

AUGUST 16, 2020

Approved - Harsens Island Transportation Authority Meeting Minutes

Meeting held August 16, 2020 at Browns Field

Meeting called to order at 5:00PM by:

Skip Tornow Roll Call

Harold Bain – Present

Margie Baldwin – Present

Gary Beaulac – Present

Dennis Szymanski – Absent

Wayne (Skip) Tornow – Present

Approval of Minutes from July 26, 2020 - Motion by Baldwin to approve, seconded by Beaulac. Motion passed 4-0

HITA PO Box – Discussed need to obtain a Post Office Box for HITA business. Cost for the box is \$56.00/year. PO Box has been secured. Address for HITA is as follows. Please direct any written requests to HTIA at this address. Harsens Island Transportation Authority PO Box 28007 Harsens Island, MI 48028

HITA Website – Discussed whether or not to pursue a separate website for HITA. None of the board members present have any experience setting up/maintaining a website decision made to not pursue at this time.

Committees – The need for various committees was discussed. It was agreed that committees will be formed as the need arises. Until such time there will be no standing committees.

Posting of meeting minutes – options of posting minutes was discussed. All agreed the secretary will post minutes on Harsens Neighbors as well as the HITA Blog.

A communication committee was formed with Tornow and Whitey Sim (Blog Manager)

Meeting with the Detroit Bridge Company - The following are the key points. • Meeting attendees were Baldwin and Bain from HITA and two representatives from Detroit Bridge Company • Bridge Company is willing to pursue a bridge if there is genuine interest by a majority of island residents. • Bridge Company will initially spend approximately \$1M (million) for feasibility studies. • Issues raised in the negotiations from 20 years ago regarding environmental impact concerns have been resolved in favor of the Bridge Company thru the court system. • Bridge Company informed HITA that there are 3 possible types of bridges that could be constructed.

o Belle Isle type bridge (USCG has already ruled this out)

o Middle section of bridge raises up (similar to bridge between Houghton and Hancock)

o Bridge with a true drawbridge in the middle section •

The US Coast Guard (USCG) will have the final determination in which style is allowed. • There are numerous avenues which must be explored including MDOT, St Clair County, Funding, etc. •

It was decided that the best method to determine interest in a bridge as a possible solution by island residents was to conduct a survey. This survey will include all property owners on the island (48028 zip code). • Decision made for Baldwin & Tornow to formulate a survey and explore methods for getting it to residents (eg bulk mailing, post card vs letter,etc).

Meeting with Champion Ferry The following are the key points • Meeting attendees were Baldwin from HITA, Dave and Pete Bryson from Champion. • Following questions were raised by Baldwin, answered by Champion

o Who inspects the ferries and docks? ♣ USCG inspects ferries ♣ There are no inspections on the docks

o Who performs construction work on the docks? ♣ The Bryson's are performing all of the work

o How does HITA establish a working relationship with Champion? ♣ Champion will meet with HITA if requested.

o What are Champion's future plans? ♣ Two new docks are on the planning stages on the mainland side. No completion timing available at this time.

o Any updates on possibly charging walk-on pedestrian traffic? ♣ Champion is awaiting direction from their insurance company

o Who oversees rate hike requests? ♣ Michigan State Police (MSP) have oversight responsibility and can speak to it. • Champion stated that car traffic is down 50% from prior levels. •

When queried on any upcoming rate increases, Champion responded that the next rate increase is dependent on what happens to passenger usage this fall.

HITA Finances – Beaulac reported that there is approximately \$450 in a dead account from 20 years ago at 5th 3rd Bank. He is in the process of reclaiming these funds and opening a new account.

Options to obtain additional funding were discussed. These included state and federal grant monies, donations from local businesses and organizations, donations from residents (one donation already received), as well as pursuing a "Go Fund Me" account.

Future Meeting Schedule- Discussed the requirement in the Open Meeting Act (OMA) to post a calendar years' worth of meeting dates/locations. Quarterly meetings were established at the July 26 meeting. Tornow will post the next 3 scheduled meetings on the Harsens Neighbors site and the Harsens Island Transportation Authority blog site. Special meetings will continue to be scheduled as information becomes available.

Public Comments Approximately 31 members of the community were present. Items discussed included: • Survey should highlight Safety/Fire Emergency Services availability • Who will control the bridge if built? Who determines the rates?

Suggestion made to approach local businesses for donations to fund HITA • How are ferry rates set? (see HB 4107 for detailed explanation) •

Have more involvement from Township supervisor and board.

Motion to adjourn the meeting by Tornow – seconded by Beaulac.

Meeting adjourned at 6:10PM