

## GABRIOLA FERRY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

November 2, 2015

### Informal Notes of Meeting (not an official record)

In attendance:

*Gabriola representatives:*

Steven Earle  
Howard Houle  
Heather Nicholas  
Chris Hock  
Jim Ramsay  
Jane McCall Woods

*BC Ferries Representatives:*

Darin Guenette (Public Affairs Manager)  
Mark Collins (VP, Strategic Planning & Community Engagement)  
David Hendry (Director, Strategic Planning)  
John Macdonald (Regional Manager, Terminal Ops)  
Captain Lewis Mackay (Marine Superintendent)

Apologies for absence:

John Hodgkins, David Prevost

### Welcome and Introductions

#### Appointment of Meeting Chair/Agenda

In the absence of FAC Chair John Hodgkins, Steven Earle was nominated and seconded to Chair the meeting. The agenda was approved with addition of "Request for route specific information from service cuts" under new business and a brief report by Mark Collins on the Denman cable ferry.

#### Fare Reduction Proposals

The proposal of John H last May to provide a 25% savings on sailings after 9:00 pm was discussed. BCF officials said consideration of their system-wide promotion took precedence over the Gabriola proposal. Heather noted that the savings don't correspond to underutilized sailings on the smaller routes. Also, with the experience card, the reduction is only 16% and therefore provides even less incentive to Gabriolans. BCF indicated they would like to try to move traffic to increase overall volume, but don't have the systems in place yet; future fare flexibility will be route-specific and applied: (a) first to the major routes; (b) next to sailings with reservations; and (c) finally to the minor routes, probably in about 5 years. Steve asked BCF to consult with us in advance to determine what would work best on Route 19.

#### Nanaimo Terminal Kiosk

After the last FAC meeting, John Macdonald met with Jim Wilson-Storey and John H plus Sasha Angus from NEDC. Howard reported he had talked to NEDC earlier today. It was agreed Chris would take over this file and prepare a submission to John M.

#### MoTI Traffic Safety Study

Jim reported that MoTI has responded to the FAC request and agreed to undertake a traffic safety study at the Gabriola terminal. As a first step, they will send a Traffic Engineer from their Coquitlam office to assess the situation at the peak times during a full day visit. Steven pointed out that although numerous agencies wrote letters of support for this initiative, BCF refused to do so. Mark indicated BCF had been reluctant to write a letter of support because in effect the government is their client, and they do not

want to be perceived as meddling in government affairs. Nevertheless, BCF will participate fully in the study and John M will be their representative.

### **Community Engagement Ideas from FAC**

Heather proposed a revisiting of how the sailings adjustments fit with the community, rather than the standard customer satisfaction surveys as conducted by BCF. FAC would like to have input into framing questions to place before the public. Mark indicated BCF resources can be supplied; Steve asked about funding for a mailout and Mark replied they are open to our applying for same.

Mark emphasized that their CEO's desire for a more extensive community engagement process is why that function is specifically part of his responsibilities and title.

### **Vehicle Fare Promotion**

The 50% promotion will apply between November 16 and December 19 on Monday through Thursday and Saturday sailings. While this represents only a 16% saving for a car and driver using the Experience Card, Mark indicated when they have full fare flexibility, tailored solutions will be possible after a dynamic assessment of routes and fares.

Heather noted that current experience card buy-in levels of over \$100+ are hard for people with low disposable income. Steve asked if a variable rate could be introduced to benefit small cars; Mark replied not now but the new system may be able to handle such fare flexibility.

### **BCF Operational update**

Lewis confirmed that operational performance has been good during the summer season, from BCF perspective, with good on time performance. Issues remain with overloads in summer particularly, including on Saturday and Sunday when there are no 13:50 and 14:25 sailings.

Steve proposed reinstating the Saturday and Sunday missing sailings, and indicated a trade-off with cancellation of other sailings would not be palatable with the community. Based on John H's analysis that cost reductions seemed to result in considerably greater savings than the target, he requested detailed route information. Mark replied that detailed information will not be released by BCF due (1) commercial considerations and (2) to avoid a potentially very divisive debate amongst the various routes. He added that some routes have saved more, some less, but overall the savings goal was achieved.

Heather asked how we can prepare a business case analysis for reinstatement without route specifics? Mark replied that BCF will do the analysis for the community. BCF is building a process to consider adding additional sailings from many routes; once built, they can let us know what inputs are needed from the community. In the meantime, we are welcome to submit a proposal. A meeting with BCF will be scheduled to explore this further when John H returns, hopefully in early December.

### **Denman Cable Ferry**

Mark gave an update on the cable ferry which, contrary to media reports, is expected to provide a very satisfactory, and cost effective, alternative to the existing operation once it goes into service.

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