

# GABRIOLA FERRY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

May 13 , 2019

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

### In attendance:

#### **Gabriola FAC representatives:**

Steven Earle (Chair)  
Heather O'Sullivan (Vice-Chair)  
Scott Colborne (Islands Trust)  
Vanessa Craig (RDN Regional Dir.)  
April Vannini  
Paul O'Sullivan  
Jim Ramsay

#### **BC Ferries Representatives:**

Darin Guenette (Public Affairs Manager)  
Graeme Fipke ( Terminal Operations)  
David Hendry (Director, Strategic Planning)  
Captain Graham Conrad (Quinsam Master)  
Peter Simpson (Director, Fleet Operational Strategy)  
John Macdonald (Reg. Mgr., Terminal Operations)

### Absent:

Peter Briscoe  
Michael Wine  
Peggy Richardson

### **Welcome/Agenda Approval**

The meeting was called to order at 3:00 pm by Chair Steven Earle. The agenda was approved and introductions made.

### **Agenda Items**

#### **a. Sailing restorations in April 2019**

- Steve and Heather expressed the FAC's gratitude to BC Ferries and the Province for the restorations implemented on April 27, 2019.
- The willingness of BC Ferries to modify the early morning option has enabled much more suitable times for residents using those sailings and that flexibility is greatly appreciated.

#### **b. Options for improving timing of evening service**

- The FAC canvass of residents presented a very close 50/50 split as to which of the two proposed options to select. Although the FAC chose the early morning option, after carefully examining all the related factors, in fact the mid-evening option would have benefited more people.
- The FAC understands the need to provide a clear ½ hour meal break for officers after the last car is off-loaded. Capt. Conrad stated that the meal break should be close to the middle of the shift, but noted that engineers can operate the vessel without officers present for part of the sailing when necessary.
- Heather asked that consideration be given to adjusting the 5:00, 6:10 and 7:15 pm schedule by adding a few minutes to each so that the last of those sailings can run at 7:30. That 15 minute difference would provide a significant benefit for families with children, in particular. [Add anything else?]
- Peter Simpson noted that any such sailing modification would not take place until the fall schedule but he agreed to review this issue again.

- **ACTION: Peter to review mid-evening schedule.**

**c. Island Class update (including weight)**

- David Hendry reported that the first two IC vessels which have been built in Romania will be introduced in service in early 2020.
- An RFP for the following 4 vessels will be issued this summer and the resulting vessels, 2 for Campbell River and 2 for Gabriola will be introduced in Fall 2021 and Spring 2022 respectively.
- The gross vehicle weight of IC's is 265 tons (versus 426 tons for the Quinsam) and the expected 5.3 tons available for AEQ's should be adequate, said Capt. Conrad, even with large commercial trucks such as cement mixers.
- One vessel will be berthed in Nanaimo and one in Gabriola. One will operate for 16 hour days and the other for 12 hours. One [I thought this comment should be captured but do those times fit our expected 2 ship operation?]

**d. Terminal Development Process Updates**

- John Macdonald noted that the terminal development plans for both Descanso Bay and Nanaimo Harbour have now been approved and details are available on the website.
- Both terminal upgrades are expected to be completed by March 2023. A temporary tie-up plan for the second IC vessel in Nanaimo will be in place for the year before the marine portion is completed.

**e. Oversize vehicle queuing issues on Gabriola**

- Steve reported that last week two commercial vehicles entered the ferry line out of turn, which was quite upsetting to the community. The problem is that there does not seem to be any policy to indicate how trucks should enter the lineup.
- John explained that there is an honour system for commercial drivers to notify the next vehicle in line where they will enter. It was proposed that protocol information should be provided to all such drivers when they check-in at the Nanaimo terminal.
- Heather requested that a fully-transparent system be put in place, featuring new signage and detailed information on the BCF website.
- **ACTION: John Macdonald to review and revise protocol measures.**

**f. Descanso Bay Parking Lot Signage**

- John noted that signage at the Descanso terminal now indicates parking for a maximum of 24 hours and that ferry staff will monitor for compliance.

**g. Taylor Bay Road safety**

- Steve reported there are great concerns amongst residents for safety of vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians in long lineups on Taylor Bay Road now that summer-like traffic numbers and overloads are a common experience, with illegal u-turns continuing to be a problem.
- It was requested that BCF again consider contracting flaggers during busy periods during peak travel times. Heather noted that one local flagging company quoted \$31 per hour. As a cost estimate, if 2 flaggers were used for 4

hours per day for 4 months, the annual cost would be in the order of \$18,000 (which is less than the revenue collected by BCF on this route **in one day**.) This system would be needed for the next 4 years until the two ship operation.

- The intention would not be for flaggers to police the lineup but rather to provide information and to report illegal turnarounds.
- In addition, BCF is requested to have toilet facilities installed on Taylor Bay Road near the first turnaround. Scott Colborne noted that the fire department needs to be able to continue to access the fire hydrant in that area in their large trucks.
- **ACTION: FAC to submit a formal request to Darin for a limited time request for flaggers and toilet facilities on Taylor Bay Road to the end of summer 2022.** [my notes say 2021 but surely it's 2022?].

#### h. BCF updates

- David reported that a new Customer Satisfaction Tracking system is being introduced with new tracking methods and a new survey company hired for intercept surveys. Phase 2 will add on-line inputs, etc.
- David noted that the Ferry Commissioner has tentatively set price caps for the years 2020 to 2024 at 2.3%. A final ruling will be issued in September. Fuel surcharges/rebates are determined in a separate process.
- BCF is introducing a flex fare system on their new computer platform to be launched in the fall. This will apply to major routes only and be introduced slowly with feedback before expansion. Heather suggested Route 19 could be considered for a pilot trial for the minor routes. **ACTION: Darin to send out details of the new system.**
- Steve asked again why bicycles are charged \$2, (even it is waived for experience card users) which is seen as a regressive fare when we should be encouraging their usage. BCF indicated no plans to change this policy.
- Darin noted that updated terms of reference have been issued to all FAC members. He requested any feedback we may have.

**CORRESPONDENCE**– Nil

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

- A nearby resident asked why the public announcement is made before the first ferry leaves the dock at 5:15, which awakens them, when similar action is not taken on the Nanaimo Harbour side. Capt. Conrad explained that the announcement is a Transport Canada requirement, but he will look at the timing and possibly a shorter message. **ACTION: Capt. Conrad to review public announcements at Descanso Bay.**
- A number of residents spoke in favour of the proposal to add flaggers to Taylor Bay for safety in peak travel times.
- A representative of GERTIE asked that any schedule changes contemplated in item (b) above consider the impact on the connecting community bus.
- A resident spoke of the difficulty exiting his vehicle on the car deck when large vehicles are parked beside his. This could be a problem when transporting his elderly father if he needed emergency attention. With the handicap sign in place, the resident was advised

- to let the mate at the front of the line know so that the officer directing loading can place the vehicle accordingly.
- Two Quinsam ferry crew workers expressed disappointment in the comments raised and the lack of communication between management and crew, which they indicated are BCF's best resource.
  - As a member of the new Gabriola Bicycle Club, Scott Colborne requested a new open door protocol be publicized that traffic-side car doors be opened with the opposite hand to prevent collisions with cyclists.
  - Derek Kilbourne requested that a temporary roofed area be added to the Nanaimo Harbour terminal area to protect passengers from sun during the summer.

**Next Meeting** –October/November 2019

Minutes recorded by Jim Ramsay