



Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation

Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

June 24, 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), 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), Tammy Finnegan (Supervisory Human Resource Specialist), Elizabeth Fox (Policy and Program Specialist), and guest Jim Weakley (Lake Carriers' Association).

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 2:01 p.m. (Eastern).

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

On motion by Board member Dr. Arthur Sulzer, which was seconded by Board member William Mielke, the Board approved the minutes without objection, the motion passed, and the minutes for the February 9, 2021 meeting were approved as drafted.

III. DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

- Deputy Administrator Craig Middlebrook welcomed Jim Weakley, President of the Lake Carriers' Association. Mr. Middlebrook reported an average start to the season from an operational and water levels standpoint. He noted that the opening ceremony was held virtually on March 22 and, for the first time in Seaway history, the Secretary of Transportation and Canadian Transport Minister participated. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg provided taped remarks while the Canadian Transport Minister Omar Alghabra appeared live. Mr. Middlebrook reported that Polly Trottenberg has been confirmed as Deputy Secretary for the Department of Transportation. Deputy Secretary Trottenberg comes from New York where she ran the New York City Department of Transportation.
- Mr. Middlebrook stated that the Department is still in negotiations with Transport Canada over the financial health and the sustainability of the Seaway International Bridge. He reported that GLS was close to receiving a supplemental appropriation to help join the Canadian special appropriation to sustain the bridge, but the matter became politically sensitive and the \$1.5 million request was dropped from the stimulus bill. Canada is providing the additional funding needed to continue supporting bridge operations. Mr.



Middlebrook added that the Department continues negotiating with Transport Canada on future governance and financial commitment issues related to the bridge.

- Mr. Middlebrook spoke about water level conditions, which have been favorable during the 2021 navigation season. Additionally, he reported that the GLS is advancing on the Eisenhower Lock Visitors' Center project. The final drawings are complete, and the schematics were included in the read-ahead materials. He noted that while the existing Visitors' Center was closed in 2020 due to the pandemic, GLS has been working with Department to develop a safety plan to re-open the Center this summer.

IV. QUARTERLY UPDATES

- Christopher Guimond, Director of Lock Operations and Marine Services, reported that the 2021 navigation season opened with mild weather, no ice in the river, and everything running smoothly. He reported on the success of the spring buoy run, which ran from March 31 to April 9 without incident. He noted that for the next 90 days he plans to focus on personnel issues, *Seaway Guardian* tugboat training, and retrieving the *Grasse River* gatelifter from Montreal.
- Jeffrey Scharf, Director of Engineering and Maintenance, spoke briefly about the winter work season and highlighted the finishing of the first phase of the Eisenhower Lock diffuser replacement project. He stated that the project went well, and they're preparing for the second phase this winter. Jeffrey said that the shotcrete repairs were also completed at Snell Lock, which was fairly complicated. He noted that the two dredging projects are wrapped up: the dredging in the pool area near the maintenance base and the spare gate erection towers below Eisenhower Lock, and the dredging completed by the remediation contractor in the Grasse River near the spare gate storage facility. This work gives the *Seaway Guardian* enough clearance to navigate in-and-out of these maintenance areas.
- Mr. Scharf briefly discussed the Visitors' Center project and said that he is not expecting groundbreaking until the Spring of 2022. He stated that the GLS is anticipating soliciting and awarding the construction contract by the end of this calendar year. He reported that Maintenance and Engineering successfully finished the Winter 2021 season and got the locks back up and running for the opening in late March. Mr. Scharf reported that current challenges are managing ongoing and anticipated projects, maintaining the locks for the 2021 navigation season, and making sure they are available.
- Kevin O'Malley, Budget Officer and CIO, reported that the GLS recently submitted its FY 2022 budget request to Congress, the largest request in GLS history at \$37.7 million. He reported the GLS's FY 2023 budget request to the Secretary is expected to be submitted in June. He ended with an update on the FY 2021 financial statements audit and the OIG financial audit team will arrive in Massena in August to perform an initial



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review and return in October after the end of the fiscal year. He noted that the GLS has been timely and responsive to the OIG's data requests and questions.

- Rebecca Yackley, Director of Trade and Economic Development, reported on the trip that she took with GLS International Trade Specialist Peter Hirthe to Muskegon, Michigan. They met with the Chamber of Commerce and discussed what Muskegon is doing to develop cargo and a new location for a cruise ship. She also reported on upcoming GLS trade and economic development events including participation and exhibition at the Seatrade cruise trade show in September in Miami, Breakbulk Houston in September, and the annual Highway H₂O conference in November. Ms. Yackley also highlighted recent GLS outreach with the Economic Development Administration (EDA). GLS staff has reached out to each EDA regional office located near Great Lakes/Seaway ports to introduce them to the GLS and the economic importance of the waterborne ports in their region. Finally, Ms. Yackley noted that there was no cruising activity expected on the Great Lakes Seaway System in 2021.
- Nancy Alcalde, Director of Congressional and Public Relations, reported on the production, completion, and distribution of the GLS's FY 2020 annual report, *Seaway Compass* quarterly stakeholder newsletter, and the monthly *Seaway Soundings* employee newsletter. She spoke about the virtual opening ceremony and stated that the GLS was pleased with the support of the Secretary and OST staff. Ms. Alcalde also highlighted recent GLS work with the Great Lakes Seaway Partnership, including the recent American Anchor supply chain videos. She stated that the short films are on the GLS's website and they have also been embedded in the *Seaway Compass* newsletter. She also discussed her office's work with the Trade and Economic Development division to develop and place educational marketing information in international and domestic trade publications. Finally, she reported that her office is working on monthly Seaway tonnage results press releases and completing the GLS Pacesetter Award notifications for eight U.S. Great Lakes ports who received an award for increased international trade during the 2020 season.

V. OLD AND NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Middlebrook reminded the group that the next meeting will be September 28, 2021.

VI. CLOSING DISCUSSION AND ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:34 p.m. (Eastern), with a motion to adjourn from Mr. Mielke and seconded by Mr. McMillan.

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