



Woods Hole, Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket Steamship Authority

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27 March 2026

Jeffrey S. Shapiro, Esq., CIG

Inspector General

Office of the Inspector General

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Re: Response to December 2025 OIG Report – Steamship Authority Website Development Project

Dear Inspector General Shapiro,

Thank you for your December 2025 report regarding the Steamship Authority's website development project and for your continued oversight of the Authority. I appreciate the opportunity to respond as I begin my tenure as General Manager.

The report identifies important concerns related to project planning, execution, and oversight. These findings are being taken seriously, and we are actively implementing changes to strengthen governance, project management, and transparency across the organization. At the same time, I believe it is important to provide additional context and clarification on several key points to ensure a complete and accurate understanding of the project and its outcomes.

Website Project Status and Forward Path

While the report characterizes the website project as having produced limited results, I want to clarify that the work completed to date is not being discarded. The website platform that was developed will be deployed in conjunction with the implementation of the new reservation system being delivered by E-Dea. The website and reservation system are now being aligned as an integrated solution, and prior development efforts will be leveraged as part of that rollout.

Use of Grant Funds

The Authority has confirmed with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation that the federal grant funds associated with the project were appropriately utilized. While the project experienced delays and changes in scope, expenditures were made in accordance with approved funding parameters and for their intended purposes.

Project Costs and Board Oversight

The report characterizes certain project costs as resulting from “mismanagement.” It is important to note that all expenditures and change orders associated with the project were presented to, discussed, and approved by the Authority’s Board Members at their public meetings. These costs were incurred while advancing the project, including addressing technical challenges related to system integration, payment processing, and evolving project scope.

While there were clear shortcomings in project execution and decision-making, the financial commitments themselves were not undertaken outside of established governance processes.

Project Sequencing and Lessons Learned

One of the most important conclusions, one with which I agree, is that in hindsight, the initial decision to prioritize development of the website ahead of replacement of the underlying reservation system was flawed. That sequencing created technical and operational challenges, which contributed to delays and inefficiencies.

This lesson has directly informed the Authority’s current approach. We are now prioritizing the reservation system as the foundational platform and aligning all related systems, including the website, and processes accordingly.

Additional Context

The report does not fully reflect certain external and material factors that influenced the project, including the operational challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic beginning in 2020. During that period, the Authority, like many organizations, was managing rapidly changing conditions that affected daily operations, procurement, staffing, and project timelines.

Additionally, we believe certain aspects of the Authority’s historical relationship with Saber Technologies and the evolution of its software licensing agreements would benefit from further clarification. The Authority did not repurchase identical rights to the same software. The initial purchase, in 2010, was for a very limited expanded license on a single machine to ensure the software was maintained while the vendor was out of the country for an extended period. The 2024 agreement secured expanded and perpetual rights necessary to ensure continuity and

long-term operational control of the “Book’em” reservation system as its original developer approached retirement.

Active Implementation of Corrective Actions

Importantly, the Authority is not simply responding to the report, we are already actively addressing its core findings, as well as broader concerns identified in prior reviews, including the HMS report, through a structured and coordinated implementation framework.

As General Manager, I have developed and initiated a comprehensive work plan focused on strengthening governance, financial controls, strategic planning, and transparency across the organization. Key actions already underway include clarifying decision-making authority between the Board, General Manager, and staff; standardizing Board reporting and implementing performance metrics; strengthening financial controls and procurement oversight; developing a multi-year financial forecast integrated with capital planning; advancing a Board-approved strategic plan; and establishing regular public reporting.

In parallel, the Steamship Authority Board has adopted its own work plan to enhance governance, oversight, and accountability. These efforts include aligning Board actions with the Authority’s enabling act and mission; establishing standing committees to oversee information technology, capital planning, and governance; reviewing and updating procurement policies to align with best practices; implementing Board governance training and self-evaluation; and strengthening coordination with the Port Council.

Together, these efforts represent a coordinated and measurable approach to addressing both the specific findings of the OIG report and broader organizational improvements identified in prior reviews.

The full General Manager Work Plan and Board Goals and Action Items are included as attachments to this response.

Commitment to Accountability and Public Trust

The Authority recognizes that it operates as a critical lifeline service, and with that comes a responsibility to operate with discipline, transparency, and accountability.

The combination of lessons learned from the website project, the recommendations from the OIG and HMS reports, and the implementation of both management and Board-level work plans represents a fundamental shift in how the Authority governs, plans, and executes major initiatives.

Conclusion

The issues identified in the report are serious and have been taken as an opportunity to reset and strengthen the Authority's approach. We are not only addressing past shortcomings, but also building the systems, processes, and culture necessary to prevent similar issues in the future.

I look forward to meeting with you and your team to discuss the Authority's implementation efforts and to ensure alignment on next steps.

Thank you again for your work and for your engagement on these important matters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alex Kryska', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Alex Kryska
General Manager
Woods Hole, Martha's Vineyard
and Nantucket Steamship Authority