

**MINUTES  
OF THE  
WOODS HOLE, MARTHA'S VINEYARD  
AND NANTUCKET STEAMSHIP AUTHORITY**

**The Joint Board and Port Council Meeting in Public Session**

**January 20, 2026**

The Members of the Woods Hole, Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket Steamship Authority met at 1:02 p.m. Tuesday, January 20, 2026, in the first-floor meeting room (Room 103) of the Authority's Administrative Offices, 228 Palmer Avenue, Falmouth, Massachusetts. Four (4) Members were present: Chair Peter J. Jeffrey of Falmouth; Secretary Robert F. Ranney of Nantucket; and Members Robert R. Jones of Barnstable and James M. Malkin of Dukes County. Vice Chair Moira E. Tierney of New Bedford was absent.

The Port Council met jointly with the Board this day. Present were Port Council Chair Gordon M. Carr of New Bedford; Vice Chair John F. Cahill of Tisbury; Secretary Joseph E. Sollitto Jr. of Oak Bluffs; and Members Nathaniel E. Lowell of Nantucket (who joined the meeting at 1:09 p.m.) and Gregory R. Egan of Barnstable. Members Eric R. Dawicki of Fairhaven and Robert S.C. Munier of Falmouth were absent. Messrs. Cahill and Lowell participated in the meeting via Zoom videoconferencing.

Staff members present were General Manager Alexander T. Kryska, General Counsel Terence G. Kenneally, Treasurer Mark K. Rozum, Chief Operating Officer Mark H. Amundsen, Communications Director Sean F. Driscoll, Reservations and Community Relations Manager Angela C. Campbell, Director of Shoreside Operations Alison A. Fletcher, Port Captain Paul F. Hennessy, and Director of Information Technologies Stephen M. Colman.

Video and Audio Recording of Today's Meeting:

Mr. Jeffrey announced Mr. Driscoll and Falmouth Community Television were making an audio and video recording of the meeting; Louisa Hufstader (representing the *Vineyard Gazette*) indicated she was making audio recordings of the meeting.

Statement Regarding Remote Participation:

Mr. Jeffrey announced that, pursuant to Section 20 of Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, as amended, members were participating in the meeting remotely because their physical attendance would be unreasonably difficult. The members were participating in the meeting by the Zoom videoconferencing app and all members would be clearly audible to each other.

As a result of the remote participation, any and all votes taken by the Members shall be by roll call vote, he said.

Review and Discussion of Draft Policies and Procedures  
In Support of the Authority's Reservation System Project:

Thomas Innis of Gibbous LLC noted that the Authority's True North Initiative project team had been looking forward to this discussion.

He noted several reasons why the new reservation system is driving these policy changes. Specifically, the Authority is aligning its policies with a system used by market leaders instead of forcing a modern system to conform to legacy workarounds; the new system mirrors built-in patterns and constraints that have worked operationally for other high-volume ferry services; and this approach reduces the need for costly customizations.

Mr. Innis noted the Board and Port Council were not being asked for a vote and today's meeting would be for discussion purposes only including the format of upcoming town hall meetings. He said the goal was to continue to make sure the Authority remains a flexible operation that meets the needs of the public and commercial users while also making the new reservation system more efficient.

He noted the components of the operational policy changes being discussed include desk space allocations, product definitions, the preseason reservation process for freight customers, and an inventory management.

Mr. Innis said the policies are focused on meeting the balance between trip flexibility versus trip certainty. A completely flexible system would be travel on a first-come, first-served basis, but that would not meet the Authority's operational needs because terminals would run out of space. A completely constrained system would not meet the needs of customers, specifically island residents, who have last-minute travel needs.

Mr. Innis then shared an example of how the policy changes will reinforce each other: moving the allocations to use linear feet (as opposed to the current car equivalent units (CEUs)) will allow for more accurate bookings of the refined vehicle sizes and types, which will reduce wait list “churn” that cannot be resold. The refined preseason freight process will reduce cancellations and no-shows that allow last-minute space to open on the vessels.

He noted that the last-minute open space allows passengers to get on an earlier trip, which is a win for the consumer but effectively costs the Authority money because it cannot resell the space. Mr. Lowell disagreed with that, and Mr. Innis said it could be resold in theory but not often. Ms. Fletcher noted that, on the Hyannis-Nantucket route, the space is sold by vehicles in standby, but it is not the same on the Woods Hole-Martha’s Vineyard route. Further discussion ensued on the differences between the two (2) routes.

Mr. Jeffrey noted the presentation was on slide 6 of 79 and asked Mr. Innis to move through the agenda and pick his examples wisely.

Mr. Innis then put forward a list of items that the project team was hoping for a “relatively quick” approval on, namely:

- Deck space management
- Lottery process
- Deposits
- Furlough fare
- Gift cards
- Wait list
- Standby
- Blue Line
- Payment rules
- Cancellation policy
- Special program enrollment

Regarding deck space management, Messrs. Innis and Amundsen reviewed the current system of managing space in units of seventeen (17) feet and said the switch to linear feet will make it more efficient. The “leftover” space doesn’t always get filled in, leaving extra space on the vessels that cannot always be resold.

Mr. Innis noted the preseason lottery process will feature only one (1) deadline instead of five (5) deadlines as is the current practice.

The commercial shippers would no longer pay a ten percent (10%) deposit but would be addressed via an updated cancellation policy, he said.

The furlough fare would not require anyone to be in uniform but to have a valid military service card.

Gift cards would move to digital-only and would be managed online, Mr. Innis said. He said the project team has not figured out a way to do physical gift cards with the new vendor. Mr. Carr asked how many gift cards are given out on an annual basis; Mr. Innis said he did not have a number on that. Ms. Fletcher noted there were no digital gift cards currently, but they could be ordered online.

Mr. Jeffrey asked what the costs associated with issuing gift cards were, if customers were charged for a replacement card, and if there was a fee to cover the costs of the cards.

Mr. Cahill noted that physical gift cards were used for charitable donations, so some way would have to be found to have a physical offering. Mr. Rozum noted that the customer would get an email confirmation with a gift card, but Mr. Cahill said it should look like it comes from the Authority. Mr. Driscoll noted that was a concern of his and a digital-only offering would require a solution for charitable donations and sponsorships.

Mr. Innis said the Authority would not be the first company to move to digital-only gift cards and it would be a matter of how the gift cards were designed and presented.

Regarding the wait list, standby, and the Blue Line, Mr. Innis noted that there had been “many, many hours” of discussion with E-Dea about these matters. He said the solution that has been proposed is that the wait list would be limited to the five (5) trips before and the five (5) trips after a booked trip, and the customer would be able to choose when the wait list search would end. He said this type of system would end “wait list churn” and would stop the practice of someone booking a trip for September to wait list for trips in July. He said the practice is blocking customers from making the reservations they want.

Mr. Kryska noted the wait list options were narrow relative to the time you actually booked a ticket.

Mr. Innis said the companion to this option is a standby ticket, which a customer can purchase for a booked trip. When space becomes available, then the customer can travel. He said it would reduce wait list churn because a ticket

would not be booked for a trip the customer does not want to take, and if the standby ticket does not fulfill then the customer would get a refund.

Mr. Ranney asked what the purpose of standby was and that he'd rather take standby because then he could get off that day. Mr. Innis said it would fulfill two (2) different travel needs—those who must get off the island and will take any trip versus people who are trying to travel at a specific time. Ms. Fletcher said the wait list would be for trips that same day.

Mr. Jeffrey asked who would get preference, standby or wait list customers. Ms. Fletcher said it would be whoever is on the list first.

Mr. Sollitto asked why someone would buy a standby ticket if that meant they weren't guaranteed to get off the island that day. Mr. Innis said there would be instances that if a trip could not be taken in the morning, then it was not worth taking. Mr. Sollitto said such trips cost a day's pay so people would want certainty.

Mr. Rozum said the standby functionality allows people to try to get a trip where they don't have a reservation so they're not holding up inventory for another trip. The wait list functionality is for customers who have existing trips who want to go earlier or later than their scheduled time.

Further discussion ensued on the wait list operations and the order in which the requests would be fulfilled. Mr. Rozum said a policy could also be brought to the Board that would set priorities for open space fulfillment.

Mr. Jeffrey said it creates a dilemma from a policy perspective as to how to prioritize those needs. Mr. Rozum said there are inherent conflicts of interest in some of the policies, and some of those matters would also come into play for cancellation and change policies.

Mr. Sollitto asked if an excursion-fare customer could then get "bumped" on the wait list or standby by a full-fare customer, and Ms. Fletcher said that was correct. Mr. Sollitto said that type of policy would get pushback from the Vineyard-route customers.

Further discussion ensued on the business rules that could be established around the priority for wait list and standby fulfillment.

Mr. Jeffrey asked if there was a policy being set forth on how to set those priorities, and Mr. Innis said the project team was not at that point in development.

Further discussion was had on the wait list versus standby functionality in the E-Dea system.

Mr. Malkin said that there is a perception about empty boats going back and forth in the middle of the day, and if the system can help address that then a lot of the changes become more palatable. If Vineyard residents still see vessels moving back and forth without loads, then it becomes less acceptable. Mr. Rozum said his apprehension is understandable and that the key is making the day of travel available the first time someone tries to book it.

Mr. Innis asked what questions the Members would want asked at upcoming town hall meetings on this topic. Mr. Malkin said there is a split of opinions on how well the current system works and that it would have to be explained in greater detail, which is why as many people as possible need to attend the town halls.

Mr. Lowell noted that the project team would have to figure out what works on each island and adjust accordingly.

Mr. Innis noted that if the wait list and standby functionality were acceptable, there could be further debate over the priority order.

Mr. Innis then reviewed the changes in delayed payment, which would allow those only in instances of multiple medical appointment bookings. Mr. Rozum clarified the only reason that payments could be delayed now was when booking on the telephone or in person.

Mr. Jones noted that reservations were not able to be transferred, which Mr. Innis said was a good segue into the cancellation policies. He noted that if a cancellation was done within forty-eight (48) hours of a trip the Authority was very unlikely to be able to resell that space. So, the project team was looking at the cancellation policy to urge customers to cancel as soon as possible. He said customers know they can put a ticket into pending status and rebook, and that the project team wanted to change that behavior.

Mr. Ranney said he had a problem with that idea of changing behavior because it is a reality of life on the islands. Sometimes the behavior the Authority wants isn't what residents want, or it isn't possible, and options can be limited. There are customer behavior issues, but most of these items are a necessity. Ms. Fletcher noted that customers have created their own workarounds to the system and that trust needed to be regained of islanders who will need to learn to trust the new system.

Mr. Malkin asked if the E-Dea system could make different rules for the Vineyard route and Nantucket route. Mr. Innis said the system was already doing that because of the rules around the drive-on/drive-off program. Mr. Malkin asked if the cancellation policies could be different for each route, and Mr. Innis said possibly but it becomes operationally more complex. Mr. Malkin said the overall operation was very complex.

Further discussion was had about the particulars of the reservation process. Mr. Malkin noted that, as part of learning the new system, there would have to be a “department of yes” to help people get through the new process. Ms. Fletcher said there would have to be “nos” as well, such as when people booked a smaller car and showed up with a larger car. Mr. Rozum said these decisions come down to a balancing act between who has the reservation and others who were unable to get it. He said the Authority would have to come up with the “sweet spot” between flexibility and allowing others to travel. Mr. Malkin said, for people on the islands, these decisions dictate how people plan their lives.

Mr. Jones asked if it would be clear what could and could not be done in the new system. Mr. Innis said there had been many discussions on the wait list and that it took a lot of pushback from the Authority to get E-Dea to understand the importance of the system. He added that the prioritization would allow the Authority to say “yes” to times when it is meaningful and important. He added that the one-, seven-, and 30-day preferred spaces were still being maintained and that those might have increased allocations as part of the switch to linear feet.

Mr. Innis then reviewed the draft cancellation policies, in which the project team was trying to create more alignment between the traveling public and commercial policies. Commercial policies have a lot of flexibility in their ability to cancel trips, and it doesn’t take a lot of canceled trucks at the beginning of the day to open up a lot of deck space. The commercial cancellation policies were being examined to see how those customers could be encouraged to review them well in advance and make changes easier and online. He said because of the advanced reservation process it is very difficult for those customers to know what they need far in advance, so a tiered cancellation policy was being considered to increase the refund amounts with earlier cancellations.

Mr. Lowell noted that the policy would prove unpopular and would affect infrequent shippers much differently than frequent shippers. He said when someone cancels with twenty-four (24) hours’ notice, the space isn’t just sitting there and can be rebooked, and he said that these changes are chasing something that’s not a problem. Mr. Innis said the timeframe for the tiered cancellations could be revisited but the goal was to get shippers to give up a

space they don't want so others can use it. He said the project team understands many shippers consider it a cost of doing business and that they were trying to figure out how to get the shippers to use the system and not let unwanted reservations stay on the book.

Mr. Innis noted that transferrable reservations between hazardous material customers would be maintained in the new system.

Mr. Lowell noted the ten percent (10%) deposit was put in place to keep people from hording reservations and that there aren't people waiting for the truck spaces one, two, or three days out.

Mr. Lowell asked about the non-refundable policy for drivers' services, and Ms. Fletcher said some customers tried to avoid the fee by going to the terminal at the last minute and driving their own vehicles off. She said it was a security issue to have unticketed customers going onto the boats to retrieve vehicles.

Mr. Malkin said these issues aren't going to fit neatly into an operational box and would require some common sense. Mr. Jeffrey said the agents and terminal managers must have the authority to make those decisions on the ground.

Mr. Jeffrey said, given the amount of discussion that's been had, the number of informational meetings needed to be rethought. Multiple virtual meetings at different times should be set on specific topics to get the broadest possible feedback. Mr. Innis said the team was happy to do it and that they appreciate the points that have been brought up this far. He said that was part of the reason that this was called the True North project because there are so many aspects to these changes.

Mr. Malkin said following the informational sessions, another special joint meeting should be held to review and discuss the feedback. He said it is going to be critically important to get it right for the public.

Mr. Innis said the shippers, in particular, need to come to the meetings so they can provide feedback on the commercial shippers' cancellation policies so it can be fair to those involved.

Mr. Innis then briefly reviewed other changes under consideration, including motorcycle booking and the policy of allowing 110% of used reservations to be the cap for commercial shippers in the following year. Hazardous shippers would be the average of the last three (3) years, he said. Mr. Lowell said having more frequent bulk shipping reservation periods may help

address some of these issues. Mr. Innis said the new system will allow for those opportunities because the process will be automated.

Mr. Jeffrey said he'd like to bring the meeting to a close and asked Mr. Innis for any final thoughts. Mr. Innis said any feedback can be sent to [truenorth@steamshipauthority.com](mailto:truenorth@steamshipauthority.com) and a lot of people have been asking for the policies to review them.

Mr. Jeffrey said three (3) shipper meetings and three (3) town hall meetings have been scheduled, and more virtual meetings need to be planned on specific policy areas, then the IT Executive Steering Committee, Port Council, and Board will review the proposals, perhaps in separately scheduled meetings. Mr. Kryska asked if the joint session would be following the virtual meetings. Mr. Jeffrey said it should be so as much public input could be gathered as possible.

Mr. Carr noted the Port Council had a meeting scheduled for February 3, 2026, and that might be a good date for the joint meeting. He also asked what the risk was for not making these decisions in February. Mr. Jeffrey posed the question to Mr. Innis, who said largely the decisions needed to be made in February to ensure proper functionality could be configured.

Following further discussion, the Members agreed that a special meeting would be held in February but not necessarily coinciding with the Port Council meeting.

Mr. Innis said the project team would follow up with questions about the online sessions and if they should be island-specific or program-specific.

Public Comment:

Margaret Hanneman said there's a lot of feedback that needs to be gathered and that the future sessions should be on Zoom and topic specific. She added that the project team does not have a clear understanding on why islanders need to waitlist, and that's to accommodate last-minute travel needs. If travel on Tuesday is needed, then grabbing a reservation on Thursday and waitlisting for Tuesday will usually be successful. She said they are not trying to "break" or "cheat" the system, but these are the options that are presented as the system now exists.

At 3:12 p.m., upon a motion by Mr. Sollitto and a second by Mr. Lowell, the Port Council **voted** 4-0 to adjourn the meeting.

**IT WAS VOTED – upon a motion by Mr. Malkin, seconded by Mr. Ranney – to adjourn the meeting.**

<u>VOTING</u>	<u>AYE</u>	<u>NAY</u>
Mr. Malkin	35 %	
Mr. Jeffrey	10 %	
Mr. Ranney	35 %	
Mr. Jones	<u>10 %</u>	<u>          </u>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>90 %</b>	<b>0 %</b>

A TRUE RECORD

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JOSEPH E. SOLLITTO Jr.,  
Port Council Secretary

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ROBERT F. RANNEY, Board Secretary

**Documents and Exhibits Used at the  
January 20, 2026, Meeting in Public Session of the  
Port Council and Board of the  
Woods Hole, Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket Steamship Authority**

1. January 20, 2026, Meeting Agenda, posted January 15, 2026.
2. Video and audio recording announcement.
3. Statement regarding remote participation.
4. Presentation, Policy Changes, undated.
5. Steamship Authority Operational Policy Development: Draft Policies for Review, Version 1.1, dated January 15, 2026.