



Saint Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation

Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

June 25, 2020

Meeting Held via Teleconference

PRESENT

David McMillan (Chairman of Board), William Mielke (Advisory Board Member), Dr. Arthur Sulzer (Advisory Board Member), Craig Middlebrook (Deputy Administrator), Tom Lavigne (Associate Administrator), Wayne Williams (Chief of Staff), Kevin O'Malley (Director of Budget and Trade Development), Nancy Alcalde (Director of Congressional and Public Relations), Nancy Scott (Director of Finance/CFO), Chris Guimond (Lock Operations and Marine Services), Michael Howard (Executive Officer), and Jeff Scharf (Director of Maintenance and Engineering)

I. CALL TO ORDER

In his capacity as Board Chairperson, David McMillan welcomed all participants to the Advisory Board meeting and, noting the presence of quorum, called the meeting to order at 2:02 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

On motion by Mr. Mielke, the Board approved the minutes without objection, the motion passed unanimously, and the March 9, 2020 meeting minutes were approved as drafted.

III. DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Deputy Administrator Craig Middlebrook discussed the impacts of the Coronavirus-19 public health emergency on the SLSDC and the Great Lakes Seaway System. Mr. Middlebrook informed the Board of SLSDC's response measures, which include social distancing and encouraging telework, when possible. Mr. Middlebrook noted that despite the Washington, D.C. office being on a full telework schedule, there was difficulty for the Massena team in starting a full-time telework environment, given the nature of the positions in Massena. He added there were initial concerns about winter work being completed on schedule for the April 1 opening date. Mr. Middlebrook noted that the day-to-day operations of our facilities have been extremely efficient and incident free. Mr. Middlebrook thanked and commended the Massena employees for continuing to come to work despite the circumstances and the management team for its response to the public health emergency. Mr. Middlebrook noted the strength, consistency, and effectiveness of SLSDC during the midst of the crisis, both management and union leadership. Lastly, Mr. Middlebrook touched on the transition that will be taking place in Massena over the next couple of weeks, as Gary Croot, a former Coast Guard Commander, will be joining the SLSDC as Associate Administrator. He concluded with praise for Tom Lavigne's 40 years of service at the Seaway and added that Tom would be staying on with the SLSDC as a Senior Advisor to the Deputy Administrator through August.

IV. QUARTERLY UPDATES



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- Craig Middlebrook and Tom Lavigne provided updates on water levels, with Mr. Middlebrook highlighting the difficulty in the winter period dealing with the co-chairs from the Canadian and U.S. sides. Mr. Middlebrook highlighted the difficulties in negotiation throughout the 2019 closing process as well as in preparing for the 2020 opening. In the end, the U.S. and Canadian Seaway Corporations delayed the opening by two weeks until April 1 to allow for maximum outflow without unduly harming commercial navigation. This year's buoy run was completed ahead of schedule, thanks to the work of the crew and favorable conditions. Mr. Lavigne also mentioned that this year there will hopefully be less drastic precipitation in comparison to 2017 and 2019.
- Chris Guimond provided an update on operations, indicating that there was a 12 percent shortage in staffing during the opening. Mr. Guimond highlighted some of the challenges in getting the ships moving and recognized the Canadian Coast Guard's assistance with installing 17 navigational buoys in the U.S. Sector. Mr. Guimond touched on managing the presence of pleasure crafts in the Seaway during the public health emergency through ship management, only allowing for seven pleasure crafts per lockage. Finally, he indicated that the biggest focus is on getting the *Seaway Guardian* completed and delivered to Massena.
- Kevin O'Malley provided an update on the expenditures incurred to ensure a safe workplace, including PPE and sanitizing agents. He mentioned that additional equipment was procured to assist with vessel traffic control in the event the traditional and main center locations were contaminated. Mr. O'Malley also discussed the future of the Seaway International Bridge, indicating there might be some USDOT engagement with the Canadian government to discuss the future of the bridge. Additionally, the SLSDC was appropriated an additional \$2 million for economic development in the FY 2019 enacted bill and the SLSDC Trade Development team is working on how best to use those additional funds to further educate prospective commercial users. In terms of trade results in 2020, Mr. O'Malley reported that the biggest driver this season has been grain exports, which have mostly gone to the Mediterranean region of Europe. He also reported a positive continuation of wind and wind-energy components. Mr. O'Malley also informed the Board that any in-person trade and economic development events for the remainder of the calendar year have been cancelled.
- Jeff Scharf provided updates on SLSDC maintenance and engineering projects. Regarding the Snell Lock ice flushing system, he reported on the installation of new hydraulic machinery suppressors, which will help slow the water flow as the water leaves the valves. He expressed hope to have a contractor on board in early July, with a scheduled completion near the end of August. Mr. Scharf also reported that preparations for demolishing older piping and installing new retrofit equipment is being finalized. Lastly, he provided an update on the Grasse River remediation/dredging project, which involved the EPA requiring the responsible party to redesign the project. The project began again in May and the dredging is scheduled for this fall. In addition, Mr. Scharf



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provided several other project updates, including power upgrades for new tugs, paving and drainage improvements, repairing or replacing the concrete diffusers at the locks, and repairing and refurbishing shop facilities.

- Nancy Scott provided an update on the continuation of the financial statements audit and field tests, which will be held virtually this year. Ms. Scott also reported that the FY 2019 financial statements audit resulted in no findings or recommendations.
- Nancy Alcalde provided a recap of previous quarter activities in Congressional and Public Relations, including the publishing of the annual report which was released at the end of May. With regard to season opening, Ms. Alcalde reported a reorientation from an originally planned live event to some form of public acknowledgement—this led to a joint press release with the SLSMC. In addition, she updated the Board on the *Seaway Compass* publications, which include embedded videos and other interactive materials. Ms. Alcalde informed the Board of SLSDC’s social media presence, highlighting increases in Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram page interactions. She highlighted the combination of working harder at the agency’s social media presence as well as better material as the catalyst for this increase. The agency is continuing its *Seaway Spotlight* video series, which will focus on the operations of the Seaway stakeholders.

V. OLD AND NEW BUSINESS

- Mr. McMillan asked how the downstream community partners are doing in light of higher water levels. Mr. Middlebrook answered this question, highlighting the difficulties with drawing excess water off of Lake Ontario due to the resulting flooding in Montreal and Lake St. Louis. This was predicted not to be an issue in 2020 due to the light snowpack.
- Board members inquired about scheduling the next meeting and asked for as much advance notice as possible.

VI. CLOSING DISCUSSION AND ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:41 p.m., with a motion to adjourn from Mr. Mielke and seconded by Dr. Sulzer.

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