



Peaks Island Council Updates and Bulletins

PIC Update: Ferry Capacity, Social Distancing, and Other Concerns

On May 14, the Executive Committee of the Casco Bay Island Transit District met to consider a staff “report on the correlation between the requirement to wear face coverings and the CDC recommended social distancing and their impacts on vessel passenger capacity.” (or in other words, how many passengers can a ferry carry and still have it be possible for passengers exercise social distancing?).

Besides others, four Peaks Island residents who are members of the CBITD Board, participated in the call – Patrick Flynn, Dan Doane, Twain Braden, and Sharoan Cohen. There were also approximately 8 Peaks Island residents who participated as members of the public.

CBL staff reported that the capacity of Machigonne II would be reduced to 200 walk-on passengers. (In CBL’s email-newsletter sent out this past Saturday, May 16, it was further clarified that the walk-on capacity would be 204, not including passengers in vehicles.)

Management reported that fares would remain at the winter rates “until full service was restored.”

During the public comment period of the meeting, the committee was asked how CBITD saw its role in enforcement of limiting ferry travel to only essential travel. CBL management reported that CBL had no authority to enforce such measures. In addition, CBL management stated that they wanted to ensure crew safety by avoiding confrontations. Management commented that “Everyone has to take personal responsibility for what happens.” Instead of enforcement, CBL management stated that it had to rely on education of the traveling public.

Picking up on management’s acknowledgement of its role in educating the traveling public, members of public pointed out that nothing on the CBL website described current conditions out on Peaks, i.e. that there are no public rest rooms, that many places to eat were closed or only doing take out, etc. Other public comments urged CBL to inform travelers of the need for 14-day quarantine, the importance of social distancing and use of face masks, and the fact that schedules and capacities remain reduced. Management offered no specific responses to these expressed

concerns.

Members of the public also expressed concern for what was going to happen over the upcoming Memorial Day weekend. Management indicated that extra-boats and crew were expected to be available to deal with over-capacity.

Members of the public expressed concern that reduction in ferry capacity highlighted the need for priority boarding to ensure that island residents were able to complete their essential travels. A board member reported that the CBL staff's consideration of an island-generated proposal had to be postponed due to the demands of coping with the implications of the pandemic.

Despite the seemingly questioning nature of the public comments, just about all expressed appreciation for the job that CBL (management, staff, and crews) were doing to ensure islander's lifeline to essential services on the mainland.

There are two meetings of the CBITD this week. The Vessel Advisory Committee will be meeting this Wednesday May 20th at 7:45am and the CBITD Executive Committee this Thursday, May 21st at 7:45am. For how to participate as a member of the public, please see [HERE](#).

If you would like to receive Peaks COVID 19 Response Committee and PIC updates directly in your email box, please send an email to randyschaeffer@gmail.com with "subscribe" in the subject line.

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