

Harsens Island Transportation Authority Meeting Minutes

Meeting held September 26, 2021 at Browns Field

Meeting called to order at 4:00PM 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 June 13, 2020 - Motion by Bain to approve, seconded by Beaulac. Motion passed 4-0

Treasurer's Report – Beaulac reported that we have a balance of \$587.38 in our account at Huntington Bank. Copy of the Treasurer's report is attached to the minutes

Website update – Tornow reported that we have 145 individuals have signed up so far for e-mail updates. Discussed ongoing issues with setting up an account with PayPal to receive donations. It was agreed that we will pursue other options. Tornow will investigate.

Meeting with Detroit International Bridge Company (DIBC).- Beaulac and Tornow met with DIBC representatives on July 12, 2021. The objectives of the meeting were to (1) share questions with them from the island residents about the proposed bridge and (2) request that they provide a presentation to the Harsens Island residents utilizing our list of questions as a basis for the presentation. Questions centered around location of the bridge, cost, funding, and timing. The complete list of the questions is posted on the HITA website (www.harsensita.com) Key takeaways from the meeting are:

- DIBC is very interested in moving forward with the bridge
- DIBC owns the property on both the Clay Twp and Harsens Island sides.
- The Mitigation Study resulting from the lawsuit with the DEQ is available and is posted on the HITA website.
- Cost information is not yet available as it is dependent on the outcome of meetings with the USCG (Coast Guard)
- DIBC will handle all negotiations and permitting with the USCG.
- DIBC will fund the bridge portion. HITA will be responsible for working with the various governmental agencies to secure funding for a Bascule (drawbridge) if required by the USCG.
- DIBC will operate the bridge once completed.
- DIBC will make a presentation to the Harsens Islands community on the bridge project once additional information becomes available.
- DIBC requested one contact person at HITA to communicate with. Margie Baldwin will be the contact person.

- DIBC provided a Permitting Timeline and a Priority List Timeline. The Permitting Timeline is basically a listing events from 2001 to the present while the Priority Timeline is a list of items that need to be completed and the order they need to be done in. Both documents are available on the HITA website.

Meeting with Michigan State Police (MSP) –Bain and Baldwin met with representative of the MSP to discuss ferry rate increases approved under PA 4807. Bain provided MSP with ferry rates/mile on several other ferry services. These included Drummond Island, Beaver Island, and Walpole Island. MSP was not aware of this data previously. Next steps discussed during the HITA meeting include:

- Maintain contact with MSP regarding any future ferry rate increases.
- Provide additional data on ferry rates. Beaulac will contact Harold Stiebler who is HISCFA representative on the great lakes island committee to obtain any additional ferry rate data that may be available in surrounding states.
- Meet with Rep. Lauwery to discuss making changes to PA 4807.

State Budget Line Item for HITA – Bain and Baldwin had met with Rep Lauwery earlier this year to discuss sourcing of funding for HITA. A request to get \$250,000 allocated in the State of Michigan budget was made at that time. As this was just announced HITA is unclear on any spending limitations or when this money will become available. They will be available for a 3 year period. Any unused funds will need to be returned to the State. Below are discussion highlights from the HITA meeting:

- A motion was made by Baldwin that “A minimum of 3 board members must approved all expenses in excess of \$100”. This was seconded by Tornow. Motion approved 4-0.
- Various funding needs were discussed. These included:
 - Attorney to review our bylaws including terms of office and provide advise on how to work with various governmental agencies. Bain recommended an attorney specializing in municipal affairs that he had worked with previously. Baldwin requested references.
 - A part time administrative assistance
 - Dedicated HITA computer & printer
 - Microphone and speaker
 - Reimbursement for phone usage and mileage in personal vehicles used during HITA business
- Beaulac will begin to create a budget for HITA. This will be presented and discussed at the next meeting
- Bain and Tornow will meet with the attorney once funding is secured.
- Baldwin will write a job description for the part time Administrative Assistance.
- Baldwin and Tornow will meet with Grosse Isle to discuss their bridge operation/experiences.

Public Comments – The following comments are a compilation of those made by those in attendance.

- Find an attorney who specializes in municipal issues like those we are facing.
 - Bain obtaining references for a municipal attorney he has used in the past. We will pursue once funding is actually available.

- Is Rep Lauwery the only one who can modify PA 4807?
 - No – changes in the PA must go through the full legislative process.
- Recommendation was made to add Rep Lauwery and Rep Gary Eisen’s contact info to the HITA website. Island residents can appeal directly to these two representatives to repeal/modify 4807.
 - This information will be added to the website. Once we have secured the services of an attorney he can assist in drafting a letter that residents can individually sign and mail in.
- Has HITA approached St Clair County for assistance?
 - Yes in the past. We will re-explore this avenue moving forward.
- Does HITA have guidelines on how the budget monies can be spent?
 - Not at this time. We are requesting clarification and any guidelines from Rep Lauwery’s office
- Recommendation made to include the Ironton Ferry by Charlevoix in our ferry rate analysis.
 - Information forwarded to Bain for inclusion in future analysis.
- Recommendation was made to check the legislative calendar prior to initiating a letter writing campaign.
 - We will keep that in mind once we have a draft letter composed
- Considerable discussion regarding the possibility of Champion discontinuing service prior to the completion of the bridge.
 - We will begin to explore options with state and local government.

Motion made by Baldwin to adjourn the meeting. Second by Beaulac. Meeting adjourned at 5:05 PM