

**Guemes Island Ferry Committee / Skagit County Public Works
Roundtable Meeting Summary**

Wednesday, January 24, 2007

2:00 - 3:30 p.m.

Skagit County Public Works, Sauk Conference Room

Attendance:

Committee:

Glen Veal
Carl Cady
Dyvon Havens
Marilee Fosbre

Staff:

Gene Sampley
Steve Cox
Linda Christensen
Jean Alden

Guests:

David Wehrly
Steve Schmokel

Commenced: 2:00 pm

Resolution Review

Resolutions R20040051, R20040054, and R20040393 were briefly reviewed. R20040051 addresses the policy recommendations of the Guemes Island Ferry schedule and fare task force. R20040054 addresses the establishment of a policy for setting the fare revenue requirement of the Guemes Island Ferry. R20040393 establishes a Guemes Island Ferry operations and performance roundtable.

Gene briefly noted the items on the agenda that are underlined were added to the Ferry Committee's recommended agenda.

Public Comment Period

There was no public comment.

Framework for Operation of Roundtable

Gene discussed the draft rate increase resolution. February 20, 2007 is the target date (public hearing) to present the resolution to the (BCC). This resolution attempts to clarify the unclear areas of the R20040054 and R20050298 that established new rates, in January 2006. Carl Cady requested that the committee review the new resolution and submit at a later date with their comments. Gene pointed out that it is important that everyone agree that the new resolution states that the intent of the resolution is to recover fares based on certain criteria. Considering the Ferry committee's concern with the timing, a new target date was set for March 5.

The Committee asked for clarification of the public hearing process. The public hearing will be advertised for two consecutive weeks in the Skagit Valley Herald, the public hearing/discussion will be held on March 5 and a possible resolution could be signed by

the Board on consent agenda the following week or as soon as possible thereafter. The time frame for signature on consent depends on issues brought up by the Board.

The Committee needed further understanding of the new resolution. Jean Alden mentioned that the new resolution does not rescind R20040054, it only clarifies it.

The Committee will review the new resolution and submit their comments to Gene by February 14, which is one week prior to the next Round Table Meeting scheduled for February 21. March 5 is the date Gene will present the new rate resolution before the BCC (public hearing) . Possible implementation could be in May. Gene also mentioned that he needs their comments regarding the fare structure.

There was a discussion regarding the 100% fee recovery. Gene mentioned that he doesn't know of any option other than recovering 100%. It is well defined in R20040054 as to what the County needs to recover. Discussion was held on the effect of cost containment issues. Any cost containment plan would be reflected in the actual costs that are used to calculate the Revenue Target. Any cost containment plan will; therefore, be part of the operations discussion and not part of the discussion on the Revenue Target calculation and methodology.

Glen discussed that one of the reasons that a 4th crew person was removed from the calculation during the beginning was to give County incentive to try to work on that issue and find another solution to the findings from the state audit instead of adding a 4th person.

4th Person Crew

Glen Veal led a discussion regarding the 4th person crew. Gene discussed his understanding on the 4th person crew as it relates to the risk of three consecutive audit findings that ultimately effect the County bond rating. The current constraints include the Coast Guard standards and the County Auditors standards for checks and balances, and the cash handling policies as set by the Finance Committee. Gene believes the 4th person crew is a done deal. Steve Cox discussed the logistics of a 3rd & 4th person crew. The Committee felt the 3rd person crew worked as a temporary solution.

Carl reviewed again his research from Whatcom County regarding their cash handling procedures and shared those results. That policy is written in such a way that if the fix to a problem was too costly, then the problem could remain unfixed. If similar language was placed in the Skagit County Cash Handling Policies, then a cost benefit analysis could be done on the 4th crew person. The language in the Whatcom policy is more permissive. Whatcom feels there needs to be flexibility, "one shoe doesn't fit all". The committee presented Whatcom's language to the Skagit County Treasure and Auditor in the past. In September 2005, the Finance Committee denied the request from the Ferry Committee for this change. The Committee requested this question to be asked again of the new Auditor.

Gene requested that Jean Alden discuss this with Skagit County's new Auditor to review the ferry cash handling procedure. Glen felt this is an opportunity to have a 3-member

crew. Gene asked Steve Cox to look at this issue from an operational stand point while Jean will look at it from an accounting stand point.

Steve Cox added that the County needs to manage its personnel concerning this issue . Gene mentioned that is part of the operational issues. We are technically at the table with the Union. This issue will be brought forward.

Resolution R20040393

A question came to the table, are these good Roundtable operating principles in this resolution? Gene wants to establishing target dates, particularly for those items that require reports to the Board. One is to develop an annual work plan and to present it to the BCC on an upcoming agenda date. Another bulleted item is to report to the BCC on a semi-annual basis on activity progress. These items can be discussed at the April 3 BCC agenda meeting.

Another item that needs to be done is to post the meeting times, location, and meeting summaries at the ferry terminal. Steve Cox will perform these tasks. Steve will also post on the County website.

Lastly, Gene mentioned that staff will brief the BCC on the Ferry Committee issues and activities on a semi-annual basis. This will be included on the April 3 meeting. After the Spring update, the Board will be updated with information each November and April.

2007 Work Plan Draft

Carl led a discussion regarding the draft 2007 Work Plan. Gene would like to add the status reports to the Board (April & November) as part of the Work Plan.

Gene suggested that the cost of the 4th person crew cost be reduced to \$100,000 from \$200,000. It was agreed; it is still a significant financial issue..

Gene mentioned that the Haul Out will be in May for an estimated period of 10 days, one week and two weekends. If we wait until September, there is a risk that the boat may go out of service during the summer because of the out-drive.

Steve Cox will discuss with Janice Marlega, Assistant County Public Works Engineer, about the Guemes Island Road widening project. Steve will bring this information to the next round table meeting.

An additional item, passengers obtaining Senior Passes at the ferry dock in addition to the Public Works Administration building, should be considered. Marilee mentioned that it is difficult for some passengers to travel to Mount Vernon. The problem with issuing passes at the Ferry dock is the requirement for photo ID on the pass.

Gene would also like to add capital facilities planning to the Work Plan and off-site ticket sales.

Parking near 6th Street

Marilee reported on the status of the parking issue. New signs are in the works. Rumble strips need to be installed. Striping has been completed. Sixth Street residents are concerned about the striping near the parking lot. The public transportation issue is still on-going with SKAT.

Ferry District

Gene discussed the possibility of pursuing a Ferry District as described in the handout, RCW 36.54.110. Skagit County would consider this possibility according to paragraphs one through four of the RCW. The BCC asked Gene to present this issue to the Roundtable and to include it on the Work Plan.

Summer Fees

Glen brought up summer fees. A small discussion continued. Gene advised that the Ferry Committee could bring proposals for alternate fee structures back to the table.

SKAT

Glen asked how the County can reach out to encourage SKAT transportation in regards to the ferry system and coordinate a funding effort. Which agency should we reach out to? Our RTPO? Gene feels that Skagit County should be a partner in this effort while SKAT takes the lead. Gene asked Glen to draft a letter to SKAT and Public Works will support the effort.

Extended Service

Carl wonders what the process is for evaluating extended service? What is the criterion for wages, hours, etc. What are the implications of extended service? He wants to put together a process for future evaluation. Gene asked Carl to draft a document from which the Roundtable can work.

Gene reviewed the action items for the next meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned.