



La Pointe Harbor Commission Madeline Island

Getting Going

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Last month, the first of what will be a regular Harbor Commission report to Gazette readers was launched with the title, "Getting Started". I outlined the steps we were taking to form the Commission: By-laws written and approved, legal counsel introductions, preparation of a Non-Disclosure agreement and initial contact with state government to say we were open for business

This second report, I'm pleased to say, can be appropriately headlined, "Getting Going". We have now structured ourselves to be able to accomplish the 2 principal tasks the Town has given us: First, complete a purchase agreement with the MIFL. Second, design a framework for future ferry operations.

As mandated by State law, we have completed the search and hiring of our Commission secretary. Commissioners Anderson and Neubauer completed interviews with a number of candidates and made an enthusiastic recommendation to hire Lauren Burtaux. Lauren has a communication degree and well-established technical skills all delivered with energy and enthusiasm. We are delighted to welcome Lauren to our team.

It won't surprise you that each facet of the HC's work requires specialized legal counsel. To advise us on a purchase agreement, we have retained Amundson Davis, a well-respected law firm with particularly well established and demonstrated credentials in Wisconsin transactional and maritime law.

A non-disclosure agreement is fundamental to creating a trusted environment in which to complete the terms of sale. Working with the MIFL, its counsel and ours, we have completed and signed an agreement. This important step was quickly followed by our receipt of MIFL financial statements and tax returns.

Baker Tilly is a national advisory, tax and assurance firm that will now advise the Commission regarding valuations of each facet of the business the HC might purchase. Baker Tilly is at work to identify alternative financing options for such a purchase. Their work will also help us understand how we can best use bond counsel to point the way to acquiring the funds that will fuel the HC for years to come.

To focus on and complete a number of critical chores at the same time, teams have been assigned within the commission. VP Carol Neubauer is our lead to form a purchase agreement with MIFL. Commissioner Pete Ross has taken the lead in preparing the way for operating agreements that will deliver future ferry service. Commissioner Michael Collins has taken on the work to identify and secure State and Federal funding.

I am happy to report that draft purchase and operating agreements have already been sketched out. The final versions will be informed by a lot of work in the weeks ahead. Funding is being pursued on both a State and Federal front. With the help of knowledgeable WI legislative staff, we have placed a request for start-up funding from Gov Evers 2023 budget. Separately and most promising will be the Commission's application for US DOT's RAISE 2023 Grant. A quick ten-minute review, available on-line, will reveal several strong connections between this Grant's purpose and the mission of the Harbor Commission to secure affordable, predictable and safe Island access and egress for generations to come.

I hope you can now see what I mean by 'getting going'. The Harbor Commission is well underway. But there is, if you'll forgive the expression, a boat-load of work to do in the immediate future. I'll be reporting to you throughout.