

Minutes of Pilot Commission  
Port Freeport  
December 14, 2023

A Special Meeting of the Pilot Commission of Port Freeport was held December 14, 2023, beginning at 3:32 PM at the Port Freeport Administration Building, 1100 Cherry Street, Freeport, Texas.

**This meeting agenda with the agenda packet is posted online at [www.portfreeport.com](http://www.portfreeport.com)**

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Commissioners present in person:

Mr. Ravi Singhanian, Commissioner  
Mr. Rob Giesecke, Vice Chairman  
Mr. Barbara Fratila, Secretary/Treasurer  
Mr. Rudy Santos, Commissioner  
Ms. Dan Croft, Commissioner  
Mr. Kim Kincannon, Commissioner

Staff Members present:

Ms. Phyllis Saathoff, Executive Director/CEO  
Mr. Rob Lowe, Chief Financial Officer  
Mr. Al Durel, Director of Operations  
Mr. Chris Hogan, Director of Protective Services  
Mr. Brandon Robertson, Network Systems Manager  
Ms. Missy Bevers, Executive Assistant  
Mr. Jesse Hibbetts, Operations Manager

Also, present:

Capt. Ross Coviello, Brazos Pilots Association  
Capt. Sean Kelly, Brazos Pilots Association

1. CONVENE OPEN SESSION in accordance with Texas Government Code Section 551.001, et. seq., to review and consider the following:
2. Roll Call.  
Commissioner Singhanian noted that all Commissioners were present in the Board Room.
3. Public Comment.

There were no comments from the public.

#### 4. Public Testimony.

There was no testimony from the public.

#### 5. Approval of minutes from the Special Meetings held April 27, 2023 and October 19, 2023.

A motion was made by Commissioner Giesecke to approve the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Croft with all Commissioners present voting in favor of the motion.

#### 6. Review Procedures for Pilot License Renewal.

Ms. Saathoff stated that she wanted to review the procedures for renewal, which is outlined in the Pilot and Pilotage Rules and Procedures that have been adopted noting there are very specific dates in the process. As a courtesy, staff has been giving the pilots whose commission will need to be renewed a six months' advance notice of their commission expiring. Ms. Saathoff then reviewed the following requirements Branch Pilots seeking renewal of his commission will need to present to the Pilot Board at least ninety days in advance of the expiring commission...

- Written letter seeking renewal;
- Copy of completed application to the Governor (the Governor commissions them);
- Proper bond as required by state law;
- Valid Merchant Mariner Medical Certificate. Optionally, the Pilot Board may require certification from a medical doctor not more than the 15th day before the date application is filed, certifying mental and physical health necessary to perform competently and safely the duties of a Branch Pilot;
- Copy of current United States Coast Guard Merchant Mariner Credentials with First Class Pilotage endorsement;
- Certificate or letter from a third party certifying the Pilot is in a random drug testing program and a certificate from a medical doctor certifying the date of the most recent drug test and the pilot's body on the date of the test was free of evidence of the presence of illegal drugs or chemicals. Optionally, the Pilot Board may require certification from a medical doctor not more than the 15th day before the date application is filed, certifying the applicant's body on the date of the certification is free of evidence of the presence of illegal drugs or chemicals;
- Letter from a presiding officer of the Brazos Pilots Association stating the Branch Pilot has piloted as at least 6 vessels in the past 6 months; and
- Oath of Office.

Ms. Saathoff stated the above packet of information is presented to the Pilot Commission for consideration after staff has reviewed the documents to ensure they are in proper order. She then reviewed the timeline noting that both Capt. Sean Kelly and Capt. Ross Coviello licenses expire June 11, 2024. Their application must be submitted on or before March 13, 2024. The Pilot Commission has a 30-day window to review the application and determine if the pilots meet the qualifications. If the Commission cannot make a recommendation to the Governor, they must

give notice by the 60<sup>th</sup> day prior to expiration of commission. If it passes April 12<sup>th</sup>, its assumed the Commission finds the application to be in order and support making a recommendation to the Governor.

Ms. Saathoff then officially notified Capt. Kelly and Capt. Coviello their commission will expire in June, and the Pilot Commission would like to have their application for renewal on or before March 13, 2024. She went on to express appreciation to the Pilots for all their great work in managing the growth, the vessels, the different types of vessels and what's coming to Port Freeport.

Capt. Coviello gave a brief introduction for he and Capt. Kelly for the new members of the Pilot Commission. Capt. Sean Kelly graduated from Texas A&M Maritime in Galveston with a degree in Bachelor of Science and Marine Transportation with unlimited third mate license . He worked on harbor tugs across the Texas coast, transitioned to deepwater drill ships and worked his way up to obtain his unlimited USCG Master Mariner License which means he's qualified to captain a vessel of any tonnage in the world and has worked across many business units with a diverse amount of crew members. Capt. Coviello graduated from U.S. Merchant Marine Academy with a third mate license and Bachelor of Science in Logistics and Intermodal Transportation. He earned his master's degree from the Naval War College while serving in the Navy Reserve. His career began through container vessels with Maersk Line Limited, heavy lift vessels working his way up to chief officer and obtained his unlimited USCG Master Mariner License. Additionally, he transitioned to deepwater drill ships. Capt. Coviello noted that he and Capt. Kelly are approaching six years piloting at Port Freeport with over 4,200 vessel transits each.

#### 7. Receive update from the Brazos Pilots Association.

Captain Coviello shared a YTD (as of November 2023) chart depicting vessel traffic across the different terminals with Vopak at 26%, Brazos Harbor 24%, Phillips 22%, LNG 15%, Seaway 11% and 2% BASF. He noted the Pilots' reporting year is January 1 – December 31. He shared an additional presentation of the same information in order to show trending across the different terminals with 25-26 vessel calls at Brazos Harbor, LNG averaging 17-18 vessels and Phillips in the low 20s. Seaway had two big months with 15 vessels but then reduced back to an average of 8-9 vessels while Vopak is trending down with 27 to 22 vessels over the last few months. Finally, Capt. Coviello shared a chart comparing projected totals between 2022 and 2023 with an increase in vessel calls of 1152 vs. 1118 in 2022. The Pilots anticipate the trend to continue upward with all the new development coming.

#### 9. Adjourn.

With no further business before the Commission, the meeting adjourned at 3:46 PM.