

Notes from Meeting Dec. 20, 2019
Subject: Future of the Ferry Service



Officials in attendance:

Politicians

Provincial

Hugh MacKay, MLA

Municipality of the District of Lunenburg

Eric Hustvedt, Councillor District 1

Erroll Knickle, Councillor District 10

Tom MacEwan, CAO

Municipality of the District of Chester

Marshall Hector, Councillor District 1

Floyd Shatford, Councillor District 2

Danielle Barkhouse, Councillor District 3

Allen Webber, Councillor District 4

Abdella Assaf, Councillor District 5

Tina Connors, Councillor District 6

Garth Sturtevant, Planner

Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal

Paul LaFleche, Deputy Minister

Mark Peachey, Executive Director

Dan Leopold, Director of Fleet Management

John Majchrowicz, Manager of Marine Services

Initial comments:

Paul LaFleche, DM

- Little Tancook Island is no longer an official small craft harbour.
- Within the next three years they need to replace our ferry with one that will be in place for the next thirty years.
- There are two paths:
 - One is to have a passenger ferry of the current style. Because of the current state of the wharf on Little Tancook, this may leave Little Tancook without the current service. This would be good for Big Tancook but bad for Little Tancook.
 - The second path is to have a 'ramp' (vehicle) ferry which would have many advantages.
 - This is their current recommendation.
 - No final decision has been made at this time.

Dan Leopold

- Discussions within TIR about the ferry have been going on for a long time.
- TIR is committed to continuing to provide service to both Big and Little Tancook.
- There is no intent to rehabilitate the wharf on Little Tancook.
- The province has received money to replace three ferries:
 - Country Harbour (tendered)
 - Little Narrows (tendered)
 - The Tancook Islands (not yet decided or tendered).
- On the premise that the replacement ferry will be a vehicle ferry:
 - Chester is not a feasible mainland destination as there is no land available
 - Blandford is feasible.
 - A service to Blandford would be more frequent.
 - A vehicle ferry would allow vehicle access to the islands which would be a benefit.
 - It would allow access for large vehicles, such as drilling rigs, septic trucks, delivery of building materials, etc.
 - A vehicle ferry would require \$10,000,000 for the ferry build, and \$10,000,000 for infrastructure.
 - Because of the short life expectancy of the wharf on Little Tancook, a passenger ferry wouldn't work as a long term service for that island.

At this point the floor was opened for questions to the 90 individuals in the audience:

Questions

Answers

We have many residents on Big Tancook who do not have a vehicle or are unable to drive. What will TIR provide for them?	Hugh explained that no solution will be ideal for everyone and that with change comes the need to adapt to the change.
How long will it take for emergency vehicles (fire & ambulance) to get to Big Tancook?	The ferry will dock overnight at Big Tancook. It will not run 24/7, except for an emergency as it does now.

<p>Will overflow passengers get a second run in the same way that happens now?</p>	<p>Yes.</p>
<p>If we get a vehicle ferry, will vehicles on Big Tancook require a licence, MVI and insurance to be driven on the island?</p>	<p>Yes. Don't assume that this won't happen if there is no vehicle ferry. It could happen anytime.</p>
<p>Will the roads on Big Tancook be improved?</p>	<p>This is an issue that will have to be addressed. A vehicle ferry would permit the repair equipment and supplies to come to the island.</p>
<p>Would a vehicle ferry be modelled on the new Margaret's Justice ferry?</p>	<p>Yes. The Scotian would be the backup ferry.</p>
<p>What would the weather limits be? Would they be more restrictive than the current limits?</p>	<p>The new Margaret's Justice crosses between Long Island and Brier Island on the Digby Neck. It encounters stronger winds and higher tides than are found in Mahone Bay. It would run in the conditions that the Ernst does now.</p>
<p>How many cars would this new ferry take?</p>	<p>It would take either 15 or 18, depending on the final design. There would be 11 daily trips from Big Tancook as opposed to the current number of 4 trips per day.</p>
<p>Will the ferry be open or closed? People won't want their good mainland vehicles being rusted out by salt spray.</p>	<p>It will be open. The salinity of the sea water is less than that of mainland road salt. It won't be as bad as driving your vehicle on a salted mainland road.</p>

How much seating will there be for passengers?	There will be seating for 20 people.
What will be the length of the trip to the mainland?	20 minutes. The schedule would be leave Big Tancook at 06:00, depart Little Tancook at 06:10 and arrive at Blandford at 06:20.
Where would the ramp be located?	No decision has been made on this.
Will there be long-term parking in Blandford?	We don't know at this point.
<p>Would there be parking in Blandford for tourists who walk on with their bicycles?</p> <p>In consideration of the environment, would tourist vehicles be restricted?</p>	These matters will have to be considered.
Will input from the islanders be considered?	<p>The decision will not be made based on a vote by the islanders.</p> <p>Both Chester Building Supplies and Collicutt will deliver to the island on a fee basis. Collicutt would schedule a weekly delivery with the fee being divided among the customers.</p> <p>There is no-one to fix the wharf on Little Tancook. The feds won't do it, the province won't and there is no wharf authority to be responsible.</p> <p>There have been discussions with the South Shore Regional School Board about the future of the elementary school on Big</p>

	Tancook. The school will not be closed as long as there are students for it. The number of students might have an impact on that decision.
Will walk-on passengers be free, as is the case with other provincial vehicle ferries? A large parking lot will be needed in Blandford.	Yes. The parking lot size will impact the size of the land that will be needed.
What will happen when the wharf on Little Tancook fails?	The province will have to provide a small boat to provide passenger service to Little.
What will be the turnaround time for the ferry?	One hour. This will allow deliveries to be scheduled.
Parking for handicapped persons in Chester is an issue. There are two handicapped spaces while there are six individuals from Big Tancook with handicapped passes. Can the parking for them be fixed?	Parking in Chester is definitely a challenge. It would help if people with paid parking spaces would not occupy spaces on the wharf.
Will Tancook residents have priority in boarding on the mainland?	There is no plan to do this. It is not done on any other ferry in the province. If it turns out to be a problem, they will sort out a solution at that time.
What will be the charge to bring a vehicle on the ferry?	\$7.00 per trip. There would be an annual pass available at a cost of less than \$1.00 per day.

<p>When will the decision and plan be made public?</p>	<p>It will be a three year plan that will be implemented in 4 – 5 years. A ferry like the Margaret’s Justice will take 18 months to build. The politicians will make the ultimate decision.</p>
<p>Will Chester be consulted? Will Blandford be consulted?</p>	<p>TIR has spoken to both councils. The mandate is to provide transportation service.</p>
<p>Will there definitely be a large parking area in Blandford?</p>	<p>They have lots of data on which to make the decision.</p>
<p>What will be the operational hours for the ferry?</p>	<p>The start and stop hours will be the same as they are now. The ferry will run on the hour from Big Tancook. This would allow people more flexibility for attending appointments as there will be more frequent runs to choose from.</p>
<p>When will the decision be made?</p>	<p>It could be made as soon as January 2020. It could also take six months. TIR will consult with the affected communities about details after the decision has been made. A funding package will be needed. Will the Feds participate? It should be settled within a year.</p>