



## The Newsletter is Back on Board!

### Welcome Back Readers

We are very excited to bring back our monthly newsletter to the Guemes Island ferry community. We are hoping this will be a great avenue to provide updates on ferry projects and ongoing maintenance activities, share opportunities for our riders to be involved in ferry decisions, and give you all a heads up on important dates coming up soon!

- Jenn Rogers, Communications Manager



### Employee Spotlight: Meet our Chief Engineer, Joe Greene!



Joe Greene is a certified Chief Engineer and U.S. Coast Guard Qualified Assessor for the engine department. He started his career at Washington State Ferries (WSF) in 2007 as a wiper and then worked his way up as an oiler, assistant chief engineer, and finally certified as a chief engineer. He worked primarily on M/V Elwha for the San Juan Islands route before spending his last four years with WSF on the M/V Suquamish on the Clinton – Mukilteo route. Joe was part of the inaugural crew and a “plank owner” for Suquamish before it entered service in 2018.

Joe joined the Guemes ferry crew this past spring as our new chief engineer. He has greatly enjoyed working on the

M/V Guemes, and felt right at home with the team here at Skagit County. He looks forward to figuring out how to solve unique issues with a ferry like the Guemes and takes pride in being able to fix problems as quickly as possible for our riders.

When Joe isn't working on Guemes, he also serves as Chief Engineer on HiYu charter vessel on Lake Union. He volunteers for the Stanwood Little League baseball team and Stanwood Youth Football. He spends his off hours with his wife and two children, and fishing on his boat.

Joe, who has a USCG Chief Engineer (Unlimited HP, Limited Oceans) license, is currently the highest-ranking technical officer we have on our ferry crew. The Chief Engineer position is responsible for overseeing all mechanical, electrical, and structural systems that keep the ferry and the bridges running safely and efficiently.

"As a small agency with limited resources, we're incredibly fortunate to have a Chief Engineer of this caliber on board. Thanks to his proactive maintenance and deep technical expertise, we've saved thousands of dollars in repairs and costly downtime since his hire date on March 1, 2025. Catching up on deferred maintenance is a top priority, and we're confident that with the right support, we'll see fewer breakdowns and a stronger, more dependable service for our community," said Ferry Division Manager, Rachel Rowe.

## Budget season is just around the corner

The annual series of meetings for the next budget and ferry fare schedule is coming up soon. Here are a few of the following items we're working on now:

- 2025 Ferry Fare Revenue Target Report
- 2026 Ferry Fare Proposal
- 2024 Ferry Expenditure and Revenue Reports
- 2025 (Jan. 1 through June 30, 2025) Expenditure and Revenue Report

These items will be published to the ferry website by this Friday, August 15th. We will send out a notice to the ferry listserv when these are posted online. We will be accepting early written comments on these items prior to the presentation to the County Commissioners in September. Comments may be submitted by email to [ferrycomments@co.skagit.wa.us](mailto:ferrycomments@co.skagit.wa.us) or by mail to 1800 Continental Place, Mount Vernon, WA 98273.

Skagit County Public Works staff will present these items to the County Commissioners on September 16th at 8:30 a.m. A public hearing to take feedback on the draft fare schedule is scheduled for October 21st at 1:00 p.m. in the Commissioner's Hearing Room. The current

fare schedule is set to expire at the end of 2025 so we will be adopting a new fare schedule before its expiration.

## Shoreline Permit Update

You may have seen a few yellow land-use notice signs around the ferry terminal recently. These signs were used to publicize a public comment period for Skagit County's application for a shoreline permit from the City of Anacortes. The permit was applied for in January of 2024 and the City of Anacortes is still in the process of review for a final decision. The permit includes the following proposed project items:

- Upgrades to the apron, wingwalls, and outermost dolphins to accommodate the all-electric ferry vessel and allow for quicker loading and unloading of passengers and vehicles.
- Addition of shoreside electrical charging stations and batteries for the all-electric ferry.
- Upland site improvements to the Anacortes parking lot and queuing areas.

If you are looking for more information on the permit application and project details, the City of Anacortes hosted a virtual neighborhood meeting on November 14, 2023, to allow Skagit County Public Works staff to present our proposed improvements. The meeting was recorded and is available on our [website](#), along with the [slide deck](#).

Please note, while the permit application includes several proposed improvements and additions to the Anacortes terminal and dock, the Board of Skagit County Commissioners ultimately decides which projects move forward to construction. We prepared the permit application before we opened the bids for construction of the all-electric ferry vessel and unfortunately, we had to [reject all bids](#) due to the costs that exceeded our available grant funding.

Because shoreline permits take a significant amount of time to complete and receive approval, we submitted the application early in the project process to ensure that we would have time to construct the terminal modifications while the new vessel was being constructed. We cannot make changes to the permit application at this time without restarting the application process from the beginning, potentially leading to additional delays for our vessel replacement project.

## Ferry Replacement Project Update

As we have previously announced, the Skagit County Commissioners will be conducting a value engineering assessment of the current all-electric vessel design and bid package to evaluate how to best reduce the cost of the vessel to meet our available budget. We will be putting out a Request for Qualifications in the coming months to select a third-party contractor to conduct this work.

In conjunction with the value engineering effort, the County Commissioners will convene a Technical Advisory Task Force (TATF) to help evaluate previous vessel replacement studies along with the outcomes of the value engineering study. The TATF will be responsible for creating a recommendation to the County Commissioners for a preferred propulsion system for the new ferry. The TATF will not only evaluate a new ferry design but also consider refurbishing the existing ferry to use for the next 10-15 years.



Skagit County ferry staff are finalizing the charter and application for the TATF and we will be sending out more information on this process in the coming weeks. Membership on the TATF will include residents of Guemes Island and other Skagit County citizens, with an emphasis on applicants with a background in local vessel operations, private marine delivery or shuttle service, shipbuilding, naval architecture, emergency operations, etc. More info on this coming soon!

## Maintenance Updates

### Final Invoicing for Drydock Period

Pay estimate no. 1 for \$1,459,338.75, covering the bulk amount of the drydock period, was paid to Nichols Brothers Boat Builders in July. Pay estimate no. 2, for \$121,506.57 was issued in July as well, and covered budgeted work performed by change orders. The original contract amount was \$1,629,837.95. Once we close out the contract, we will share final project costs.



### Missing Propeller Investigation

As you remember, in late 2024 the propeller fell off the No. 2 end outdrive, which was discovered upon departure from the Guemes Island slip on December 28, 2024, while in transit. The propeller was never located. We have filed an insurance claim to cover the cost of the propeller replacement, and the insurance company has been conducting an investigation as to the cause. The investigation is out of Skagit County's hands at this point.

### Additional maintenance period next spring

Please be advised the Ferry Division is planning to have a pier-side maintenance period in the spring of 2026. The work will not require the vessel to drydock. The U.S. Coast Guard is requiring the County to replace four small sections of steel on the vessel deck forward of the car deck. This was called out during the 2025 drydock; however, if done at that time, the ferry's return would have been delayed even further.

Given the vessel's age, there are times when annual maintenance periods are beneficial, and doing this in 2026 should reduce the amount of time out of service for the next required drydock in spring of 2027. We will also replace wiring connected to the new engines, which was identified as needing replacement earlier this summer.

