

San Juan County Ferry Advisory Committee
Meet Minutes – May 13, 2026

Call to Order, Introductions, Approval of Previous Minutes – The meeting was called to order at 9AM.

FAC Present – Jennifer Swanson, Ken Burtness, Chip Long, Kari McVeigh

SJC Present – Kelsey Vargas

WSF Present - Tally Teal, Hadley Rodero, Jason Rogers

Members of the Public Present – David Robison, Duncan Chalmers, Mark Ainsworth

Public Access – Member of the public spoke

WSF Update: Tally Teal and Hadley Rodero - Tally provided details about the upcoming 75th anniversary celebrations, including events, giveaways, and special promotions, with Hadley and Jennifer supporting the communication to the group.

Service Contingency Plan Updates and Communication: Jason Rogers presented the updated service contingency plan, explaining vessel deployment, response strategies, communication improvements, and special event planning, with the FAC.

Revised Pet Policy Implementation: Tally and Hadley announced the updated pet policy for WSF vessels, detailing the new rules, transitional period, enforcement measures, and opportunities for public engagement.

Public Engagement Opportunities: Tally and Hadley mentioned upcoming community meetings on May 26th and September/October, encouraging public participation and sharing links for registration.

FAC Communication with Engage -

David Robison - David proposed highlighting the contingency plan and vessel assignment logic on the Engage page, including video explanations and addressing issues like Lopez allotments, to improve public understanding and transparency.

Discussion of Committee Positions (Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary) -

Jennifer, Ken, Kelsey, and Kari discussed the status of committee positions, term limits, and election procedures, clarifying current roles, term expiration dates. Jennifer is chair, Ken is vice chair, and Laura is secretary, with term limits and policies reviewed for potential rotation and continuity. Kelsey provided updates on term expiration dates and tracking systems, noting that both Jennifer and Ken's terms run until December 2027, and clarified the policy on serving multiple terms. The group decided to maintain current positions until January 2027, with Chip declining nomination due to limited experience, and agreed to revisit elections next year.

Committee Work Plan and Annual Report for County -

Jennifer and Kelsey discussed the requirement for the committee to submit an annual report and work plan to the County Council, with Chip and Ken agreeing to review Jennifer's draft and provide feedback.

Council Liaison Update -

Kari McVeigh – Update regarding conversation with John Vezina - Kari McVeigh updated the group on discussions with Switch Maritime and conversation with John Vezina regarding a passenger-only ferry proposal for San Juan County, including potential routes, hydrogen-powered vessels, operational challenges, and new federal funding opportunities.

New and Continuing Business -

- Terminal Updates
 - o Lopez - Ken described ongoing parking challenges at Lopez, Friday Harbor, and Orcas, noting state property status and county leases, as well as concerns about commuter lots and lot C safety.
 - o Orcas - WSF staff visited Orcas to assess parking and drop-off congestion, with Justin requesting improvements for pickup and drop-off areas. Chip acknowledged personal experience with Orcas parking issues and committed to gathering more information for future updates.
 - o Shaw - Jennifer reported that WSF is addressing the lack of a generator at Shaw landing by renting one for bad weather months, providing a temporary solution for power outages affecting bridge operations.
 - o San Juan – None

Discussion on Sydney Route Restoration and Fleet Forecasts: Duncan, Mark, Ken, and Jennifer engaged in a detailed discussion about the missing Sydney route, declining fleet projections, and the role of the Ferry Advisory Committee in taking a position or advising the Council, with public input emphasizing the need for accurate information and problem-solving.

Public Access – Duncan Chalmers and Mark Ainsworth David and Mark reiterated that advising the Council on the Sydney run and fleet issues is within the committee's purview and encouraged the committee to support Ken's chart and consider extending passenger-only ferry proposals to Sydney.

11AM - Adjourn