

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS – JOINT MEETING/PUBLIC HEARING WITH DUKES COUNTY

Minutes of the Meeting of April 11, 2022. The meeting took place via remote participation using Zoom. Members of the Commission present were Matt Fee, Melissa Murphy and Jason Bridges. Kristie Ferrantella joined later as indicated. Dawn Holdgate was not present.

I. JOINT PUBLIC HEARING WITH DUKES COUNTY COMMISSION TO TAKE PUBLIC INPUT AND COMMENT ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION IMPACTING THE STEAMSHIP AUTHORITY (H4527).

Dukes County Chair Christine Todd called the Dukes County Commission meeting to order at 5:00 PM and reviewed the purpose of the hearing: review legislation pertaining to the Steamship Authority filed by Senator Cyr and Representative Fernandes, discuss it between the two agencies and take in public input. She added that Vineyard Port Council member George Balco passed away yesterday. Remembrances of Mr. Balco were exchanged. She introduced Robert Ranney, Nantucket Steamship Board member. Mr. Ranney made some introductory remarks and read a statement (attached) regarding the legislation, focusing on language that he stated indicates that the Islands and port communities were intended to govern the Steamship Board themselves, rather than the State.

Ms. Ferrantella joined the meeting at 5:05 PM.

Chair Melissa Murphy introduced members of the Nantucket County Commission, other Nantucket Administrative staff and Nantucket community members. She greeted the Dukes County Commission. Chair Todd introduced Dukes County Commission members, staff and other municipal officials from the Vineyard. James Malkin, Dukes County representative to the Steamship Board made a statement, indicating his emphatic opposition to the legislation. He concurred with Mr. Ranney's statement. He added that he was concerned and distressed that this legislation was filed without any public discussion with the public who are impacted, noting that the Vineyard and Nantucket pay for the operation of the boat line, not the state. Vineyard Port Council member Joe Solitto spoke on some of the reasons Representative Fernandes said he filed the legislation and expressed alternative opinions. John Cahill, Vineyard Port Council member noted that attendance at this hearing is "significant" and expressed concerns as to the process for filing this legislation. He added that one of the reasons related to an operational audit conducted of the Authority in 2018, noting that four years later, things are very different.

Mr. Bridges concurred with Mr. Cahill. Chair Murphy agreed that the process around filing the legislation was flawed and said when communities are not involved in the process, representation is not at its best. Chair Todd agreed. Dukes County Commissioner Tristan Israel commented that he does not understand why the legislation has not been pulled at this point and called upon Representative Fernandes to do so. Dukes County Commissioner Leon Brathwaite said that he supports the legislation and expressed support for Representative Fernandes. He acknowledged that the process could perhaps have been different but again expressed support for the legislation. Mr. Malkin spoke to the points made by Mr. Brathwaite. Chair Todd opened the discussion to the public. Mary Longacre of Nantucket spoke against the legislation. She said she has been attending Steamship Board and Port Council meetings for at least the last two years and said that she is impressed with how the challenges of the last two years have been handled by the Authority. She spoke against the legislation, stating that she does not find any positive benefit to it. Vineyard Legislative Liaison Kaylea Moore said that the legislation was initiated because of the 2018 operational audit but that also many Vineyard citizens have contacted Representative Fernandes office since 2018 regarding the operation of the Authority, and they are requesting "accountability" and increased oversight. Nantucket Legislative Liaison Charity Grace Mofsen concurred with Ms. Moore. Vineyard resident Joy Robinson-Lynch spoke in favor of the legislation and agreed with Ms. Moore's remarks.

Vineyard resident Bob Johnston spoke in favor of revisiting the legislation. Vineyard resident Susanna Sturgis spoke in favor of the legislation. Mr. Cahill spoke on the Dukes County Steamship Board member appointment process. Ms. Robinson-Lynch spoke again and said the Dukes County Authority member needs to be more responsive. Mr. Malkin spoke on contacts he receives from constituents regularly and said he responds within two days. Chair Murphy read a statement from Nantucket Port Council member Nathaniel Lowell (attached), who was attending a separate meeting concurrent to this one. Chair Todd suggested a joint letter from the two Counties to their legislators with suggestions as to how processes could be improved. Mr. Israel spoke further on the benefits of the two counties meeting more regularly, on other topics. Chair Murphy agreed that would be a great idea. Chair Todd said that she and Chair Murphy would work on a draft letter to be circulated among the Commissioners.

II. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was unanimously adjourned at 5:58 PM.

Approved the 25th day of May 2022.

**COUNTY COMMISSION
APRIL 11, 2022 – 5:00 PM
REMOTE PARTICIPATION VIA ZOOM
NANTUCKET, MASSACHUSETTS**

List of documents used at the meeting:

- I. Joint public hearing ad; H.4527; Nantucket County letter to Sen. Crighton & Rep. Strauss, re: H.4527; Dukes County letter to Sen. Crighton & Rep. Strauss, re: H.4527