

RIPOA BOARD

# SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

## 6/8/2025

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**08 JUNE 2025 / 10:30 AM / RI PAVILION**

### ATTENDEES

Tony Ruggirello, Phil Sloan, Eric Preston, Beth Romanelli, Christyn Scott, Kevin Wood   Absent from Board: Paula Kaip, Niki Peltier, Steve Engelhart

### TOPIC FOR SPECIAL MEETING - FERRY CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS

Meeting called to order at 10:32 am

#### INTRODUCTION - TONY RUGGIRELLO

- Purpose of the meeting is that we are at an impasse with trying to negotiate with NCT (North Channel Transport).
- Brief history: Board met with NCT last year regarding alcohol consumption and asked if they would be will to sell the ferry back to RIPOA - this was declined.
- Negotiations began in January 2025 where NCT was asked to give the ferry committee their proposal.
- Proposal was received, with many items stated as non-negotiable.
- The Board's concerns: increase in ferry subscriptions, NCT's proposed elimination of additional runs, current placement of garbage barge and offered alternatives that were declined.
- Members' comments will be limited to three minutes - no rebuttal is allowed.

**FERRY COMMITTEE: CHRISTYN SCOTT**

- Christyn presented a list of items the Board was willing to agree to with NCT.

#### **NCT – BETH JANJANIN**

- Beth spoke on behalf of NCT. Indicated that NCT never received a fuel stipend. She made corrections to her data regarding 2023 and 2024 walk ons. Storage was \$2,660.32 and was going up again this year. She indicated that the length of Bernie's work year is longer than 7 months. She stated he starts working on the ferry in mid-March and doesn't come off the water until December 1st.
- Regarding items the board sent - she stated expense and maintenance the board stated as \$7,000 is incorrect, its \$30,000. The estimated freight at \$1,600 is also incorrect, he does not make \$60 a week in cargo fees.
- Bernie is not an hourly worker. He has been told in the past that this is not a pay per run contract and he also works outside the normal run times.
- If he was an hourly employee he should get sick days, time off, and only work 8 hours per day.

#### **QUESTIONS TO NCT FROM MEMBERSHIP**

- Maria Szejbach: Paying 200 a year over and above what we normally pay and you estimate about 130 cottages, where there are multiple cottage owners, that amount of money, where is it in all that information?
- Phil Sloan: We have 124 cottages. We collect roughly \$62,000 between ferry subsidy plus the extra for multiple cottage owners. As of now, we are \$3-4,000 short to cover the cost of the ferry. This was changed in 2021.
- Beth Janjanin: NCT talked with other captains and they felt the \$100,000 he was asking for was not egregious.
- Mel Izokovic: Please address things that you wouldn't negotiate.
- Beth Janjanin: Insurance subsidy/private excursions. Bernie will fully own the board, if there is a chance someone wants to do a moonlight cruise on a Saturday night and doesn't interfere with the schedule, this shouldn't be a consideration because he owns the boat. Insurance price doesn't go up because he does a moonlight run or two.

- Margaret Mutch: Does NCT have full liability coverage if you're making special trips like that? RIPOA would not be drawn into this, if anything happened while he was doing this and insurance went up, would RIPOA be liable?
- Christyn Scott: What about alcohol on these private ferry excursions?
- Beth Janjanin: That happens all the time.
- Mel Izokovic: What would happen if an accident puts the ferry out of commission?
- Beth Janjanin: Bud used to do this all the time. Bernie does have to have a backup boat and that is in the contract. He does own Patches and could use it as a backup.
- Beth Janjanin: Regarding garbage barge. The work barge has always been by the ferry. Bernie is getting spuds so he can moor the boat on Wednesday. He needs the barge there as access to work on the ferry.
- Beth J.: NCT is willing to give right of first refusal.
- Mike Ohlert: Is the increased cost of insurance due to coast guard violation?
- Beth J. : No, it is a national policy and the hurricanes drove up the price.
- Bernie Schenk: I measured the garbage barge - there is plenty of room on the seawall to share and Chuck could back his boat right up behind the barge.
- Kathy Engelhart: When Bud had the fuel barge, do you keep fuel on it? The way we got around it was Bud put his spuds there and did not tie up. He was not allowed to tie up his fuel barge to the island, so he put his spikes in.
- Bernie: I purchased spuds and they're coming this Wednesday.
- Linda Fignar: Is there a barge that would be appropriate for garbage?
- Beth J.: In one of the emails that RIPOA sent they had mentioned that they don't charge us to use the well, but Bernie is the parking lot police and keeps track of the parking lot. He also maintains the garbage on the garbage barge.

#### **RIPOA SPREADSHEET: ERIC PRESTON**

- When we started reviewing the contract proposals, we wanted to figure out what the contract was worth.

- Expenses of boat are around \$30,000
  - Last four years of passenger fees, averages are around \$21,000
  - Value of services - unique contract
  - Time it takes to operate the ferry is about 2200 hours of service for those 7 months the boat is in the water, not taking into account the extra time Beth mentioned.
- Gene Lovasco - Question about salary increase - was that offer rejected?
- Eric Preston: Since it deviated from the norm, we wanted to go to the members.
- Phil Sloan:
  - If we went with the original \$100,000 request, ferry subsidy would go up by approximately \$300 per cottage, per year.
  - If we went with the 15% plus COLA, it would go up approximately \$125 per cottage, per year going forward.
  - If we went with the 6%, 3%, 3% option, it would go up approximately \$83 per year, per cottage.
- Phil Sloan: These are not conservative numbers. We have to worry about fallout. We are lucky that currently everyone subscribes to the ferry service.
- Eric Preston: A few revisions:
  - About \$160 per cottage overall. Around \$66 in year one then close to \$37 in years 2 and 3.
- Karen Ridgeway: question about increases?
- Eric Preston: It would be per cottage and increase the current \$325 subsidy.
- Phil Sloan: The increase would be added to the base.
- Cathy Wood: Asked for the current version of the ferry contract. Christyn agreed to provide that to her.
- Chris Fleischer: This contract should be between NCT and RIPOA. I am getting the idea that you are going to put a vote to the membership.
- Christyn Scott: The members are RIPOA. The contract will be with RIPOA. We are holding the meeting today for RIPOA input.
- Phil Sloan: This meeting was for your information and guidance. If we go with any of these proposals, it's outside what we are used to and we represent you, so we need your input and guidance.

- Maria Szejbach: We have a very diverse community, in some this would create hardship in many ways.

#### **READING OF ANONYMOUS COMMENTS - ERIC PRESTON:**

##### **CONS:**

- Not in favor of meeting these demands
- Don't continue with these negotiations
- Compensation is appropriate
- Walk on fee increase is too high
- Island was sold with intent to service the island, not to be held hostage
- Ferry has not been maintained

##### **PROS:**

- Okay with eliminating certain runs
- Revamp ferry schedule
- Renegotiate contract and let NCT negotiate with islanders directly
- Consider arbitration
- Consider annual increase
- Okay with passenger fee increase
- Ferry services outweigh garbage runs

#### **MEMBERS COMMENTS**

- Chris Fleischer: RIPOA and RIF met about 10 years ago to allow Bernie to purchase the Islander. Many seniors cannot get in a small boat and the islander is ideal for the elderly. Property values will be affected. Met with Jake Bryson. He employs 4 full time captains at \$33 per hour, paid health insurance, paid sick time and a 401k. His pool has decreased by  $\frac{1}{3}$  due to marijuana use. Thanked the Board and Bernie and Beth for their many hours to reach an amicable agreement. She has information regarding a potential maintenance and fuel subsidy and will provide that to the Board.
- Gene Lovasco: Thank you to the Board and Bernie and Beth. Thanks to Bev for the playground committee. Met with Bud and Bernie for

preliminary negotiations to purchase the ferry. Drafted a contract that has served us well. Proposes three ideas:

- If negotiations cannot be resolved, propose an outside third party negotiator.
- We need to consider the risk of owning a business and doesn't think that is being taken into consideration, blown engine, gas prices.
- Ask islanders to consider the consequences of not having a ferry and additional cost associated with transportation.
- Peter Barden: Arbitration is an essential service. My concern is that if we can't come to terms with NCT, you won't like the alternative. Will be much more expensive if we have to hire someone else.
- Andrea Fignar: We have spent a lot of time talking about negotiations, I want to hear about negotiations with the garbage barge. She thinks ferry service always wins. Wages going down for halloween and picnic - she is disappointed in the picnic, that people don't come or invite guests and that Bernie has taken the burden of this financial impact. Concerned about increasing, but not for children to encourage kids to experience the island.
- Chris Fleischer: Chuck is compensated to run the garbage barge.
- Tony Ruggirello: What happens if we get rid of the garbage barge? What are our options?
- Beth Janjanin: We don't say we don't want a garbage barge, just move it.
- Phil Sloan: There is not room for two. We have offered to have Bernie park next to it. There is no reason why he couldn't do his work there. The maintenance is not being done. It could be done 50 feet away.
- Beth Janjanin: Bernie helps Chuck with the garbage barge
- Karen Ridgeway: RIPOA needs a long term garbage solution. Alternative could be that we're back to taking garbage home or having dumpsters.
- Mel Izokovic: Is there no other place to put the barge on the island?
- Linda Girard: Why don't we have a garbage service, we pay taxes?
- Margaret Mutch: Question on electricity? One says there is access, and the other says there is not access.
- Tony Ruggirello: There is access. He just needs an extension cord.

- Dan Stock: Clay Township wrote us out of the garbage service and won't write us back in. We have been turned down completely.
- Eric Preston: We are going to be sending out an email with a survey that we'd love your input on. Any suggestions, your comfort level with walk on fees and elimination of runs or a new schedule.
- Linda Fignar: If we lost the garbage barge and let Bernie have that spot and Chuck went away, would we be changed.
- Bernie Schenk: No you would not be changed. I'm not a garbage hauling boat, but the comment that I would charge \$5 for a bag of garbage is not true.
- Christyn Scott: I just threw out carpet on the barge today. Are you saying you wouldn't charge for that?
- Bernie: Yes, I would charge for big ticket items.
- Margaret Mutch: If we have been taken out of Clay Township's budget, why do we pay taxes? Where else can you take your kids for the day and pay \$3 per child? Nowhere.
- Tony Ruggirello: What happens to events? What happens after the picnic, ice cream social, etc?
- Bernie: Chuck said he's done with the garbage barge.
- Christyn Scott: We need volunteers to assist with a garbage barge committee. No one volunteered.
- Tony Ruggirello: We need a chairman for the picnic. No one volunteered.

Motion by Christyn to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Kevin. Motion passed.

Meet adjourned at 12:13 pm.

Submitted by:

Christyn Scott (taken in absence of RIPOA secretary, Paula Kaip)