

Dukes County Commission (DCC)
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, January 3, 2024
4:00 PM
Remote Participation Only

Dukes County Commissioners Present in person: Christine Todd, Peter Wharton, Doug Ruskin, Jim Klingensmith, Tristan Israel, Juli Vanderhoop

Other County Officials: Martina Thornton – County Manager, Paulo DeOliveira – Register of Deeds, Judy Soules – County Treasurer, Sarah Kuh – Director of Health Care Access Program, Richard Cohen – Associate Commissioner for Disabled

Others Present: Steamship Authority MV appointees: Jim Malkin, John Cahill, Joseph Sollitto; Leon Brathwaite, Stephen R. McDow II, Cindy Trish, Ethan Genter – Vineyard Gazette, Abigail Rosen – MV Times, Paddy Moore

Christine called the meeting to order at 4:00PM

Approval of minutes

Tristan/Jim moved to approve minutes for December 20, 2023. So voted. Doug – abstained, Peter – yes, Tristan – yes, Jim – yes, Juli –yes, Christine – yes. Motion carried.

Steamship Authority update – Jim Malkin

Jim stated that he had thought that he can make changes as he would as CEO, but he only has 35% of the vote and he needs to work with his board colleagues, work with all constituencies that have different priorities. Three biggest issues, in his opinion:

- 1- The issue with IT infrastructure and website that the board is looking to improve. Reservation system is independent of the website. Creating new website is not fixing the reservation problems.
- 2- Electrification is required by the State and also there needs to be replacement due to the age of the vessels. There will be substantial capital needed to do so.
- 3- Accountability and Culture with concern surrounding the Sankaty incident and board's reactions to it, stating that the board received a report in December. Would like to develop an open culture that holds people accountable for getting things done and when things are not getting done. The board member from Falmouth and Jim were not satisfied with the CEOs actions, but the rest of the board was. Since the CEO is accountable to the board as a whole, there was no further action required by the board on that matter.

When there is a search for a new CEO it will be a global search.

It was stated by Jim that the legislation to increase the veto power of the mainland port towns will not be advancing.

Doug – issue of budget management of financial, safety & IT being 'global' to all ports, not just MV and WH . Jim will continue to raise the issues.

Woods Hole terminal construction - Jim said the construction was stopped, he has no knowledge of what work was already contracted. The existing building is under a temporary occupancy permit that is being continuously renewed.

Associate Commissioner for Disabled -Richard Cohen – update

In most communities in MA, they can have a local Disability Commission with the idea that no single agency can monitor what is going on in each community. The umbrella for these is the Governor's Commission on Disability. There is no Disability Commission in any of the island towns and the Associate Commissioner for Disabled's role is therefore to help bridge the lack of it. The Architectural Access Board does send to these local commissions for review applications when a new construction or renovation is happening that serves a public. When such applications come to the County, Richard reviews it on behalf of the island and makes comments on it. There was a committee when he started, but it lost members over time and now he just does the actual work as best as he can on his own. He is collaborating with other agencies on the island like the Island Disability Commission, Healthy Aging etc. One of the projects that he is working on is "Beach within reach" – making public beaches accessible to people with disabilities including parking. They made a survey of all public island beaches and will be producing a report in the next couple of weeks. Most of the beaches do not meet all the requirements but some are close and would be able to do so with minimal improvements. Another project is to make more public trails on MV accessible. Dick shared couple specific examples of improvements that would be helpful and that he pointed out and are in a process of being done. Dick will also share with Martina his ideas for improvements on State beach. Jim Klingensmith offered to help.

Leon Brathwaite – JTC – Joint Transportation Committee – appointee from each town and from MassDOT to work on improvements of the infrastructure on the island. They don't meet every month, but they work on improvement plan... The JTC is working on Beach Road in Tisbury, and they have some other projects on their radar. They voted on an improvement plan that will go to 2040.

Surplus List from the Health Care Access Building (on file)

Doug /Juli moved to surplus the stuff on the list. Doug read the list into the record. So voted. Doug – yes, Peter – yes, Tristan – yes, Jim – yes, Juli -yes, Christine – yes. Motion carried.

Committee Updates:

The Finance Committee met yesterday, payroll is working now as needed, the Treasurer uploaded all documents requested to the auditors' portal with exception of about three documents that are in process of being done.

County Manager received a Letter of resignation from our current County Treasurer effective March 29th and after that she can be available for 10 hours per week to get us through the rest of the year. We need to start a search again to find a new treasurer that lives in Dukes County. The employees in the Treasurer's Office have been in a lot of turmoil under several treasurers over the past several years and we need to assure that we listen to their concerns during this process.

Senator Cyr is aware of the need to pursue the legislation for the County to be able to appoint a Treasurer that does not live in Dukes County through the Senate. It is currently in Committee in the Senate. Once voted in Senate, it will go to the House for a vote.

Doug/Tristan moved to authorize Martina to send an updated letter to the Committee to advocate for expediting the legislation. So voted. Doug – yes, Peter – yes, Tristan – yes, Jim – yes, Juli -yes, Christine – yes. Motion carried.

It was stated that the Treasurer's position is not simply a financial position and there are many aspects about it that need to be clear to any prospective candidates. Doug, Tristan and Christine will work with Martina to work on this issue.

Christine reached out to Bob Rosenbaum to share the news with him as well so they can help look for replacement.

The Land Use Committee will report at the next meeting.

Legislative Committee – already discussed.

Communication Committee – Doug reported that they were unable to meet.

Improvements Committee – no update.

Manager's Report (document on file)

Martina mentioned that most of the incumbents for appointment are interested in being appointed. The deadline for applications is January 26th. She also shared with DCC in her report the dates of upcoming meetings with the Boards of Selectmen and Finance Committees. Doug asked if we could streamline the interviewing process and have a subcommittee to review resumes, interview candidates and make recommendations to the full board ahead of the full meeting to save time. Christine and Tristan volunteered to serve on that committee.

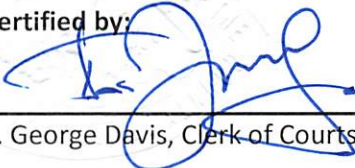
New business – Doug Ruskin asked for all reports from others and from our committees to be submitted in writing and the time on the agenda be allotted for questions. He suggested posting the reports on the website so the public can have access to it as well.

Martina said she will have a full report on progress with the ARPA septic project by the next meeting. Communications committee will try to increase the awareness about the program to encourage people to apply.

Public Comment – none

Tristan/Juli moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:43pm. So voted. Tristan – yes, Doug – yes, Peter – yes, Juli - Christine – yes. Motion carries. The meeting was adjourned at 6:50pm.

Certified by:



T. George Davis, Clerk of Courts

Documents presented at the meeting and part of the official record:

- Manager's Report
- Surplus list