ross (Zoom Host); Nancy Ging (past Chair), Dave Parker, Mike Skehan, Mary Jane Van Hoesen

**CALL TO ORDER**

As the only returning officer, Mike McKenzie called the meeting to order at 6pm with all 7 members of LIFAC in attendance.

**MOMENT OF SILENCE**

**MINUTES**

January 11, 2022 meeting, Mike McKenzie (2021 secretary) in a LIFAC group email moved to accept, Charles Bailey seconded, approved 4-0 (Charles Bailey, Rhayma Blake, Mike McKenzie, Judy Olsen). Minutes submitted to and posted by County Council on linked LIFAC page.

**ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

Mike McKenzie moved to elect slate of Cris Colburn as Chair, Judy Olsen as Vice Chair, and Reid Johnson as Secretary. Todd Legestee seconded. Mike pointed out that Cris has the most seniority on LIFAC, having served a partial term and then 2 full terms before a mandatory period of one year off the committee. Mike called for a vote.

In discussion Jim Dickinson made an amended motion to have the Chair position rotate monthly among all 7 members. No second. Original motion approved, 6-1 (For: Colburn, Frye, Johnson, Lagestee, McKenzie, Olsen; Opposed: Dickinson.)

Mike turned the meeting over to Cris Colburn as 2022 Chair.

**INTERNAL BUSINESS**

Cris said an agenda item for the next meeting March 9 would give background on the members and to recap the LIFAC agenda to date.

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*In discussion of March 9 meeting where and how:*

Jim Dickinson and Mike McKenzie suggested in-person attendance coupled with a Zoom option. Jim stated that the quality of presentations and “interactivity” have diminished severely because of virtual meeting limitations. They both feel that if a facility is available—either in a County meeting space or on island—LIFAC should return to an in-person format, especially if Zoom option is feasible. (County offices remain closed to the public; The Grange Hall is available on the island.)

Todd Donovan reported that County Council budgeted for the County’s IT team to fully equip the Council meeting chamber in sound and video for continuing a Zoom option. He said that the vast majority of counties in the state—“20-some”—have returned to in-person/virtual hybrid meetings and just “a half dozen or so” still meet virtual only. The IT Dept will report its recommendations in March and Todd said he anticipates Council returning to in-person w/ Zoom option “pretty soon.”

*Mike’s research into in-person, on-island possibilities:*

- Cris can contact Judy Thomas, administrator of The Grange Hall on Lummi Island to set up meetings at that facility. It has reopened, albeit requiring masking.
- The Island Chapel church service has taken place there in-person weekly since May 2021.
- The Lummi Island Community Association (LICA) Board has agreed to cover the Grange Hall rental fee (\$40 per meeting) for LIFAC because it has no budget.

Mary Ross, host of LIFAC’s Zoom sessions throughout 2021, said she’s transitioning the hosting to another islander volunteer, Bill Sager, and that LIFAC could consult with him and with LICA President Greg Hall and Island Chapel Pastor Chris Immer on technical requirements to set up a Zoom option at The Grange Hall.

Rich Frye referred to Whatcom County Health Department’s constantly updated data, suggesting LIFAC follow the metric on CHD’s reports of hospitalizations and fatalities attributed to COVID and subsequent recommendations on indoor events and sites.

Judy suggested that discussion of this issue takes up too much meeting time (this agenda item lasted 26 minutes) and that a committee member reach out to Bill Sager. Reid volunteered to and will report March 9.

***Judy moved to hold the March 9 meeting by Zoom only. Todd Lagestee seconded. Motion approved, 5-2 (Jim and Mike opposed).***

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*Judy issued an update on operation of the Google Groups email servers:*

- One for LIFAC internal communications, including receiving emails of public comment and/or meeting presentations.
- The other is a public list open to sign up for receiving LIFAC public announcements.
- Nancy Ging, a past chair of the LIFAC, owns the servers. Judy is now a designated manager and will keep the lists updated.

#### **OLD BUSINESS**

1. Ferry Senior Master Rich Hudson gave his monthly report on all ferry operations. Highlights:

**The three-week, pre-bid process** opened for the pier-side inspection May 6-20 on the Whatcom Chief. Three companies participated in an on-board inspection of the ferry:

- [Lake Union Dry Dock](#) in Seattle.
- [Pacific Fisherman](#) in Seattle.
- [Nichols Brothers Boat Builders](#) in Freeland.

Public Works has used Lake Union before, and not the other two. Next steps:

- (a.) County responding to questions, and then
- (b.) Applicants submitting bids.

**Installation of a steel plate** on the boarding platform at Gooseberry Point where a 20' wood stringer had cracked.

**Temporary 'fix' of a flawed hydraulic system** causing problems with the load-unload apron on the Gooseberry dock. Eventually, with a 2-week notice of service interruption, Public Works ordered and will install two new hydrants—one on each dock.

**The ferry crew has operated without shortages** under strict COVID protocols, without interruption of service such as experienced on State and Guemes ferries. Rich stated, "We had a couple of scares but no transmission (of COVID). Our tamped-down process worked great and the crew is healthy."

2. **Rich also reported on behalf of Special Projects Manager Roland Middleton:**

- Deadline for the 2022 proposal for federal aid, i.e., a **RAISE Grant** from the U.S. Transportation Dept., was moved from May to April. The County requested \$20 million last year and was declined.
  - The proposal for distribution in 2023 probably will be for 25 or 30 million to meet annual projected costs of a replacement ferry.

- Meanwhile, the current state legislature will vote this Spring on distribution of county road funds, i.e, a **CRAB Grant** granted by state legislators, toward the replacement ferry project. Public Works applied for \$10 million.
  - Roland urged LIFAC to stimulate public support of both grants through letter-writing and telephone initiatives directed to Federal and State legislative delegates—with emphasis on critical needs for emergency response and other advantages of a newer, more reliable ferry.
  - County is working closely with its project consultant, KPFF, a national engineering consulting firm based in Seattle, on examining detailed points for improving the new grant proposal.
- County announced recently that \$5.3 million in direct transportation funds have been designated for the budget for the replacement ferry project.

\***RAISE** stands for Rebuilding American Infrastructure w/ Sustainability & Equity

\***CRAB** stands for County Road Administration Board

Both Rich Hudson [rhudson@co.whatcom.wa.us](mailto:rhudson@co.whatcom.wa.us) and Roland Middleton [rmiddlet@co.whatcom.wa.us](mailto:rmiddlet@co.whatcom.wa.us) welcome questions through their county email addresses.

### 3. Update on Shore Power Study:

Councilman Donovan said LIFAC’s recommended study, approved by County Executive Satpal Sidhu and approved for funding by County Council, “is not on the back burner, but is on hold” until a new director is hired to lead the County’s Climate Action Plan. Todd’s suggestion: “Keep nudging it to keep scoping on options beyond just PSE (Puget Sound Energy). The Excutive (Sidhu) will back it, remind him in to ask us for the money in the next budget cycle.”

Todd Lagestee inquired about whether the study will delve into all options for alternative power sources and whether it will incorporate input from Lummi Nation. Rich Frye suggested “advantages of living on an island,” e.g., wind, waves, flowing water solar....

## **PUBLIC AWARENESS**

- **The Tome** deadline Friday, Feb. 11, 4pm. Mike will submit article.
- **Letters & Telephone** initiative to seek support from legislative delegates, both U.S. Congress and State Legislature.
- **LICA community website:** increase usage on [www.OurLummiIsland.org](http://www.OurLummiIsland.org)

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

- *Mary Jane Van Hoesen* (Lummi Island) spoke about maintaining a focus on ferry maintenance issues.
- *Mary Ross* (Lummi Island) submitted a report on the island Public Dock Advisory Committee's "very successful and informative Town Hall" meeting on Feb. 6. All details appear on the [LICA community website here](#). She emphasized personal stories in a survey, also available on that site.
- Nancy Ging (Bellingham) pointed out that a bill before U.S. Congress written by Washington's U.S. Representative Rick Larsen for funding electric ferries. "He has talked to the Biden administration about how the Whatcom County ferry project would make a great 'poster child' for that bill...and he thinks it's 'looking pretty good' for getting the bill passed."
- Mike Skehan (Lummi Island) spoke about the importance of continued support of the shore power study with deeper research into alternatives (beyond) the existing electric infrastructure. He listed many detailed suggestions and mentioned that the County could conduct a study similar to one that was done on Guemes Island ferry operation.
- Bill Sager (Lummi Island) proposed inclusion in the upcoming RAISE Grant application of the Lummi Nation's needs of emergency support during flooding such as it experienced this winter. "The more people we help (with ferry transportation) the more we have a chance for the grant."
  - *[Rich Hudson interjected that that had come up in past grant applications and would again this time around: "...A collaborative effort on the path forward with our shared experiences....We'll highlight in our next proposal how in a flood when the peninsula is isolated we can get people to Bellingham."*

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Moved and seconded, meeting ended 7:37pm.

A video of the meeting appears on [YouTube here](#).