



The Village of Bald Head Island

April 6, 2021

Ms. Kimberley A. Campbell
Chief Clerk, North Carolina Utilities Commission
430 N. Salisbury Street
Raleigh, NC 27603

**Re: Letter of Support
Bald Head Island Transportation, Inc.'s Motion to Resume Full Ferry Capacity
in Docket No. A-41, Sub 19**

Dear Ms. Campbell:

As the Mayor of the Village of Bald Head, I am writing this letter in strong support of Bald Head Island Transportation's request to allow it to operate its ferries at full capacity and ask that it be filed in North Carolina Utilities Commission Docket No. A-41, Sub 19 and provided to the Commissioners.

I have served as Mayor for almost twelve years, and have lived on the island since 1995. I utilize the ferry services at least weekly, and sometimes daily, and am very familiar with its operations and the steps it is taking to protect public health and safety

The current capacity limit of 100, which has been in place since October, has created some challenges but has generally been sufficient -- until the past few weeks -- to transport passengers during our "off-season." As we approach the late spring and summer, however, it is becoming increasingly obvious that the ferry system will not be able to function with this limitation as the number of seasonal visitors to the island increases. With less leisure air travel, more North Carolina citizens are spending their vacation time closer to home -- on the North Carolina coast -- especially as the weather warms. This was obvious over the past two weeks as the influx of Spring Break and Easter Week travelers resulted in extremely long lines and hundreds of bumped passengers (some waiting as long as three hours to board the ferry).

As important as this vacation travel and tourism is to the island and its property owners, one of my main concerns continues to be the burdens that we are placing on the independent tradesmen and employees who make the island function and who travel to and from the island every day for their jobs. Among these employees are those who work for the Village of Bald Head -- water

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and sewer system operators, public safety officers, road maintenance employees, and our Town Hall staff. They are finding it harder and harder to get to and from their jobs on Bald Head Island.

I am writing to confirm some of the facts underlying the pending motion and for your consideration:

- Vacation rentals have never been as fully booked by this time of the year as they are this year. Late spring and summer have always been our “peak season,” and this year, we believe the “peak” will be higher than ever.
- Home construction is booming on the island. There are currently 28 homes under construction on the island. Renovations and repairs are also active with 39 minor permits and over 100 inspections being performed in the last reported month. Almost all of the building contractors, repairmen, and their crews use the ferry in the morning to arrive at the jobsite, and in the late afternoon to return home.
- Long wait-times and being bumped to the next scheduled trip (or the one after that, or even the one after that, if necessary) create very real hardships: not only inconvenience, but also lost productivity, missed appointments, etc., and, as I mentioned above, are particularly detrimental to those independent tradesmen and employees who live on the mainland but work on the island.
- Both BHIT and the Village of Bald Head are taking public health concerns seriously and managing the process as well as we can. BHIT is following the Governor’s policies and implementing the 3Ws: (1) wait, (2) wear, and (3) wash. (1) It is requiring physical distancing while passengers are queueing to embark and disembark. (2) It is requiring masks of all passengers. (3) Hand sanitizer stations are numerous and prevalent at the terminals and on the vessels.
- On March 30, BHIT and the Village hosted a combined “employee vaccination day” at the Deep Point Terminal in Southport. Brunswick County Health administered vaccinations to both BHIT and Village employees, and all who wish to be vaccinated are either now fully vaccinated or will have received their second shot by the end of April.
- Stated simply and directly: Going into the summer with a limit of only 100 passengers per trip, the ferry system cannot adequately serve the needs of the island. The quality of life of our residents, the commerce of our businesses, and the livelihood of those who work will be adversely and seriously affected if the ferries cannot operate at their full capacity.

Like every utility, the Bald Head ferry system has times of “peak” and “off-peak” usage. As you well know, it is imperative that utilities fully utilize their available resources to meet “peak” customer demand. Our peak season for visitors coming to the island is quickly approaching, and BHIT needs to be able to utilize the full capacity of its vessels to meet ridership needs.

I respectfully request that you grant the motion to restore the passenger capacity immediately so that the ferry system can better serve our extended community of residents, visitors and workers.

Thank you for your consideration.

With deepest respect,



J. Andrew Sayre

Mayor, Village of Bald Head Island

Cc: Mr. Michael Brown, Mayor Pro Tem (via hand delivery)
Mr. Scott Gardner, Councilor (via hand delivery)
Ms. Emily Hill, Councilor (via hand delivery)
Mr. Peter Quinn, Councilor (via hand delivery)
Mr. Chris McCall, Village Manager (via hand delivery)
Sam Watson, Esq., General Counsel to the NCUC (via email)