

CITY OF MACKINAC ISLAND

SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES FERRY & AIR TRANSPORTATION

Wednesday, January 29, 2025 at 12:30 PM

City Hall – Council Chambers, 7358 Market St., Mackinac Island, Michigan

I. Call to Order

Mayor Doud called the meeting to order at 12:30 pm

II. Roll Call

PRESENT

Richard Chambers

Tom Corrigan

Steven Moskwa

Erin Evashevski, City Attorney - via Zoom from St. Ignace, MI

Anneke Myers

Alan Sehoyan

Jason St. Onge

VI. New Business

– Discussion of Air & Ferry Transportation

○ Fresh Air

- Depend on winter service to be able to provide year-round service to Mackinac Island
- Would like to discuss operations with the Mackinac Island Transportation Authority (MITA)
- Councilman St. Onge noted that the formation of MITA was to ensure that the Island had a year-round (or ice to ice) boat service
 - The Council needs to make mainland access obtainable - cannot force residents to travel air only, especially as it is the higher cost for travel
- Fresh Air proposed the ferry passenger service temporarily shutting down each winter from February 1st through March 1st
- Councilman St. Onge noted that Mackinac Island Ferry Company holds the Winter Service Contract with the City of Mackinac Island, which makes them the sole ferry passenger service from November through April of each year. Fresh Air is not the sole operator for aviation services, and if they were, rates would need to be regulated
- Councilwoman Myers noted that the City Charter gives authority to the City Council over the Island's docks and ferry service. Plane service is operated through the Mackinac County and Mackinac State Park airports. The council has discussed subsidizing the airlines in the past, but the City does not have the authority to do so.
 - A conversation with MITA may provide different options than what the City has access to
 - Also need to keep in mind that Mackinac Island Ferry Co. has a Franchise Agreement and a five (5) year Winter Service Contract with the City to run a ferry passenger service in the winter months
- Councilman Corrigan inquired if there was any chance for a discounted rate for island residents like the ferry service offers
 - Fresh Air responded that this is something they could look in to, but no guarantees

○ Arnold Transit

- It is critical that there is a backup transportation system for the Island, and Fresh Air can provide that as long as it is sustainable for them
- Would agree with shutting the ferry passenger service for the month of February
- Councilwoman Myers inquired what would happen in that situation for the boat line? What if there was a storm during that time that boat travel was possible, but air travel was not?
 - Ms. Dobrowolski noted that Arnold Transit would work together with Fresh Air to make a form of transportation available
- Andy McGreevy of MITA commented that they may be able to provide some sort of funding or financial support to the airline like they do with the boat line. Can continue to look in to what funds may be available.
 - Mr. McGreevy further commented that it would be ideal to keep both ferry and air services available throughout the winter months

- Mayor Doud and other council members made it clear that the option of the ferry passenger service shutting down for the month of February is not a possibility for 2025
 - Suggested that Fresh Air and Arnold Transit speak with MITA and then make a proposal with future plans to present to the City Council for consideration
- Closing of the Straits of Mackinac
 - Ms. Dobrowolski stated that even if the Straits are closed, Arnold Transit can still run passenger and freight services, they just need to keep the Coast Guard updated daily
 - Capacity
 - Coast Guard has become stricter over many things, especially traveling through ice
 - Straights II is not an "ice boat"
 - Freight boat Senator can carry up 100 people
- Update on the Ottawa and Huron
 - Ottawa is waiting for electrical work to be completed
 - Looking at the first week in February for the electricians to come back and complete the work. Once on site, the work shouldn't take more than a week
 - Huron
 - More progress is being made
 - Interior is being put back together
 - Looking more like mid-February before final work will be completed
- Hours for Fresh Air
 - Plowing and daylight can delay morning flight times
 - First flight is typically 7:00 am or 7:30 am with the last flight being around 5:00 pm or 5:15 pm - multiple planes are flying during this time
 - These hours are Monday through Friday only
 - Weekends currently have low demand, therefore providing a limited schedule
- At this time, this is being referred to the Transportation Authority for further discussion. A representative from MITA will be in touch with Fresh Air.

VIII. Adjournment

There being no further business, motion made by Myers, seconded by Moskwa, to adjourn the meeting at 1:30 pm.

Voting Yea: Chambers, Corrigan, Moskwa, Myers, Sehoan, St. Onge