



Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation

Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

March 1, 2022

Meeting Held via Teleconference

PRESENT

David McMillan (Advisory Board Chairperson), William Mielke (Advisory Board Member), Dr. Arthur Sulzer (Advisory Board Member), Craig H. Middlebrook (Deputy Administrator), Martin Welles (Executive Officer), Carrie Lavigne (Chief Counsel), Kevin O'Malley (Strategic Advisor for Financial and Resource Management), Rebecca Yackley (Director of Trade and Economic Development), Ryan Chatland (Chief of Lock Operations and Marine Services), Jeffrey Scharf (Acting Associate Administrator and Director of Maintenance and Engineering), and Elizabeth Fox (Policy and Program Specialist).

I. CALL TO ORDER

In his capacity as Board Chairperson, David McMillan welcomed all participants to the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation (GLS) Advisory Board meeting, noting the presence of quorum, he called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. (Eastern).

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

On motion by Board member William Mielke, which was seconded by Board member Dr. Arthur Sulzer, the Board approved the minutes without objection, the motion passed, and the minutes for the September 28, 2021 meeting were approved as drafted.

III. DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

- GLS Deputy Administrator Craig Middlebrook reported on the GLS's efforts related to COVID-19. He noted that the President's mandatory vaccine requirement went into effect November 22, 2021, and all but four GLS employees are fully vaccinated. For those employees who are not vaccinated, the GLS is awaiting guidance on how to proceed with their reasonable accommodation requests. Since January 1, 2022, the GLS has had 15 employees test positive for COVID with no transmission at the workplace. Last year at this time, Mr. Middlebrook reported that the GLS had recorded 21 positive cases. With the improving news on COVID cases and transmissibility, Mr. Middlebrook is hopeful that the issues that faced the GLS over the past two seasons in trying to operate the waterway during COVID conditions are gone.
- Related to GLS personnel news, Mr. Middlebrook reported that Nancy Alcalde retired at the end of 2021 as the GLS's Congressional and Public Affairs Director and that her replacement is Elizabeth Fox.



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- Mr. Middlebrook next reported on the Seaway's 2021 navigation season. He noted that, in terms of operational safety, there were only four minor vessel incidents during the season. Tonnage was up over 1 percent and the GLS exceeded its operational performance metrics with Lock Availability at 99.9 percent and System Reliability at 99.5 percent. He added that the 2022 navigation season will begin on March 22 in the Montreal-Lake Ontario section and March 24 in the Welland Canal section.
- Mr. Middlebrook concluded his Deputy Administrator's report by briefing the board on the status of the GLS's new Eisenhower Lock Visitors' Center, its unqualified financial statements audit opinion for FY 2021, the development of the Seaway's Voyage Information System (VIS) project, and the GLS's Washington Office move and office renovations.

III. QUARTERLY UPDATES

- Mr. Middlebrook began the quarterly updates by briefing the Board on the current situation related to water levels on Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River. He noted that water levels going into the navigation season are higher than they were this year, but over the next four months, the forecast is for that level to go down and revert to the mean. He concluded by sharing the latest results from the 2021 Ballast Water Working Group annual report indicating 100 percent of all ballast tanks were inspected during the 2021 navigation season with a compliance rate of 99.9 percent.
- Ryan Chatland, Chief of Lock Operations and Marine Services, reported that the 2021 navigation season successfully closed after it was extended by 24 hours due to traffic delays caused by COVID-19 infections with piloting districts. He provided an update on the GLS's vessel safety and ballast water inspections program in 2021 as well as the GLS's efforts to convert its floating navigation aids to all-season buoys. Finally, he reported on recent hires in operations and marine services and provided an update on the construction of the *Seaway Trident* tugboat in East Boothbay, Maine.
- Jeff Scharf, Acting Associate Administrator and Director of Engineering and Maintenance, reported on the status of finalizing the design plans for the new Eisenhower Lock Visitors' Center. He said that a solicitation is expected for construction of the new Visitors' Center in the spring. Mr. Scharf discussed current challenges and rising issues with managing on-going projects, developing infrastructure priorities for the 2023 winter capital work season, and maintaining the reliability and availability of the locks during the new navigation season. He mentioned that managing the impacts related to the evolving national health emergency is his focus area for the next quarter. Lastly, Mr. Scharf discussed continuing work on major capital priorities, the maintenance shop addition, and work on HFM equipment.



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- Kevin O'Malley, Strategic Advisor for Financial and Resource Management, reported on the status of GLS funding in FY 2022. He noted that, while remaining under a Continuing Resolution, there is activity in Congress to pass a full-year appropriation. He added that he is optimistic that a full-year appropriations bill would include provisions for the GLS to pay the Seaway International Bridge Corporation for toll revenue shortfalls beginning in April 2022. Mr. O'Malley also discussed the GLS's performance efforts and that he is working with the Department's performance team on a possible new GLS performance metric related to infrastructure. He concluded by reporting on the status of the GLS's FY 2022 financial statements audit and that the OIG auditors are expected to host an entrance meeting in late March/early April.
- Rebecca Yackley, Director of Trade and Economic Development, provided an update to the Board on the GLS's trade and economic development activities. She mentioned the GLS's recent efforts in partnering with the American Great Lakes Ports Association and other U.S. ports on a new feasibility study related to container movements to and from the Great Lakes via the St. Lawrence Seaway. She also briefly discussed efforts to increase cruising on the Great Lakes and that the GLS was able to fold the former Great Lakes Cruising Coalition organization into the Highway H₂O marketing brand. Finally, she discussed a number of upcoming domestic and international trade shows and exhibitions that the GLS will participate in including Breakbulk Americas, Breakbulk Europe, and Posidonia.
- Elizabeth Fox, Director of Congressional and Public Relations, reported on major GLS accomplishments since the last Board meeting including producing and distributing the quarterly *Seaway Compass* newsletter and the monthly *Seaway Soundings* employee newsletter. Additionally, the Office of Congressional and Public Relations recently produced the FY 2021 Annual Report and is working with Trade and Economic Development on the placement of marketing ads for trade publications. She also noted the completion of September, October, and November tonnage statistic releases with the Great Lakes Seaway Partnership. Ms. Fox provided a brief update on NOAA's Marine Sanctuary program and spoke of her continued work on policy issues that are important to the GLS and USDOT.

V. OLD AND NEW BUSINESS

Martin Welles, Executive Officer, briefly discussed details for the May 24, 2022 Advisory Board meeting in Massena, N.Y. He suggested flight destination options and hotel choices.

VI. CLOSING DISCUSSION AND ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 3:43 p.m. (Eastern), with a motion to adjourn from Mr. Mielke and seconded by Dr. Sulzer.

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