



Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation

Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

February 9, 2021

Meeting Held via Teleconference

PRESENT

David McMillan (Advisory Board Chairperson), William Mielke (Advisory Board Member), Dr. Arthur Sulzer (Advisory Board Member), Craig Middlebrook (Deputy Administrator), Martin Welles (Executive Officer), Gary Croot (Associate Administrator), Carrie Lavigne (Chief Counsel), Kevin O'Malley (Budget Officer/CIO), Rebecca Yackley (Director of Trade and Economic Development), Nancy Alcalde (Director of Congressional and Public Relations), Christopher Guimond (Director of Lock Operations and Marine Services), Jeffrey Scharf (Director of Maintenance and Engineering), and two visiting officers – U.S. Air Force Major Jamie Gurganus and U.S. Army Major Valerie Peterson.

I. CALL TO ORDER

In his capacity as Board Chairperson, David McMillan welcomed all participants to the Advisory Board meeting, noting the presence of quorum, he called the meeting to order at 2:09 p.m. (Eastern).

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

On motion by Board member Dr. Arthur Sulzer, the Board approved the minutes without objection, the motion passed, and the minutes for the November 17, 2020 meeting were approved as drafted.

III. DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

- Deputy Administrator Craig Middlebrook reported that the President Biden's new Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg was confirmed by the U.S. Senate and is hard at work. Mr. Middlebrook noted that a member of the Secretary's detail tested positive for COVID-19, so the Secretary is currently in quarantine. Mr. Middlebrook reported that Secretary Buttigieg has undertaken a series of listening sessions to meet the different modes, and the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation (GLS) will be the second session. It will be virtual and will include Massena and Washington employees.
- Mr. Middlebrook briefly discussed the end to the 2020 navigation season; he thinks the year-end rush helped to make up for the losses in cargo earlier in the season. He also noted that the end of the season was strong in terms of trade and the waterway enjoyed one of the safest and smoothest ends of seasons in the last five years. Mr. Middlebrook said that even with the pandemic challenges during the 2020 navigation season, there were no positive cases of COVID among GLS employees. He reported that the waterway closed December 31 on schedule, and shortly thereafter, the GLS had its first employee positive case in Massena.



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- Mr. Middlebrook reported that the GLS recorded 13 employee positive cases over the previous 4-6 weeks and management continues to take proactive steps to mitigate risks and to keep employees safe, in accordance with Federal and Departmental policies and regulations.
- Mr. Middlebrook reported that on December 27, 2020, the Saint Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation (SLSDC) was legally renamed the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation (GLS). Mr. Middlebrook reports that this effort was spearheaded by U.S. Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur and U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown, both from Ohio, to better reflect the regional focus of the agency and its role in promoting economic development and commerce. Craig mentioned that the GLS is currently designing a new corporate seal.
- Mr. Middlebrook also reported changes in GLS personnel. He noted that Director of Human Resources Deborah Perkins and Director of Finance/CFO Nancy Scott retired on January 1. He reported that the GLS recently hired a replacement for Ms. Scott. However, because of changes instituted by the Department, the GLS will not backfill the Director of Human Resources position; instead, Tammy Finnegan was promoted to a new position, Supervisory Human Resources Specialist.
- Mr. Middlebrook spoke briefly about ballast water and water level conditions, which he stated are different this year compared to last year. As a result, the Seaway is expected to open for 2021 during the third week of March. He reminded the Board that in 2020, the GLS and SLSMC jointly agreed to delay the Seaway opening until April 1 to accommodate the higher outflows from Lake Ontario in an effort by the International Joint Commission (IJC) to mitigate high water on Lake Ontario. Lastly, Mr. Middlebrook spoke about the progress of the Eisenhower Lock Visitors' Center project. He stated that the GLS has engaged with an architectural/engineering firm to finalize the design of the new structure and the GLS has received preliminary design plans to review. He added that there could have a groundbreaking in late fall 2020.
- Associate Administrator Gary Croot reported on the operational closing of the 2020 navigation season, which ended on December 31 without incident. Mr. Croot commended the GLS's Marine Service Division on a tremendous job safely and efficiently removing all aids to navigation near the end of the season. He mentioned that despite best efforts for social distancing and separating employees into smaller work groups, about one-third of the GLS's workforce was on quarantine during preparations for winter work. In terms of personnel, Mr. Croot reported that the GLS has hired a vessel master with a tremendous amount of deep-sea experience and a deputy vessel master with a tremendous amount of experience on z-drive tugs.



IV. QUARTERLY UPDATES

- Christopher Guimond, Director of Operations and Marine Services, spoke briefly about accomplishments of the second quarter. He stated that managing through the COVID-19 pandemic was a challenge, but the GLS was able to operate the locks and waterway for the entire season before experiencing a positive case. Mr. Guimond spoke about ballast water inspections, noting that the GLS will continue with the same modified inspection program in 2021 because of the uncertainty of the pandemic. Mr. Guimond noted that for the next 90 days, his office will be focused on training Marine Services personnel as it relates to operating the *Seaway Guardian*.
- Kevin O'Malley, Budget Officer and CIO, noted that the GLS's 57th consecutive clean audit was completed by the Department's Office of Inspector General in November 2020. He also reported that the FY 2021 appropriation was enacted at \$38 million, which was equal to the FY 2020 level. The FY 2021 appropriation was \$21.5 million for operations and maintenance, \$14.5 million for the Seaway infrastructure program, and \$2 million for trade and economic development activities. He stated that the GLS is working on two congressionally-directed reports – the GLS's infrastructure program annual report and the trade and economic development strategic plan, which will be circulated shortly through the Department and OMB. Mr. O'Malley reported that the GLS's performance metrics for system reliability and lock availability exceeded their goals of 99 percent in 2020; 99.3 percent on system reliability and 99.96 percent for lock availability. He also reported that 99 percent of the ships moving through the GLS's locks were able to use the hands-free mooring technology, a slight increase from 2019.
- Rebecca Yackley, Director of Trade and Economic Development, briefly discussed the Seaway's 2020 navigation season tonnage, noting that Canadian grain exports were up by 27 percent and U.S. grain were up by 29 percent. Ms. Yackley stated that the commodity that kept everyone busy throughout the season was the amount of ships that brought wind energy equipment. She also reported that the Great Lakes Cruising Coalition had sought support on its marketing efforts from the GLS and SLSMC, requesting that the Highway H₂O marketing program include them and expand its focus to include cruising. She reported that, as of January 1, Highway H₂O is representing cruising interests and the Ports of Cleveland, Duluth, Muskegon, and Milwaukee have joined the Highway H₂O brand. Ms. Yackley also reported that the Canadian Government has shut down its ports to cruising for the entire 2021 season, which will shut down Great Lakes cruising for a second straight year. Finally, Ms. Yackley reported that a company has been selected to design and construct a new Great Lakes Seaway System cruising display for the annual Seatrade Cruise Exhibition.



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- Jeffrey Scharf, Director of Engineering and Maintenance, reported that the dredging contractor arrived on-site in late fall and were able to complete approximately one-half of the project before suspending operations for the winter. The remaining work is expected to be completed this spring. He spoke about two major concrete-related infrastructure projects – the repair and replacement of lock diffusers at Eisenhower Lock and additional repairs at a variety of recesses in the Snell Lock. Finally, Mr. Scharf provided an update on the Grasse River dredging/remediation project. The GLS continues to work with the EPA and Arconic on some of the outstanding issues in and around GLS boundaries.
- Nancy Alcalde, Director of Congressional and Public Relations, reported on her office's work to get the quarterly *Seaway Compass*, the GLS's monthly internal newsletter, and the *Seaway Soundings* publications for stakeholders distributed. She stated that her office continues to work collectively with the Great Lakes Seaway Partnership on a work plan for 2021 to include public relations and marketing initiatives. She highlighted the Partnership's new agriculture commodity short film, which is almost completed and a second film that is under production focused on steel. Finally, Ms. Alcalde reported that the Congressional and Public Relations office has taken over the GLS Pacesetter Award portfolio and has begun receiving questionnaires from the U.S. ports for the 2020 season highlights.

V. OLD AND NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Middlebrook reminded the group that the next meeting will be June 24, 2021.

VI. CLOSING DISCUSSION AND ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:52 p.m. (Eastern), with a motion to adjourn from Mr. Mielke and seconded by Mr. McMillan.

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