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Jennifer Rogers

From: Nancy Fisher-Allison <fisherallison.nancy@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, March 10, 2023 8:42 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Cc: Commissioners; guemesferry@gmail.com
Subject: Guemes Ferry comment from a Guardian ad Litem

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To: The Ferry Rate Decision Makers

I am writing to express dismay over the proposed rate changes for the Guemes Island Ferry. In many categories, the fares are expected to **double**.

If you look at recent U.S. Census data for the tract covering Guemes Island, you will note the following.

Median age: 62.8

Median Household Income: \$76,429

Poverty rate: 10.4%

I do not live in poverty, although I am mindful of my neighbors who do (and I know them). However, I am above the median age and, like most people in the “senior” category, **I live on a fixed income**.

On my fixed income, I have an important volunteer job that involves regular travel off the island – in fact, I serve Skagit County. **I am a Guardian ad Litem for children in dependency cases, providing essential information to commissioners and judges at Skagit County Superior Court.** In order to advocate for the best interests of dependent children, I travel around Skagit County and beyond to visit children, foster parents, relative caregivers, and birth parents – *all at my own expense*. Sadly, the proposed fare structure will make me think twice about taking on any cases in the future.

My household budget calculations always take ferry expenses into account, but I was not remotely prepared for your proposed changes.

The proposed fares are excessive and unprincipled. In the spirit of fairness and good conscience, please find a way to adjust them.

Respectfully,

Nancy Fisher-Allison
7404 Holiday Blvd
Guemes Island 98221
fisherallison.nancy@gmail.com

Jennifer Rogers

From: Nancy Lazara <nancylazara@yahoo.com>
Sent: Sunday, February 26, 2023 7:53 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: ferry increase

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My husband and I live on Guemes. We believe that the proposed increases are far too great! We are already paying a significant increase in property tax - the increase in ferry fare is too much on top of that. I could live with an increase of 1-20% but the rates proposed are untenable.

Thank you

Nancy Lazara Cushing
5344 Beechnut Tree Lane
206-972-8979

Jennifer Rogers

From: Naomi Sage <naomiweddle@yahoo.com>
Sent: Friday, February 24, 2023 7:53 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Fare increases

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15\$ raised to 25\$? People can barley afford what it is now. Thats an absurd increase, especially when times are hard enough right now as it it. I wish you would work with the islanders. This isn't sustainable for us, and your greed is showing.

Jennifer Rogers

From: Natalie Magnus <magnus.nata@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, February 23, 2023 9:37 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Guemes Ferry Proposal

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Good evening,

I am writing as a two-year resident of Guemes Island. I moved to the island less than two years ago and am 34 years old. I live alone and rent the home I am in. My dream is to save up enough money to buy a house on the island.

I am concerned about the ferry fare increase for a few reasons. I understand there would need to be an increase. I listened to the previous open meeting and understand the impact on the Road Fund. I am a Dean in higher education at Skagit Valley College who oversees a variety of million dollar budgets and have frequently had to make tough decisions to make ends meet.

Even with two advanced degrees and an administrative leadership position, it is still impossible for me to purchase a house within Skagit county at this point. I realize that is a separate issue from the ferry fares, but I want to ask a few questions to understand why these decisions were made and if certain things were taken into consideration.

I would appreciate hearing from someone to answer the questions in bold. I will not be able to be at the upcoming Feb 28 meeting as I work full-time. I recall from the last meeting that the goal was to have a meeting for comment on Guemes Island, and ideally at a time when all could try to participate. A weekday at 10am in Mount Vernon, even the location I work, is impossible and does not feel inclusive to those of us who are impacted the most from these decisions (working/not-retired adults).

1. **Has there been any consideration to adjusted fares based on residency?** For anyone who has spent time on Guemes Island it is easy to realize that those living here full-time are more likely to be in precarious financial situations. The island has been cheaper historically to invest in than in Anacortes. Of course there are people of all income brackets, but most of those in higher incomes use the island as a second home or an Airbnb/rental property. Many of us are trying to live and make ends meet. I ride the ferry every day to commute to Mount Vernon, so no matter what I am a regular payer into the ferry fare bucket. **Was there any thought to having a punch card for those of us who show full-time residency versus part-time or tourist/vacationers?**
2. I am also concerned about the fare for a bicycle. While I myself do not frequently use this mode of transportation on the ferry, a main concern everyone has about the ferry is the ability to "catch" the next one. Lines of cars and people extend far beyond capacity and people must wait to catch a boat later on. By creating more of a cost and barrier to walk-on/bicycle travel, we are disincentivizing that transportation which will result in more vehicle traffic. **What was the reasoning for adding an extra two dollars for a bicycle fare? Have the negative outcomes regarding congestion been considered in this proposal?**

Comparing these fares to the Coupeville-Port Townsend ferry is very eye opening. I am concerned that Skagit County will lose more than it can gain from this proposal in both where tourists decide to spend this time and

money, and by also pushing out those of us trying to live on the island and work full-time. With every increase the resulting gentrification is real, and while I understood fares would go up I was hopeful a more community-centered approach would be taken.

I look forward to your responses.

Best,
Natalie

Jennifer Rogers

From: Natalie Magnus <magnus.nata@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, March 10, 2023 5:36 PM
To: Ferry Comments; Commissioners
Cc: guemesferry@gmail.com
Subject: Ferry fare proposal feedback

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Greetings,

I am writing again to expand on the feedback I provided earlier. Previously I wrote regarding my own personal situation as an island resident and the impact this fare increase will have on my life and ability to live within my Skagit community that I call home. I want to expand on that, and also express additional concerns about this decision making process.

I rent on Guemes and have been saving up to try to purchase a home here. With housing prices in this area and now a proposed 80% increase in my annual ferry fare, you can see why I am frightened and discouraged.

I work full-time, Monday-Friday, in Mount Vernon as a Dean in higher education (Skagit Valley College). In anticipation of the fare increase, and especially after seeing the proposal, I have been speaking with my employer about trying to work remotely at minimum two days per week. I currently estimate \$1,200 in ferry fares per year specifically for work commuting (not personal/leisure). This proposal would increase my needed work ferry fare budget to \$1,920 per year. However, if my work plan is approved and the proposal passes (increase to \$8/adult fare) I will be able to reduce this to \$1,152 per year-- which is less than I am paying currently. This is just one example to show how the most frequent (every week day) and highest paying (standard adult fare) rider is already making life adjustments which will decrease overall revenue for the ferry due to such a drastic proposal that did not take into consideration the voices and lives that it would impact most.

As a Skagit county resident and public employee of the county, I am not impressed by the process that is being displayed. I know how important it is to involve the community and stakeholders most affected by policy and new decision making. This is what I have been trained to do as a government employee. Public Works is not following the current resolution R#20100050 that established a calendar of events for collaborating with the public at large to discuss proposed rate increases and upcoming issues with the ferry. Feedback has not been solicited in a manner that is accessible to those who are most deeply impacted.

I want to remind the county of how much revenue is earned by having Guemes as part of the community and county. Not only in direct tax dollars to the road fund from residents, but also as Guemes is a vacation destination to many. The island is booked with weddings all summer long, bands travel in to put on live events at the store, and travelers from near and far come to enjoy the island. In this, they stay in local Anacortes hotels, shop at local-owned businesses, eat at local eateries, and contribute to Skagit County in countless ways.

The disjointed process and proposal has the potential to decrease and gentrify what has been a money-making and community-building highlight of our county. I urge you to listen to each and every comment sent your way, and consider those of us who are being pushed out.

Best,
Natalie Magnus

Jennifer Rogers

From: Natasha Petroff <natasha.petroff@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 27, 2023 2:41 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Urging a broader perspective on Guemes ferry rate

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To whom it may concern,

My partner Jeff Brender and I have owned property on Guemes Island since 2018 and became full time residents last July. My appeal to the county today has to do with what I've observed over the last five years that I perceive is at risk – a historically inter-reliant community.

Families who have been on Guemes for generations are still living in many of the same ways and helping each other out so that everyone can make a life here. There may be shortcomings in the unwritten system, but it's functioning. An affordable ferry is one way that's possible.

On Guemes, people trade in more than neighbor favors but also clothing, food, elder care, pet care, farm care, rescues, fire abatement, children's needs, and occasionally shelter. Longtime residents welcome newcomers, especially the ones who pitch in, and even with a surge in expensive development, the island maintains a communalism that is grassroots at its core. I have no doubt that any drastic ferry rate hike would stress the system and require a level of inter-reliance among islanders that's not sustainable – and in the near term, some residents would be forced to leave.

I urge the county to consider a ferry rate structure that models not just after other county ferries but also programs like:

- Public initiatives statewide that seek to protect places of cultural heritage.
- Programs that factor in ability to pay such as state healthcare insurance.

Thinking outside the box, not just in numbers, may be that way to a workable solution.

Yours respectfully,

Natasha Petroff

Jennifer Rogers

From: Commissioners
Sent: Monday, February 27, 2023 8:43 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: FW: Fw: Guemes Ferry comments

From: Nigel Cushing <cushlaza1@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, February 25, 2023 5:50 AM
To: Commissioners <commissioners@co.skagit.wa.us>
Subject: Re: Fw: Guemes Ferry comments

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A full-time Guemes Island resident, I concur with many of the arguments made by Ms. Whitman (attached) and urge the commissioners to carefully consider the points she makes. Although an increase is justified by inflation, the economic impact of higher rates on seniors is especially important.

Nigel Cushing
5344 Beechnut Tree Lane
Guemes Island
509 885 7565

From: Kathy Whitman <kmdwhitman@msn.com>
Sent: Friday, February 24, 2023 8:10 PM
To: ferrycomments@co.skagit.wa.us <ferrycomments@co.skagit.wa.us>; commissioners@co.skagit.wa.us <commissioners@co.skagit.wa.us>
Subject: Guemes Ferry comments

To: Skagit County Commissioners and Ferry Comment webpage

Please reject the Guemes ferry rate increase proposal.

I am a full-time resident of Guemes Island. I have read the proposal and am concerned about several points:

1. An average 71% fare increase is excessive. This has far reaching impacts and cannot be approved.
 - a. I do not see where a drop in ridership is anticipated with the high fee.
 - b. The impact on regular commuters is only addressed with the punch pass and does not consider the individual financial impact.
 - c. Those on fixed incomes are also ignored with the proposal.
2. The review used a 5-year period but did not give adequate consideration to the impacts of COVID including the period where no revenue was collected and ridership pattern changes. The COVID impacts have provided false information patterns which were not addressed.
3. The new ferry promises decreased cost of operation which is not reflected in the document.

Jennifer Rogers

From: Pat Richley-Erickson <dearmyrtle@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, March 12, 2023 5:25 PM
To: Ferry Comments; comissionars@co.skagit.wa.us; guemesferry@gmail.com; cweeks@goanacortes.com; bazola@goanacortes.com; news@skagitpublishing.com
Cc: guemes.karen@gmail.com
Subject: GUEMES FERRY: 143% increase on senior passengers?

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As a permanent, year-round, land owner resident of Guemes Island, I must report the negative impact the proposed ferry rate increase will have on our household if passed. My husband has just completed chemo weekly and radiation week-daily for the past three months, with attendant hospital stays before and after. When he begins the next round of treatments, the costs for ferry trips will effectively move us off the island.

25 Senior Passenger non-peak crossings **up by 97.8%** (from \$46 to \$91)
25 Senior Passenger peak crossings **up by 143%** (from \$46 to \$112)
20 Senior/Disabled driver, under 22 non-peak **up 76.3%** (from \$156 ro \$275)
20 Senior/Disabled driver, under 22 peak **up 109%** (from \$156 ro 326)
Figures based on <https://www.skagitcounty.net/PublicWorksFerry/Documents/Fareproposal.pdf>

This is at odds with a 71% ferry rate increase reported in the media.

In the same year, when our home's **real estate taxes have doubled**, this exorbitant ferry rate increase is untenable to all but the very wealthy.

Our real estate taxes include funds for Skagit County roads, but there is no accounting ensuring Guemes Island roads will benefit from our taxes. The Guemes Ferry is our road to the rest of the world.

You can bet I'll be attending the Commissioners Work Session: Tuesday, March 14th, 2023 at 2:30 p.m. via Zoom using the following link: <https://bit.ly/SkagitBoCCMtg>

Pat Richley
5458 W Shore Road
(Guemes Island)
Anacortes, WA 98221

Jennifer Rogers

From: Pat Richley-Erickson <dearmyrtle@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, March 12, 2023 5:57 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Fwd: Guemes FERRY: Please slow down discussion process

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----- Forwarded message -----

From: Pat Richley-Erickson <dearmyrtle@gmail.com>
Date: Sun, Mar 12, 2023 at 5:56 PM
Subject: Guemes FERRY: Please slow down discussion process
To: <commissioners@co.skagit.wa.us>, <guemesferry@gmail.com>, <cweeks@goanacortes.com>, <news@skagitpublishing.com>, <guemes.karen@gmail.com>, <ferrycomments@gmail.com>, Gordon Erickson <glerickson1@gmail.com>

Since the 2023 Public Works budget has already been adopted, without the proposed ferry increases. So why the rush to raise ferry fees by 1 April 2023?

I am a registered voter, full-time, resident homeowner living on Guemes Island, and am following the county's interactions with Guemes Island residents closely.

Pat Richley 5458 West Shore Road (Guemes Island)
Anacortes, WA 98221

Jennifer Rogers

From: Commissioners
Sent: Monday, March 13, 2023 8:55 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: FW: GUEMES FERRY: 143% increase on senior passengers?

From: Pat Richley-Erickson <dearmyrtle@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, March 12, 2023 5:48 PM
To: Commissioners <commissioners@co.skagit.wa.us>
Subject: Fwd: GUEMES FERRY: 143% increase on senior passengers?

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----- Forwarded message -----

From: Pat Richley-Erickson <dearmyrtle@gmail.com>
Date: Sun, Mar 12, 2023 at 5:24 PM
Subject: GUEMES FERRY: 143% increase on senior passengers?
To: <ferrycomments@co.skagit.wa.us>, <comissionars@co.skagit.wa.us>, guemesferry@gmail.com
<guemesferry@gmail.com>, <cweeks@goanacortes.com>, <bazola@goanacortes.com>, <news@skagitpublishing.com>
Cc: <guemes.karen@gmail.com>

As a permanent, year-round, land owner resident of Guemes Island, I must report the negative impact the proposed ferry rate increase will have on our household if passed. My husband has just completed chemo weekly and radiation week-daily for the past three months, with attendant hospital stays before and after. When he begins the next round of treatments, the costs for ferry trips will effectively move us off the island.

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Pat Richley
5458 W Shore Road
(Guemes Island)
Anacortes, WA 98221

Jennifer Rogers

From: PATRICIA A STOWELL <pastowell@mac.com>
Sent: Sunday, March 26, 2023 11:53 AM
To: Ferry Comments; Commissioners
Subject: GUEMES ISLAND FERRY RATE INCREASE PROPOSAL

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*To: Skagit County Commissioners: Ron Wesen, Lisa Janicki, Peter Browning
Public Works Director/County Engineer: Grace Kane P.E.
Ferry Operations Division Manager: Captain Rachel Rowe
1800 Continental Place
Mount Vernon, WA. 98273*

*Re: SKAGIT COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS FERRY DIVISION
2023 GUEMES ISLAND FERRY FARE INCREASE*

*From: Patricia A. Stowell
5824 Guemes Island Rd.
Anacortes Wa. 98221*

Dear Commissioners, Director, and Captain:

I am a senior residing on Guemes Island. My family would be considered middle class and we live on a tight budget. Living on Guemes Island has increased my quality of life overall, but the ferry rate increase would definitely decrease it.

I need to take the Guemes ferry off the island for medical appointments 1-3 times per week to deal with chronic health issues - this is sometimes in addition to other household trips for work, groceries, etc. If the ferry rate increases at your proposed rate, it would have a very negative impact on me and my husband. I would likely decrease my visits to healthcare providers due to the steep increase you propose, and I very much worry that my health would suffer and deteriorate. Paying the higher rates you propose would mean tightening our budget for food & medication as well.

I would need to decrease my ridership by approximately 30-50%.

I know many other islanders who are in similar situations as myself and this is causing them much stress and hardship.

I understand the need to increase fares periodically by 10-20% (which would be in line with other WA county ferry rate increases), but your proposed rate increase is unreasonable and unrealistic.

The fare proposal process needs to stop now.

There needs to be a transparent public process for the development of the fare increase proposal.

The methodology and process used to develop the fare increase proposal is not using the current and best available data.

Please consider giving more time to the process so that it reflects the correct data and includes the voices of Guemes Island residents.

An increase of over 113% is **UNACCEPTABLE**.

- The average percent rate increase across all fare classes is over 113%, meaning most of the fare more than double.
- Average % rate increase by rate class:
 - Adults: 80%
 - Senior/Disabled/Youth: 105%
 - Oversized vehicles: 148%
- Many of these groups impacted will face financial hardships that impact or threaten their ability to earn a living and live on Guemes.
- The burden of the fare increases target frequent riders (multi trip card purchases), families, seniors, disabled, and youth.
- These are the people that pay the steepest price. This fare increase targets the most vulnerable of the population that also happen to be its beating heart.
- Some households will be impacted to the point that they will no longer be able to live on Guemes.

Public Works's budget shortfall for Fonk Road repairs are not an acceptable reason to cap the Road Fund contribution.

- It is Public Works responsibility to develop a maintenance and capital project plan and budget for all projects in unincorporated Skagit County
- Skagit County applied for FEMA funds in November 2022 for Fonk Road repairs
- The fact that Public Works has not adequately planned for the maintenance of Fonk Road, is not a sound reason for capping Road Fund contributions to the ferry.
 - Though Grace Kane, Public Works Director, has stated that this is one of the drivers for the fare increase.
 - The other being "that island residents need to pay their share toward ferry operations"

Guemes property tax payers will contribute more than the proposed cap of \$750,000 to the Road Fund in 2023

- Guemes residents will contribute \$787,521 to the Road Fund for 2023, through property taxes, based on a total Guemes Island property valuation of \$605,785,292 for 2023. Capping the use of the Road Fund contribution at \$750,000 annually is less than what Guemes residents are contributing.
- Guemes residents will also contribute \$595,609 to the general Skagit County fund in 2023.
- We are potentially contributing more than other areas of the county who are benefiting from Public Works road improvements

Thank you for your kind consideration.

Sincerely,

Patricia A. Stowell

Jennifer Rogers

From: Patricia Waller <patsiwaller@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 9, 2023 2:00 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Guemes Island ferry Rate Proposal

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To: Skagit County Commissioners
Re: Proposed Guemes Island Ferry Rate Proposal
From: Patricia Waller
4930 West Shore Rd
Anacortes 98221

Dear Commissioners:

I will keep my comments short because I know you have heard from many others more informed and eloquent than I. I believe the proposed ferry rate hike is ill-advised at this stage and in this manner for the following reasons.

1. I have rarely seen such a large, single rate hike at any one time for any service anywhere. It seems that if a rate hike of this magnitude is truly necessary, it should come with joint meetings and discussions and incremental raises. Since the proposed rate will have severe effects for many of the islanders it needs to be handled in a more egalitarian manner. Incremental stair-stepped raises over a year or two is one possibility.
2. In the past several years Guemes has become a holiday, entertainment gathering spot. This has come about due to increased vacation rentals and increased music events being sponsored. I strongly believe that ISLAND FULL-TIME residents should have a different/lower ferry rate than the non-residential vacationers who use up ferry space and facilities. The main purpose of the ferry is to provide transportation for island RESIDENTS.
3. Guemes Island property taxes have risen substantially. We pay our fair share of county expenses and shouldn't be penalized for living on an island.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Patricia Waller

Sent from my iPad

Jennifer Rogers

From: PATRICK BRENNAN <redhook65@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, June 8, 2023 7:01 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Ferry

#####

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It is my opinion that as property taxes constantly rise on the island that people that live year round and property owners should have a fixed rate and visitors a separate rate And this permanent rate could be adjusted accordingly every 2 years as inflation costs rise

Sent from my iPhone

Jennifer Rogers

From: Patrick Dougherty <prdougherty@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, March 26, 2023 12:50 PM
To: Commissioners; Ferry Comments
Subject: 2023 GUEMES ISLAND FERRY FARE INCREASE

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*To: Skagit County Commissioners: Ron Wesen, Lisa Janicki, Peter Browning
Public Works Director/County Engineer: Grace Kane P.E.
Ferry Operations Division Manager: Captain Rachel Rowe
1800 Continental Place
Mount Vernon, WA. 98273*

*Re: SKAGIT COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS FERRY DIVISION
2023 GUEMES ISLAND FERRY FARE INCREASE*

*From: Patrick Dougherty
5824 Guemes Island Rd.
Anacortes Wa. 98221*

Dear Commissioners, Director, and Captain:

My wife is a senior, and I am a soon-to-be senior, residing on Guemes Island. Our family would be considered middle class and we live on a tight budget. Living on Guemes Island adds to our quality of life overall, but the proposed ferry rate increase would definitely have a negative impact on it.

My wife takes the Guemes ferry off the island for medical appointments 1-3 times per week to deal with chronic health issues - this is sometimes in addition to other household trips for work, groceries, etc. If the ferry rate increases at your proposed rate, it would have a very negative impact on me and my wife. She would likely decrease her visits to healthcare providers due to the steep increase you propose, and I very much worry that her health would suffer and deteriorate. Paying the higher rates you propose would mean tightening our budget for food & medication as well. **We would need to decrease our ridership by approximately 30-50%.**

Also, a fare increase will potentially add to the cost of goods and services we need access to; such as propane delivery to heat our home or other required maintenance to maintain our residence.

We know many other islanders who are in similar situations as us and this is causing them much stress and hardship. We certainly understand the need to increase fares periodically by 10-20% (which would be in line with other WA county ferry rate increases), but your proposed rate increase is unreasonable and unrealistic.

Please stop the current fare process now

- Taking the time to develop a clear and transparent set of alternatives will ensure that the plan is thorough and considers engagement of the community and all stakeholders. We are looking for a plan that is sustainable and equitable now and into the future.
- 2023 Public Works budget has already been adopted, without the proposed ferry increases, so there is adequate funds to operate the ferry in 2023

- This provides time to develop a sound methodology, adequately engage all stakeholders, and do a fair and equitable public process

There needs to be a transparent public process for the development of the fare increase proposal.

- Up to this point, the process has involved inconsistent communication and a lack of publicly available information about the development of the proposal and public engagement.
- Public Works is not following the current resolution R#20100050 that established a calendar of events for collaborating with the public at large to discuss proposed rate increases and upcoming issues with the ferry.

The methodology and process used to develop the fare increase proposal is not using the current and best available data.

- This is inaccurate, short-sighted, and not a sustainable method for avoiding a similar crisis situation in the future.
- The 2023 proposal states the ferry Operations and Maintenance (O&M) budget is \$3,169,000, which is slightly higher than the highest O&M total since the current fare methodology was adopted in 2010, which was \$3,144,332 during the last haulout. It appears we are basing the fare model on an off nominal yearly cost.

Guemes property tax payers will contribute more than the proposed cap of \$750,000 to the Road Fund in 2023

- Guemes residents will contribute \$787,521 to the Road Fund for 2023, through property taxes, based on a total Guemes Island property valuation of \$605,785,292 for 2023. Capping the use of the Road Fund contribution at \$750,000 annually is less than what Guemes residents are contributing.
- Guemes residents will also contribute \$595,609 to the general Skagit County fund in 2023.
- We are potentially contributing more than other areas of the county who are benefiting from Public Works road improvements

The Guemes Ferry's Road Fund Contribution percentage is less than the Whatcom and Pierce County ferry's road fund contributions.

- Public Works needs to look at all available best management practices for developing the annual O&M budget
- Whatcom and Pierce County ferries have a greater portion of their county road fund contributing to their ferry operations
 - Guemes' current Road Fund contribution to the annual operations budget: 35%
 - Whatcom current Road Fund contribution to the annual operating budget: 45%
 - Pierce county current Road Fund contribution to the annual operating budget: 45%

Thank you for your kind consideration.

Sincerely,
Patrick Dougherty

4440 South Shore Drive
Anacortes, WA 98221

February 27, 2023

Ron Wesen, Skagit County Commissioner
Peter Browning, Skagit County Commissioner
Lisa Janiki, Skagit County Commissioner
1800 Continental Place, Suite 100
Mount Vernon, WA 98273

RE: Proposed Guemes Island Ferry Fare Increases

Dear County Commissioners:

We are writing to express our concern about the proposed 71% increase in fares for the Guemes Island Ferry. We have lived on the island since 1998 and been full time residents since 2019. We value and appreciate the ferry, and its crew.

As frequent ferry passengers, we are aware of how many island residents ride the ferry daily to get to and from their jobs, and/or shop in Anacortes, Mount Vernon, and other locations in Skagit County.

The Ferry is the only way to get to and from the island; residents can't choose an option that costs less. The structure of the fare increases currently under consideration create the risk of making island residency too expensive for working families who commute, and those of more limited means who must run errands on the mainland. The island community should continue to be a place where people of all income levels can make their home.

We would encourage the County to look for other solutions. At the very least, it needs to better understand the problem it is trying to solve. And a better understanding of its budget.

The Skagit Valley Herald reported "*This year, the county expects to send \$1.4 million in road fund revenue — about 10% of the road fund's budget — to subsidize the costs of running the ferry, said Rachel Rowe, who heads the county's ferry division.*" Ms. Rowe appears to be in error, by a wide margin. The road fund budget in 2023 is \$32,808,795. \$1.4 million is slightly more than 4% of the roads budget.

The Herald article also reports that County Public Works Director Grace Kane said the diversion of funds from the ferry this "*would allow her to reallocate about \$862,000 a year from the ferry to maintenance and improvements to the county's 850 miles of roads. This could help generate funding to fix a severely damaged culvert on Fonk Road, she said at a meeting Thursday introducing the plan to county officials ahead of a public meeting next week.*"

If additional funding was needed for projects like this, why did the County previously forgo tax revenue that could have funded them? The County's budget memo says: "*The Road Fund budget includes revenue of \$1,469,562 that was not levied in prior years and could have been.*" Perhaps if

the County had deployed all of the funding it had available, other road priorities would have been completed years ago.

According to the county budget posted [online](#), the 2022 road fund expense budget as modified was \$36,238,546. The 2023 preliminary expense budget for roads is \$4 million less than the budget in 2022. Perhaps if this year's budget matched last year's, there would be funding both to maintain the commitment to the Guemes Island community, and fund other County road priorities.

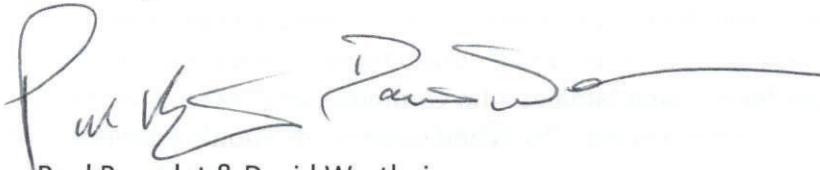
Before approving a massive fare increase, we would request that the County explore all of the following options:

- Alternative fare structures that significantly reduce costs for working families, and those of more limited means;
- Reduce operating costs;
- Increase property taxes to more adequately fund all County road priorities, including the ferry operations, and have all County residents share the burden.

Taking these steps would help to ensure that the island remains affordable and accessible to everyone, including those who have lived here for many years and would find increased fares present them with an undue financial hardship.

Thank you for considering this request, and these alternatives to blanket increases to the fares for the Guemes Island Ferry.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signatures of Paul Beudet and David Wertheimer. The signature on the left is 'Paul Beudet' and the signature on the right is 'David Wertheimer'.

Paul Beudet & David Wertheimer

Cc: Grace Kane, Skagit County Director of Public Works
Rachel Rowe, Ferry Operations Division Manager, Department of Public Works

Jennifer Rogers

From: Commissioners
Sent: Thursday, March 9, 2023 10:15 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: FW: Guemes Ferry fares and revenue

-----Original Message-----

From: Paul Moorehead <moorehead@mailworks.org>
Sent: Tuesday, February 28, 2023 8:33 AM
To: Commissioners <commissioners@co.skagit.wa.us>
Subject: Guemes Ferry fares and revenue

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Dear Commissioners,

As a long term Guemes Island resident and property owner I am writing you to request that you seek other means, than increase in ferry fares, for raising revenue to pay for public works projects for the island.

I suggest, if possible, to create a distinct short-term rental taxing district of Guemes. These types of businesses are part of the growing problem of non-residents utilizing the ferry and occupying dwellings that are removed from the stock of housing that might be available to longer term residents of the island.

Thank you for this consideration.

Sincerely,
Paul Moorehead
Guemes Island

Jennifer Rogers

From: Penelope Hewitt <penny.hewitt@icloud.com>
Sent: Friday, June 16, 2023 1:53 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Fare increases

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Raising the guemes ferry fees will accelerate an already shifting culture to the wealthiest. The charm of this island is that it is affordable for those living here... increasing the ferry fee will not accomplish your goal- but you already know that. Please don't do this. We're literally begging you.

Penelope Hewitt
6042 Guemes Island rd.

Sent from my iPhone

Jennifer Rogers

From: Commissioners
Sent: Wednesday, May 17, 2023 1:03 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: FW: Guemes Island rate increase

From: Penni Sturgill <pennisturgill@outlook.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 17, 2023 12:54 PM
To: Commissioners <commissioners@co.skagit.wa.us>
Cc: Guemes Island Ferry Committee <guemesferry@gmail.com>
Subject: FW: Guemes Island rate increase

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From: Penni Sturgill
Sent: Wednesday, May 17, 2023 12:52 PM
To: rwesens@co.skagit.wa.us; ljaniki@co.skagit.wa.us; pbroning@co.skagit.wa.us
Cc: Guemes Island Ferry Committee <guemesferry@gmail.com>
Subject: Guemes Island rate increase

Skagit County Commissioners

I strongly object to the sizeable rate increases you are demanding from Guemes Islanders over the next 5 years.

I would like to speak to our tax dollar contributions that we do not see or have benefit of.

June 2022, at midnight we had a young man appear at our front door drunk, high and very disoriented. He was so confused and frankly lost; he not only came to our door once but twice within about 10 minutes. We answered the door to this highly dysfunctional person who wanted to find his way home. He could not provide us with a name or phone number to assist him in locating his residence or family. After attempting to make three failed calls to individuals he claimed were his family he walked off into the night.

I called 911 to report this person's questionable activity. An hour later I received a return call from the Sheriff. He asked me to call my neighbors and make them aware of this person who was wondering around and call him back if the person returned. He then shared that before he could come to GI, he would have to call his supervisor and get permission to call out the Ferry before he could come over.

The following day I was able to find out who this person was and where he belongs.

This is only one of many occasions that has occurred where our police and fire protection tax dollars are not available to us as residents.

Perhaps we should be afforded some latitudes on these overbearing rate increases since our tax dollars contribute to the benefit of all residents within Skagit County but us....

Penni Sturgill
206-755-0395

Jennifer Rogers

From: Commissioners
Sent: Monday, May 22, 2023 2:47 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: FW: Respect for the Guemes Island Ferry Committee....

Linda Hammons, CMC, Clerk of the Board
Skagit County Commissioners' Administrative Building
1800 Continental Place, Suite 100 | Mount Vernon, WA 98273
Direct (360) 416-1310 | Commissioners' Office 360.416.1300 | E-mail: lindah@co.skagit.wa.us

From: Penni Sturgill <pennisturgill@outlook.com>
Sent: Monday, May 22, 2023 12:41 PM
To: Commissioners <commissioners@co.skagit.wa.us>
Cc: Guemes Island Ferry Committee <guemesferry@gmail.com>
Subject: Respect for the Guemes Island Ferry Committee....

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My husband and I attended the April 17th, 2023, Commissioner's meeting that was open to the public, for viewing only. The purposed fare rates were presented and reviewed among staff and Skagit County Commissioners. As the discussion was close to wrapping up Ms. Kane decided that it was of value to share her opinion about the GIFC. She states that she was not sure this committee was legitimate and not sure they were elected to represent islanders.

If Ms. Kane felt that way why has that been allowed to work with this prevailing attitude while working on this project all this time? We are the stake holders and are due respect.

I have to ask why did Rachel Rowe who has worked to the committee for years not address this lack of knowledge and provide the committee and islanders with the acknowledgement and respect they are due? Do you think you have the right to ignore these mis-statements that only create ill will, anger, and discord?

SHAME ON YOU!!!

I would like to thank Ron Weson for objecting to the tacky and nasty comments directed at the Ferry Committee.

Perhaps it's time for a little reflection about the residents of Skagit County that pay your wages and give us the respect we are due.

I believe that Ms. Kane owes the Ferry Committee a written apology for her inappropriate comments. I would also like to request that you to make measurable efforts to work with the Ferry Committee on the purposed Rate Increases now and in the future.

Penni Sturgill
206-755-0395

Jennifer Rogers

From: Commissioners
Sent: Monday, May 22, 2023 5:44 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: FW: Guemes Island Rate Increase

From: Penni Sturgill <pennisturgill@outlook.com>
Sent: Monday, May 22, 2023 3:19 PM
To: Commissioners <commissioners@co.skagit.wa.us>
Cc: Guemes Island Ferry Committee <guemesferry@gmail.com>
Subject: Guemes Island Rate Increase

CAUTION: This email originated from an external email address. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender, you are expecting this email and attachments, and you know the content is safe.

After reviewing the proposed rate increases for the Guemes Island Ferry I must strongly object on several issues and rate categories.

- You have added an additional rate category of 14 ft. vehicles or less.
This has little to no value and directly goes against one of your concerns, having the purser having more ticket sales and hands on at the line.
- You have created another category for Bike Riders, as a resident if we ride our bikes over to Anacortes on busy summer nights, we are able to use our passenger punch cards.
Under your proposed rate increase we can't use our punch cards, you are requiring us to purchase a per use ticket, again requiring more interaction with the purser.
- You have charged Guemes Island Fare Box with Thousands of dollars that once charged left the islanders unable to meet the fare box goals that you set.
How can Insurance fees or cost that have been charged to the Fair Box amount to \$500,000.00 in one year?
Where is the transparency? What are you hiding... Is this charge for insurance the total cost for all of Skagit County charged against the Fair Box?
- Why is the KPFF's Fee coming from the Fair Box for \$111,000.00 – All they have done was follow the fares charged by the WA. State Ferry System.
Why wasn't the fee prorated over 5 years since you are proposing a rate increase over five years. The have provided nothing original or creative.
- I find it interesting the KPFF thinks that mirroring the WA. State Ferry system is acceptable.
We are a small island of about 900 homes, many that are only here on a seasonal basis. WE ARE NOT equal to the size and scale of the islands within WA. We have a 6-minute ride covering a 1 mile each way. How can this be comparable to islands that offer a host of camping, RV's sites, hotels, restaurants, public and private marinas, and private airstrips for travel options. We do not have the draw for many of vacationing options that the islands provide. STOP TREATING us like we are comparable.

- Skagit County did significant work on Eden's Road. During this work you used the Ferry for days and into the evening with hundreds of trips with equipment and gravel.
Did you compensate other departments within the County to provide services needed to complete this work? If so, did you contribute to the Fair Box for the Ferry it seems to me you should have contributed a credit for the 65% Fair Box used and taken away from paying customers.
You the County controlled to expense, timeline, and outcome of this project we as islanders did not have a say in the expense or outcome.

If you look at the rates you have proposed, you are directly impacting the lifestyle and services provided by nearly anyone who services the island.
The fees for oversized vehicles and trucks or trailers in not palatable for anyone.

Frontier Lumber
Waste Management
Ziplay Fiber & San Juan Cable
Fedex & Third-party delivery Companies
Lowe's & Home Depot
Septic Pump Trucks
Concrete Trucks

Islanders will not be able incur the additional service fees from all these oversized delivery vehicles to cover the Ferry Fees.
Many of these service providers are on Guemes Island on a weekly basis.

With these exorbitant fees life on Guemes Island will no longer be an option to many would have a fixed income or an abundance of disposable funds.
I see two scenarios for our future:

Property prices and home values will sink due to burden-some costs, or we will become an island of non-occupied mega wealth property homeowners.
You will lose many who are multi-generational families and their business.
We will no longer have any agricultural businesses on the Island since it will be cost prohibitive.
You will lose many veterans who want to live a simple quite life.
You will lose several people who are aging out of with limited funds.
You will lose the guests who visit and stay at the resort that bring their boats for crabbing and fishing.
You will lose the property owners that have vacation properties within Holiday Hideaway that come over with RV's, motorhomes, trailers, and boats.

If the Ferry were considered a part of the roads system in Skagit County and not another vehicle for taxation, the island will survive and adjust. With the purposed rate increases over the next five years you will cause considerable harm to those who current have a stake in ownership on the island.

Penni Sturgill
206-755-0395

Jennifer Rogers

From: Peter Castle <peter_castle@hotmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, March 12, 2023 9:49 PM
To: Ferry Comments; Commissioners
Cc: guemesferry@gmail.com
Subject: Guemes Island Ferry Increase

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To: Skagit County Commissioners: Ron Wesen, Lisa Janicki, Peter Browning
Public Works Director/County Engineer; Grace Kane P.E.
Ferry Operations Division Manager: Captain Rachel Rowe
1800 Continental Place
Mount Vernon, WA 98273

Re: Skagit County Public Works Ferry Division
2023 Guemes Island Ferry Fare Increase

From: Peter Castle
7922 Saddlebag Lane
Anacortes, WA 98221

Dear Commissioners, Director, and Captain:

Property taxes on Guemes Island have increased dramatically, but with all of this new revenue you state you are unable to continue the funding percentage formula that has worked for all these past years. In taking into account all of the categories of tax distribution, Guemes is a solid Net Positive tax revenue generator for the county. This larger perspective must be taken into account in any fare rate decisions. It also negates the premise that the rest of the county is subsidizing our island,... Skagit's Island. On the whole, the opposite can be said to be true. I will gladly support all of the other county services, but island residents should not be penalized in the process.

Personally, our property taxes have doubled since moving here in 2019, now requiring an additional \$6000 a year. Our current ferry rate costs us \$2000 a year. Under the proposal they would at the least double, the result being our sending the county an extra \$8000. per year since our recent arrival. We will certainly have to alter our trips and spending as a result. It will require ordering very many products on-line for delivery as opposed to patronizing local businesses as has been our preference. Also many fewer trips to support and enjoy the restaurants of Anacortes. As you know, dollars spent locally tend to circulate many times through our own local communities.

Some points,..

- There are approximately 34 school age children currently on the island. The proposed rate increases will force some of these families off the island. We are already contributing far more resources to the schools than the island population consumes. You're welcome.
- Guemes has a very low crime rate and uses significantly fewer county resources for sheriff patrols, incident calls, court resources and jail accommodations than the overall county population.

- The new rate structure for longer vehicles will likely create a situation such that farming or livestock operations are no longer viable on the island. You might ask some county farmers off the island how much these new higher rates would affect their operations whenever longer vehicles or equipment rolled on or off their property.

I suggest an idea - an experiment to familiarize yourself with constituent concerns. Every time you go to a restaurant, out for groceries, off to work, attend a medical appointment, take the kids to a game or outing, put your proposed fee in a cash box - every time, real money, all passenger fees included, no money to be ever taken out of the box. If you are taking that trailer full of junk to the transfer station, have some hundred dollar bills at hand for the occasion. Taking the fishing boat out for a day of crabbing? Have a few hundreds at the ready for that as well. Appliance delivery? Hay delivery? Horse trailer? Have a stack of hundred dollar bills at hand for each of those too. Perhaps tell your children that they can no longer play sports or participate in after-school activities as the trips are too costly. Live with the consequences. Do this for at least a year, then consider your rate increases. You are asking us to live with this without end.

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows

Jennifer Rogers

From: Philip Burton <philipguyburton@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 29, 2023 8:27 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Guemes Ferry Fare Increase 2023 Comments From Philip Burton

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Guemes Ferry Fare Increase 2023 Comments
From Philip Burton

The suggestion that rates should be raised 70 to 100% is ridiculous and unacceptable and should be immediately rejected.

The ferry crew is working without a contract. No rate increase should be considered until they have a contract. That way we know what that expense will be.

The primary goal of government is to provide public safety and infrastructure.
The infrastructure of the ferry facilitates commerce from all over the county that gets delivered/ used on Guemes.
The ferry is an aqua road. Public transit does not pay for itself. It is funded by tax dollars.
The road fund should certainly contribute substantially to ferry budget.
The target of fares recovering 65% is the upper limit and should be lowered to 45%.
I think it was misstated that the \$1.4m the road fund contributes is 10% of entire road fund budget. Some research showed that the road fund is \$32m. If the road fund was only \$14m then it is too low to maintain the 800+ miles of road in the county.
Other sources of ferry funding could and should be explored.

A modest increase of 10-15% is understandable, outside increase 20%.
Then no more increases for 5 years.

We should be careful to keep fares reasonable to protect economic diversity of the island and visitors.

The proposed rate increase would be especially hard on the senior population of the island.

Making the fares too high could hurt the real-estate market of Guemes.

Making the fares too high will alter peoples ridership pattern and the county could easily end up loosing fare box revenue.

The consultants proposal of fares overcomplicates the fare types. The current fare types should be retained. Examples of where the proposal got it wrong are: commuter/punchcard rates should be same all year, Walk on punch card should include bicycle for commuters - cash ticket can be higher for the summer visitors, over length vehicles should continue to be measured in 5' increments, the proposed 14' car length is ridiculous and would only apply to a small % of cars on the road. Just keep the same fare categories.
The expense of the consultant was a waste of dollars. This all could have been done in house and with the help of the community/volunteers.

There is an overarching feeling or sentiment here that Guemes is some how apart from the county. We are part of the county of course. We contribute substantially to the real estate tax revenue for the county. We work and shop throughout the county. We should all work together on issues like this with mutual respect and admiration - in a spirit of community. We are your customers and your employer. We pay your salary. We admire and respect the ferry crew and the county infrastructure that carries us back and forth to work and home. The ridership deserves the same respect.

I own and operate Burton Jewelers that has been in Anacortes since 1930. I have visited Guemes all my life and bought my first property there 1990-93. I lived there part time until my wife and I built a house in 2009-2012 and have since live on Guemes full time. We commute to work 5-6 days a week. I welcome any feedback / discussion with county commissioners and county staff on this issue. I have worked in Anacortes local government and non profit groups since 1988. I was on the ferry study group in 2003-2004 that also studied the fare structure and schedule. I still have the thick book that was generated by the consultant and the group at that time.

Jennifer Rogers

From: Ralph Mendershausen <ralphr@sti.net>
Sent: Thursday, June 8, 2023 5:49 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Please do consider the Guemes fare hike impacts on social diversity and environment

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Ralph Mendershausen
Lewis Lane
Guemes Island

Dear Commissioners,

My wife and I have just committed to being full time homeowners on this island.
We are not impressed with your plans for our future.

We believe the fare schedule needs careful reexamination unless it is indifferent to you that you are radically accelerating gentrification of an island which is currently exceptional for lack of just that, relative to the larger San Juan islands.

You are doing this in a way that minimizes public information and participation while it maximizes consultant control. Taxation without representation is alive and well on Guemes. We are scared enough of the assessor after the last yikes-hikes, but it turns out Public Works is actually worse . We do get to appeal the Assessor’s enthusiasms, but where is the appeal process in the next five years of ferry fees? There is to be less transparency going forward, and that is not fair when it comes to fees or taxes.

We do look forward to the electric ferry! You should- at the very least - encourage island residents to bike on. Residents on bikes should pay the same fee rate as walk-ons pay. Let non-resident cyclists pay the surcharge. Easy to do!

For a diverse and healthy Guemes Island.

Ralph Mendershausen

Sent

Jennifer Rogers

From: Becca Bonno <rcbonno@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, March 10, 2023 4:30 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Cc: Commissioners
Subject: Ferry Rate Increases for Rural and agricultural Community of Guemes Island

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Dear Commissioners Wesen, Browning, Janicki,

My name is Rebecca Bonno and my husband is Sam Bonno. I grew up on Guemes Island during the 70's-90 's. My great Grandfather arrived in the early 1900s as a camp logger. He set roots and farmed his land and delivered coal with his beloved horses.

My grandfather and Grandmother Shoultz continued the tradition of farming cattle and hay until he was 93 years old. My family, my husband, and 3 sons are continuing this legacy as best we can along with our regular jobs. The recent proposals for rates on vehicles and trailers pose a huge impact on farmers and anyone who makes their livelihood with a larger vehicle or trailer. As well as anyone needing to upkeep their property or improve it , maintaining their roads or their home. I know for ourselves we have several tons of hog fuel or arborist mulch to maintain certain areas for the cattle. We need supplies for the haying season as well as throughout the year to keep them healthy and managed. We sell hay and can't imagine anyone coming to the island to purchase hay at the increased rates. It is hard enough to make profits farming in the current situation.

My plea is to be reasonable with these rate increases . It is far too much over the top for any of the farmers or agricultural and rural communities to withstand this.

My suggestions follow:

1. Perhaps, an agricultural or farm exemption or at the very least reduced rates for those hauling ag trailer or the like ..
2. Please be more inclusive of the 14 ft vehicle length and raise it to 15 ft. That would help with more of the residents of the island as 14 ft or shorter doesn't even include a Prius or a mini cooper.
3. Offer reduced rates to homeowners on the island. We have an abundance of tourists in the summer which makes for a lot of the trips to the island. The ferry often runs none stop during late June, July, and August. Perhaps more runs during these months as well.
4. Offer Late evening runs on Tuesday, Wednesday, and /or Thursday for date night or for sports for the teens and maybe have last ferry to 7 pm or earlier as it use to be to reduce expenses.
5. Please consider no expiration or longer use on punch cards. As residents, we use punch cards and often buy two. We also like to buy the 10-punch card to have extra for emergencies since it is a one-year expiration. I see that this is proposed to be done away with.
6. Consider raising rider and bike fees. We do get quite a few bike riders. a handful comes over every day to ride. Maybe they should have a punch card if they want to come more frequently.

We also are opposed to the extreme cost of the electric ferry. It is possible that an all-electric ferry could be obsolete to the county in a short time. I think we would need diesel to help with the power to safely get across the Guemes Channel.

We would love to keep the charm of Guemes as a rural island with farms, livestock, and natural preservations. I don't believe we can keep that if the rates rise to 71-110 % as proposed.

Thank you Thank you Thank you for your time and consideration!!

Rebecca & Sam Bonno
4644 Edens Rd
Guemes Island , WA

Becca
Becca

Jennifer Rogers

From: Rebecca Rumpff <gmapickle52@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 28, 2023 5:27 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Guemes Ferry rate increase

CAUTION: This email originated from an external email address. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender, you are expecting this email and attachments, and you know the content is safe.

County Commissioners,

As a retired resident of Guemes Island I would implore you to find a more favorable solution to the proposed ferry rate increase found by KPFF. Such a high increase would be an additional financial challenge to the already numerous rates of inflation we are experiencing.

Find workable solutions for the benefit of all.

Sincerely,

Rebecca J Rumpff

Jennifer Rogers

From: Remi Starston <remistarston@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, February 25, 2023 10:19 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Proposed Guemes Ferry Increase Feedback

CAUTION: This email originated from an external email address. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender, you are expecting this email and attachments, and you know the content is safe.

Good Morning,

My spouse and I are full time Guemes residents, and I commute 4 days a week to the mainland for a part time city job that pays just above minimum wage.

Your proposed 71% fare increase is absolutely cruel to the working class and to the less fortunate lower income families and individuals, and is completely unsustainable and unsatisfactory to me, my family, and many of my island acquaintances who are in a similar situation financially.

The idea that Guemes Island is populated by just the wealthy and fortunate and that we, as an island, can afford such an increase is very short sighted and leaves me questioning the county's management.

My spouse is disabled and is unable to make an income. We are both neurodivergent and trauma survivors that have made Guemes home because it is so well suited for our sensory needs. We live to the penny, and have no extra to afford such a wild, inappropriate fare increase.

Please reconsider. An increase of 10% would be difficult, but acceptable. 71% is absolutely ridiculous and would break us.

Frustrated and offended by County Management,

Remi Starston
Guemes Island

Jennifer Rogers

From: Commissioners
Sent: Friday, March 10, 2023 9:47 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: FW: Ferry Increase

From: Remi Starston <remistarston@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 9, 2023 5:14 PM
To: Commissioners <commissioners@co.skagit.wa.us>
Subject: Ferry Increase

CAUTION: This email originated from an external email address. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender, you are expecting this email and attachments, and you know the content is safe.

Good Afternoon,

My spouse and I are full time Guemes residents, and I commute 4 days a week to the mainland for a part time city job that pays just above minimum wage.

Your proposed 71% fare increase is absolutely cruel to the working class and to the less fortunate lower income families and individuals, and is completely unsustainable and unsatisfactory to me, my family, and many of my island acquaintances who are in a similar situation financially.

The idea that Guemes Island is populated by just the wealthy and fortunate and that we, as an island, can afford such an increase is very short sighted and leaves me questioning the county's management.

My spouse is disabled and is unable to make an income. We are both neurodivergent and trauma survivors that have made Guemes home because it is so well suited for our sensory needs. We live to the penny, and have no extra to afford such a wild, inappropriate fare increase.

Please reconsider. An increase of 10% would be difficult, but acceptable. 71% is absolutely ridiculous and would break us.

Frustrated and offended by County Management,

Remi Starston
Guemes Island

Feb. 2, 2023

Grace Kane, public works director
County of Skagit
1800 Continental Place, Suite 100
Mount Vernon, WA 98273

Dear Director Kane,

I am a licensed merchant mariner, a purser-deckhand aboard the Guemes Island Ferry, and the ferry workers' union steward.

I share your concerns about funding for the ferry and its dependence on the road fund, and I understand that the ferry system's dependence on the road fund is taking funding away from other important road projects in the county.

Two solutions, which can be taken immediately and which the county has the authority to do:

1. PARKING FEES

The parking lot on 6th and K has 70 spaces. The lot on the old railroad right of way has 20 spaces, and that's after eliminating the parking on the north side to provide a safer space for pedestrians. The parking lot on Guemes Island has spaces for 80 vehicles. Total: 170 parking spaces provided for free.

Currently, these parking spaces are provided for free. This likely constitutes a gift of public funds, in that it benefits one group of users at the larger public's expense. The county also provides, at public expense, two free-use porta-potties at the Guemes Island lot.

- A parking permit charge of \$15 per month per space would generate \$2,550 per month and **\$30,600 per year**.
- A permit charge of \$20 per month per space would generate \$3,400 per month and **\$40,800 per year**.
- A permit charge of \$25 per month per space would generate \$4,500 per month and **\$54,000 per year**.

The benefit to the larger public: The lots would be paid for by users. The lots would no longer be provided for free for a specific group at the larger public's expense, which likely constitutes a gift of public funds.

The benefit to users: Funding for better security and porta-potty maintenance.

The benefit to the road fund: As much as \$54,000 less that would be required from the road fund for the ferry.

2. FERRY ASSESSMENT

There are 1,532 tax parcels on Guemes Island. An assessment of \$25 per parcel per year to support ferry service to and from Guemes Island would generate **\$38,300** per year. In light of the latest news about the financial condition of the road fund, I believe the Board of County Commissioners could establish this assessment as an emergency measure.

The benefit to the larger public: \$38,300 less would be required from the larger public, most of whom are non-users of the ferry.

The benefit to users: The funding would help support the operation of the ferry and would contribute to its financial stability.

The benefit to the road fund: \$38,300 less that would be required from the road fund for the ferry.

TOTAL FROM BOTH PROPOSALS: \$92,300.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to continuing to work with you and for you. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Richard A. Walker
P.O. Box 301
Anacortes, WA. 98221
360-813-2916

Jennifer Rogers

From: Commissioners
Sent: Wednesday, March 1, 2023 12:08 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: FW: REGARDING PROPOSED FERRY FARE INCREASES

From: Richard Walker <richardmollywalker@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 1, 2023 8:54 AM
To: Commissioners <commissioners@co.skagit.wa.us>
Subject: REGARDING PROPOSED FERRY FARE INCREASES

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March 1, 2023

Honorable members of the Skagit County Board of County Commissioners,

My name is Richard A. Walker and I am a purser-deckhand aboard the Guemes Island Ferry. I am also the IBU union steward.

Then-Commissioner Ken Dahlstedt warned 15 years ago there would be consequences for not raising fares in accordance with the annual CPI. Fares would have to someday be raised in order to catch up with the increased costs of fuel, maintenance and operation. The longer the wait, he warned, the greater the increase. That's where we are today, and it's why the proposed fare increases have come as a shock to ferry users.

I appreciate islanders' concerns about ferry fare increases and I believe riding the ferry should be reasonably affordable. In response to some concerns and suggestions presented by ferry users, I think it's important to put some things in perspective.

Islanders do pay a discounted fare – it's in those punch cards. Here's what an islander pays for each round trip with a punch card: adult passenger, \$3.08; senior/disabled/youth, \$1.84; vehicle and driver, \$9.80; senior/disabled driver, \$7.80; motorcycle and rider \$5.85; senior/disabled motorcycle and rider, \$4,90. Visitors pay more than residents because visitors generally don't buy punch cards, they pay full fare.

Islanders also receive free parking in three lots – one on Guemes Island, one in the former railroad right of way next to the ferry terminal, and one on 6th Street. In addition, there is free overnight handicapped parking next to the terminal building.

In other words, **for \$3.08 an adult passenger with a punch card receives a round trip and free parking.** Few could disagree that that's a generously low fare and benefit.

I understand that no one wants to pay more for something. We all work hard for our money. But it's a fact that while fares have remained at 2015 levels, the cost of fuel, maintenance and operation of the ferry have not.

Even if the regular car and driver fare increases to, say, \$25 per round trip, an islander can still save money by consolidating trips (and by buying a punch card). Ferry crew members see many islanders more than once a day, another sign that riding the ferry is affordable. Right now, a regular car and driver fare is \$15 peak season. By taking the ferry twice a day, an islander pays \$30. By consolidating trips, they would pay \$25 – a savings of \$5 by taking one trip, not two. They can also leave a car in the parking lot for free and walk on.

Ferry fares are a good deal, too, for those large vehicles that carry goods to the island. Every day, **vehicles carrying thousands of dollars of product to the island pay between \$21 and \$129 round trip**, depending on vehicle size. Again, few would disagree that that's a generously low fare. Drivers of those oversized vehicles have told us that it's a low price to pay to deliver the thousands of dollars of product they carry.

Every day, the Guemes Island Ferry helps commuters get to and from their jobs, moves visitors to and from vacation rentals and other attractions on the island, and transports products and services to and from the island. The materials used to build homes on the island, the products bought in the island's store, the materials and trucks that maintain the island's roads, the appliances and services that add to residents' comfort – they all get there on the Guemes Island Ferry.

I am proud of the service the Guemes Island Ferry provides every day. The ferry makes 4,224 round trips a year between Anacortes and Guemes Island -- not including after-hours trips for medical emergencies and power outages. It's a solid 45-year-old vessel with a proud record of service.

However, It's clear the current fare structure is not sufficient. The county commission should take the following steps in order to ensure the financial viability of the ferry service:

1. Approve the recommended fare increases,

OR

2. Approve a modified fare schedule with lower fares for commuter vehicles and pedestrians and higher fares for oversized commercial vehicles,

AND

3. Allow for automatic increases in fares based on the annual CPI,

AND

4. Establish parking permits and fees. The parking lot on 6th and K has 70 spaces. The lot on the old railroad right of way has 20 spaces, and that's after eliminating the parking on the north side to provide a safer space for pedestrians. The parking lot on Guemes Island has spaces for 80 vehicles. Total: 170 parking spaces.

Currently, these parking spaces are provided for free. This likely constitutes a gift of public funds, in that it benefits one group of users at the larger public's expense. The county also provides, at public expense, two free-use porta-potties at the Guemes Island lot.

A parking permit charge of \$15 per month per space would generate **\$2,550 per month and \$30,600 per year.**

A permit charge of \$20 per month per space would generate **\$3,400 per month and \$40,800 per year.**

A permit charge of \$25 per month per space would generate **\$4,500 per month and \$54,000 per year.**

The benefit to the larger public: The lots would be paid for by users. The lots would no longer be provided for free for a specific group at the larger public's expense, which likely constitutes a gift of public funds.

The benefit to users: Funding for better security and porta-potty maintenance.

The benefit to the road fund: As much as \$54,000 less that would be required from the road fund for the ferry.

AND

5. Establish a property assessment. There are 1,532 tax parcels on Guemes Island. An assessment of \$25 per parcel per year to support ferry service to and from Guemes Island **would generate \$38,300 per year.** In light of the latest news about the financial condition of the road fund, I believe the Board of County Commissioners could establish this assessment as an emergency measure.

The benefit to the larger public: \$38,300 less would be required from the larger public, most of whom are non-users of the ferry.

The benefit to users: The funding would help support the operation of the ferry and would contribute to its financial stability.

The benefit to the road fund: \$38,300 less that would be required from the road fund for the ferry.

The revenue from parking permits and the assessment could generate **a total of \$92,300 a year** to support the ferry system.

Thank you for your consideration.

Richard A. Walker
P.O. Box 301
Anacortes, WA. 98221
360-813-2916

Jennifer Rogers

From: Omi Cummings <bobomi2@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 2, 2023 10:16 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Cc: Commissioners
Subject: Fw: Guemes ferry fare recommendations

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----- Forwarded Message -----

From: Omi Cummings <bobomi2@yahoo.com>
To: ferrycomments@co.skagit.waus <ferrycomments@co.skagit.waus>
Sent: Wednesday, March 1, 2023 at 04:38:31 PM PST
Subject: Guemes ferry fare recommendations

We are writing in response to County officials request for public comment relating to the proposed rate structure for the Guemes ferry. We have lived on Guemes Island for nearly 20 years as full time residents and are retired. We chose this island for the friendly laid back lifestyle, commitment to the preservation of the natural world, and above all, an escape from urbanization. The ferry lends itself to furthering all of those attributes and the Skagit County departments have (on the whole) has fairly treated Guemes island as an integral part of their jurisdiction, in spite of the strident independence islanders display on occasion.

Now we are looking at the recommendations of your study and are dismayed to note the way fares are being structured to address County budgetary issues. The ridership needs vary significantly and are not taken into consideration in our opinion and will undermine the diversification we now enjoy and you would economically want to encourage. These rate increases will certainly be a disproportionate hardship on those folks that: 1. use it daily to work off island and are significant supporters of your tax base for many years to come 2. elderly long term residents on very limited incomes facing displacement in spite of being the back bone of this community for generations 3. the low income residents that provide services in many ways on the island.

It appears that the population which will benefit from this proposed rate structure will be visitors to our island through the increased focus on vacationers and part time residents. The increase of homes being built on the island is adding to your tax base and appears to be leading to gentrification of Guemes with little room for those who would provide the support for that population. We urge you to reassess the recommendations before you to develop a more equitable rate structure.

Respectfully submitted,
Robert and Naomi Cummings
7596 Samish Street
Anacortes, WA 98221

Robert & Virginia Bertilson
4694 South Shore Dr.
Anacortes, Wa. 98221

February 27, 2023

Peter Browning, Skagit County Commissioner
Lisa Janiki, Skagit County Commissioner
Ron Wesen, Skagit County Commissioner
1800 Continental Place, Suite 100
Mt Vernon, Wa. 98273

Concerning the Proposed Guemes Island Ferry Fare Increases.

Dear County Commissioners,

It is our understanding that there is possibly going to be a 71% increase in Guemes Island Ferry fares, way beyond inflation rates. It is very concerning to us as we are in the late eighties, senior citizens, that purchased our property in 1997, and we drive on the ferry to limit falls when walking. With our Social Security raising only a small amount we would need to cut costs by walking onto the ferry. There are many seniors in similar situations on the Island. With many of us parking our cars and only paying a Walking Senior Rate the fares collected by the County would be considerably less and would be counter intuitive.

The people on Guemes have also been hit with outrageous property tax increases this year. It's time that the Skagit County do some tightening like the rest of us are having to do.

It has come to our attention that there are inaccuracies in the financial figures that we have seen for the ferry, and county roads, as to what the real amount should be. It would be wise to work on your accounting figures.

A small realistic increase is probably warranted using the US inflation index.

Thank you, we appreciate your taking the time to review our concerns.

Sincerely,

Robert & Virginia Bertilson

Jennifer Rogers

From: Robert H Anderson <earthspiritcircle@earthlink.net>
Sent: Friday, March 17, 2023 12:18 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Cc: Commissioners; Guemes Island Ferry Committee
Subject: Re: Guemes ferry price increases.

#####

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Some us us who were born in the Great Depression followed all the rules of living a responsible life: Live within your income and budget. Live frugally. Plan for your retirement so you aren't a burden to your children. Don't buy what you can't afford. Stay out of debt. Etc.

We did that and thus are able to have reasonable savings that allows us to live on Guemes Island in retirement. Suddenly we are in a situation where all prices are going up (taxes, and almost everything up over 10% this year) except retirement income (went down 20% last year) and increases on bank savings, IRAs etc. flat or negligible.

In determining increases needed to maintain a balanced County budget, you need to factor in these trends that, if continued, will make it impossible for us responsible citizens of modest means in retirement, to continue to live on Guemes or in Anacortes in the near future. Guemes is fast becoming a retirement community where only the wealthy can afford to live. Is this the future the county desires?

Rev. Robert Anderson, 6966 Holiday Blvd. Anacortes. 360-293-3770

Jennifer Rogers

From: rha42a@protonmail.com
Sent: Wednesday, March 29, 2023 8:57 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Guemes Ferry Rate Increase

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To Whom it may concern,

My name is Robert Anderson. I am an Anacortes resident. I ride the Guemes Ferry year-round to visit friends, enjoy the natural and community attractions and for crabbing and fishing off the north shore.

I was shocked to hear about the proposed fare increase. A small increase is to be expected from time to time but, this is ridiculous. If the proposed increase is adopted, I won't be using the ferry nearly as much. Please dial it back.

Thank you,
Robert Anderson

Sent from Proton Mail mobile

Jennifer Rogers

From: Commissioners
Sent: Friday, June 9, 2023 11:16 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: FW: Yesterday's hearing

-----Original Message-----

From: Robert H Anderson <earthspiritcircle@earthlink.net>
Sent: Friday, June 9, 2023 10:43 AM
To: Guemes Ferry <guemesferry@gmail.com>
Cc: Commissioners <commissioners@co.skagit.wa.us>
Subject: Yesterday's hearing

#####

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Two things struck me yesterday:

-Signing/agreeing to any proposal around insurance without knowing the insurer to vet by the BBB, and not knowing the specific coverage for specific claims, in my experience, would be malfeasance of duty. No reasonable private person would do this. The fact that every contacted ferry system in our region appears to have LOWER COSTS (even for more than one ferry) than our 2022 premium should gnaw at our conscience and have us "hit the brakes", until we learn why.

-We have no base line of any kind as to costs to transport people in this county by our myriad transport means over county transport routes. Admittedly such data would not be perfect, but aggregating all County budgets for transportation and dividing by number of county residents would tell us more that we now know. We need some data against which to determine fair rates for everything from bridge tolls, ferry fees, taxing rates, and whom to tax and for how much .

Clearly the Commissioners have not yet done the amount of research needed on which to make an informed decision about the new Guemes ferry rates.

Hold your ground and make loud public noise if necessary. If the commissioners don't respond, and you don't want to do it, I will gladly air these concerns in a letter to the SVH.

This incomplete information base, and arbitrary change of our working long-term formula, needs wide and transparent Island and County dissemination.

Sincerely, Robert Anderson

Jennifer Rogers

From: Commissioners
Sent: Wednesday, June 21, 2023 4:27 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: FW: A Caution: Your possible risk for legal liability

-----Original Message-----

From: Robert H Anderson <earthspiritcircle@earthlink.net>
Sent: Wednesday, June 21, 2023 3:57 PM
To: Commissioners <commissioners@co.skagit.wa.us>
Subject: A Caution: Your possible risk for legal liability

* Spam *

#####

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Dear Allen, Ron Wesen, Ferry Committee and Commissioners:

If the new contract and the 4-fold increase in insurance rates is accepted as one factor and base for increased fares, according to the "Prudent Man Principle", you could be considered for liability, as I understand the principle. If you need to understand it more, use Google.

As I understand the legal principle, individuals and agencies can be sued for damages if they fail to invest funds or make decisions that adversely impact their shareholders and constituents by not acting as a "Prudent Man" would have acted.

Example (from my professional practice). This principle has hampered investments in green energy, however well-intentioned, when such investments would yield a lower return than, say, the same investments in fossil fuels. A "Prudent Man" would make decisions based on the highest and best return for shareholders and constituents. Lawsuits have followed and been won.

No "prudent man" would accept an insurance plan not knowing the name and contact of the insurer, and the liability coverage, which information is not yet available to Guemes "constituents" so covered. Especially since there is an unexplained 4-fold increase in premiums, and every area ferry system appears to be paying LESS than even our 2022 premium of \$125K.

Even if this principle of law does not directly apply to this matter, I believe the principle still makes sense for all of us: Guemians, Island ferry committee and Commissioners, should be wary of accepting the new contract as a basis of fare increases without full resolution of this lack of transparent insurance information, at least to avoid bad press and damaged reputations once this glaring public "lack of prudent decision-making" becomes widely known...and it will.

(IE: SVH/Times Headline: County Commissioners rise fares using unknown insurance carrier and coverage: New rates based on insurance costing more than that of similar regional systems and an unexplained 4-fold increase." The article would, of course, publicly question the competence and sanity of named officials.)

SO: Just a friendly word of caution... from my 60 years of involvement in the work of, and experiencing the pitfalls of, many public entities working for the "common good" imprudently, getting sued, or bad public press, and deserving it. I would hate for any of us to incur such a result after the fact.

Rev. Robert Anderson



Aahrats Pest Control, LLC
7337 Miller Road, H-1
Anacortes, WA 98221
425-508-9821

www.aahratspestcontrol.com
admin@aahratspestcontrol.com

August 20, 2023

Dear Commissioner Ron Wesen
Commissioner Peter Browning
Commissioner Lisa Jancki

My name is Robert Dean Henry, Owner and Operator of Aahrats Pest Control, LLC. My company was formed on a thirty-year dream of mine. To one day breaking away from the “big box” pest control companies and form my own locally grown and run company.

During the height of the COVID pandemic, that is exactly what I did. Along with the support of my wife, Elizabeth, Aahrats Pest Control was born. It was a very scary leap to take. However, I witnessed and heard the need for a local company, one with solid work ethics, strong and comprehensive experience in pest control, a dedication to superior customer service and solid business practices. I knew that was me.

Our company was established in December 2020 and since our first customer, in February 2021, Aahrats Pest Control, LLC has flourished. We serve five counties: Skagit, Island, San Juan, Snohomish and Whatcom. I have experienced a steady increase in the needs of Guemes Island residence for responsive pest control. I am at the point of traveling two days per month to take care of my Guemes customers. That is only regular services. If a customer calls me because of hornets or wasps, or a rodent inside their home, I get on the ferry to the Island.

If the proposed fare increases are established, it will be crushing to a small business operator like me. Response times will not be at a moment’s notice and these

increased costs will have to be passed along to my customers. Not only are these proposed fare increases extreme, but they are also abhorrent and excessive. With the state of the recessed economy, gas and food prices increasing each day; it is difficult for me to comprehend how such extreme increases make sense to anyone, especially to the Commissioners of this county.

The very citizens you represent may be subjected to living with pests that could be destructive to their health and the very structures they live in.

Tourism will be impacted, housing, and employment too. These increases will only create a larger, more bulging inflation bubble. And in fact, it could be detrimental to small business owners like me.

Residents will be forced to make very difficult decisions between their needs for obtaining food, gasoline, employment or medical care for their families or protecting their homes from pests that are onerous to the Pacific Northwest. During the entire pandemic, pest control companies like me were “Essential Service Providers”, there is a very good reason for that. My services protect not only the health of citizens, but my services can also protect and prevent homes from being eaten from the inside out.

As a small business owner, I am asking you to reconsider these unreasonable and exorbitant fare increases. Demonstrate your representation for the better good of Skagit County, small business owners and the residents of Guemes Island.

Thank you.

Robert Dean Henry, Owner
Aahrats Pest Control, LLC
Elizabeth A. Henry, Admin. Asst to the Owner

Jennifer Rogers

From: Roderick Brown <roderickbrown@outlook.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 1, 2023 4:09 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Cc: 'barbarajsbrown@outlook.com'
Subject: DRAFT Guemes Island Ferry Rate Changes

CAUTION: This email originated from an external email address. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender, you are expecting this email and attachments, and you know the content is safe.

After reviewing the proposed major fare increase for the ferry, I needed a day or two to reflect and consider.

Quick thoughts:

I understand the costs need to come dramatically and the ferry is a critical lifeline to Islanders and thus needs proper funding.

Review and consider if the Guemes Island property taxes average per parcel were proportionate to road funds as the remainder of the base. In other words, is Guemes truly getting its fair share of road funds based on the total tax base for the island relative to the road funds? When comparing island contributions to the rest of the taxpayers are we getting the same level of funding? If even close to yes, then drop this point and move forward as proposed.

If there is some reason to believe Islander's tax revenue compared to the general fund is higher than the allocated spend and what the other Skagit taxpayers are contributing.

I am trying to justify the Island taxpayer's right to a "locals" lowered rate.

In the end, I trust that you have looked closely at all angles and duly considered and you to do what you believe is right. Then move forward.

I am unsure if I articulated this adequately but hopefully, it is understood.

Roderick Brown
Brand Ambassador
roderick@rodsroad.com

6464 West Shore Road
Anacortes, WA 982211

Jennifer Rogers

From: Rodger Ricks <rodgerricks@glacier.com>
Sent: Friday, March 31, 2023 4:25 PM
To: Ferry Comments; commissioner@co.skagit.wa.us; guemesferry@gmail.com
Subject: 2023 GUEMES ISLAND FERRY FARE INCREASE

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*To: Skagit County Commissioners: Ron Wesen, Lisa Janicki, Peter Browning
Public Works Director/County Engineer: Grace Kane P.E.
Ferry Operations Division Manager: Captain Rachel Rowe
1800 Continental Place
Mount Vernon, WA. 98273*

*Re: SKAGIT COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS FERRY DIVISION
2023 GUEMES ISLAND FERRY FARE INCREASE*

*From: Rodger Ricks
6106 West Shore Road
Anacortes WA 98221*

Dear Commissioners, Director, and Captain:

My wife and I were drawn to purchasing property on Guemes Island in 2016 partly because it is easily accessible with a County ferry system which is known to provides good service, and we built a home there in 2018 which we hope to retire to shortly. We love the island and are very pleased to report that the ferry system functions very well. Since our involvement with Guemes, we have kept abreast of the arguments for and against the new electric ferry, several ferry rate increases, and the ferry replacement surcharge, but...the current proposed fare increase is in my mind both outrageous in magnitude as you have been advised by many island residents already, but it represents a rescission of the farebox recovery policy that has served the island and County well for many years and is relevant in your consideration of this proposed ferry fare proposal. Key points of this farebox recovery policy follow:

Resolution R20110382 states that, "It is the desire of the Board that the County's ferry fare revenue target be calculated as a percentage of the overall system operating and maintenance costs as computed in the annual deficit reimbursement report provided to the state less revenues from the motor vehicle fuel tax and state ferry deficit reimbursement. In order to balance and mitigate potential large variations in year-to-year maintenance costs and revenues from the motor vehicle fuel tax and state deficit reimbursement, these costs and revenues will be averaged over the previous five county calendar fiscal year periods."

The ferry fare revenue target shall be calculated, using data from January 1 through December 31 of each calendar year, as follows:

"The five (5) calendar year average of ferry operating and maintenance costs as computed in the prior annual deficit reimbursement reports submitted to the State. For purposes of this resolution, capital expenditures are not included in the ferry operating and maintenance costs and shall be defined as all capital expenditures defined in WAC 136-400-030 and other capital costs including financing and depreciation expenses applied to

the replacement, expansion, or creation of ferry system physical elements, less the five (5) year average of the state motor vehicle fuel tax received by the County for operation and maintenance of the ferry system, less the five (5) year average of the State Ferry Deficit Reimbursement received by the County, the total of the above multiplied by 65%.”

As you undoubtedly know already, this farebox recovery is a metric used by other ferry systems around the country and specifically by those Skagit County Ferry Systems compares itself too, and with a 65% farebox recovery, Skagit County is already assessing the Guemes Island ferry users a higher farebox than other County ferry systems in WA:

| | |
|---|-----|
| Whatcom County – Lummi Island Ferry @ | 55% |
| Pierce County – Anderson Island Ferry @ | 43% |
| Skagit County – Guemes Island Ferry @ | 65% |

Essentially, the code requires that 65% of the operational costs for running the ferry system be borne by the system users, and the remaining 35% be borne by Skagit County property taxes and other revenue sources, which includes a large portion from the County Road Fund. This farebox recovery measure is in effect a partnership between the County and the system users where each party is vested in seeing “cost control” and the users paying the bulk of the cost, and as shown, Skagit County requires system users to pay more than peer county ferry system users by a significant margin.

Grace Kahn, Skagit County Public Works Director, was quoted in the March 1 edition of the Anacortes American article on the Guemes Ferry, “ We’re coming to a point where we can’t afford \$1.0 million per year coming out of the road fund, . . . adding that island residents need to pay their share toward ferry operations.” Accordingly, the ferry fare proposal abandoned Resolution R20110382 in favor of eliminating the partnership that controls costs by capping the County Road Fund contribution to \$750,000 per year.

Reviewing the 2023 adopted budget, the County Road Fund has swelled from \$22,980,448 in 2020 to a projected \$32,941,020 in 2023 for nearly a \$10 million increase. So.... Because the County Road Fund budget has swelled so much, it appears the current proposed ferry fare increase is being proposed to help stem the red ink flowing from the County Road Fund, which really is a serious County budgeting / management issue that should not be passed on to Guemes Island ferry users in the form of a nearly 100% rate increase and abandonment of the partnership Resolution R20110382 provides.

The Skagit County Assessors office provided me information supporting assessed value of property of \$617,578,300 on Guemes (excluding farm, agricultural and commercial) with over 1300 property owners which provides \$4,920,524 in real estate tax revenue, and specifically \$1.3020460195 per \$1,000 assessed value, or \$804,115 into the County Road Fund revenue in 2023. Although I don’t have the information to compare this to the rest of the County, I believe the property tax contribution by Guemes is not insignificant, and any talk that “island residents should pay their share toward ferry operations” should review the facts.

As you consider how to make the ferry system budget be balance, I suggest you review very closely the following additional matters:

- Revenue sources from other ferry systems, as when I reviews the Pierce County and Whatcom County ferry rate study reports, I believe they had tapped into other funding sources.
- Skagit County had a Covid-19 response that suspended collection of revenue for many months, and such revenue suspension should be considered an extraordinary event with projected revenues from such suspended months included in the farebox calculation
- The farebox methodology per Resolution R20110382 prescribes ferry fare revenue target be calculated as a percentage of overall system operating and maintenance costs.... Given the County periodically hires consultants for new ferry design, rate surveys, etc., such are “below the line” and not operational and maintenance costs and should not be included in calculation of new target ferry fares

- All system users for Guemes Island should pay their way which will be counted as revenue sources for determining accurate farebox revenue, include school busses, US postal service vehicles, and County vehicles.

Thank you for your consideration of these matters and your service to the community.

Sincerely,

Rodger Ricks

Jennifer Rogers

From: Rory Denovan <rorydenovan@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, March 11, 2023 12:06 AM
To: Ferry Comments; Commissioners
Cc: guemesferry@gmail.com
Subject: proposed Guemes ferry fare increase

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My kids may not be able to **attend swim lessons and other activities because of your ill-conceived, politically motivated, and downright greedy plan to more than double our ferry fares.**

We knew you didn't represent us. Now we know that you hate us.

Jennifer Rogers

From: SALLY EAGAN <sallyeagan@icloud.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 2, 2023 11:50 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Trucks

#####

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#####

The increase of large trucks using the ferry has got to have impacted the condition of the docks and the boat. I am sure neither the docks or the boat were originally built to accommodate the large trucks. I think they should come on that barge and be let off at the beach by the ferry or somewhere convenient. Ignoring this issue is only going to bite you in the ass soon.

Thanks, Sally Eagan

Jennifer Rogers

From: Sally Peyou <sally.peyou@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, March 10, 2023 11:07 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Proposed Guemes Island ferry increase

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**To: Skagit County Commissioners: Ron Wesen, Lisa Janicki, Peter Browning Public Works
Director/County Engineer: Grace Kane P.E.
Ferry Operations Division Manager: Captain Rachel Rowe**

I am writing to express my concern regarding the proposed ferry rate increase. We are permanent Guemes residents and we live on a fixed income. We cannot afford this dramatic rate increase. We are worried for ourselves and other long time Guemes residents. As you are aware Guemes has very limited services so we need to ride the ferry for our shopping, medical, school and other services. Perhaps permanent residence ferry discount permits could be issued.

Kind Regards,
Sally Peyou
7135 Upland Dr
Anacortes WA 98221

Jennifer Rogers

From: Sally Stapp <stappbrigham@earthlink.net>
Sent: Friday, March 24, 2023 8:21 AM
To: Ferry Comments; Commissioners
Subject: Guemes Island ferry proposed fare increases.

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#####

My husband Dick Brigham and I, Sally Stapp park our bicycles at 5191 Lewis Lane, Guemes Island. We often commute to town by bike and leave our car at home.

I understand the need for occasional fare increases for Guemes Island commuters as operational costs increase. However the hefty increase to the bicycle fare might discourage bike commuters. Skagit Co. should be encouraging bike riders rather than doubling their fare. Bikes take up far less space, are an environmentally healthier option to cars and fit into unused deck space. Rather than discourage this healthier form of transport the County should celebrate bicycle commuters!

Thank you,
Sally Stapp

Jennifer Rogers

From: Sandy McKean <smckean@pobox.com>
Sent: Saturday, January 28, 2023 5:19 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Rate Study Comment

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#####

I am Sandy McKean. I live on Guemes Island. Here is my comment:

One of the objectives of the study is to implement a cap on the Road Fund subsidy to the Guemes Ferry. In the past, there has been the occasional year when unforeseen large expenses occur beyond what was expected for operations and maintenance (up to \$1,000,000). Under the proposed cap policy, such unanticipated costs will presumably come from fare box revenues (at least in part). How future fares will be set to absorb such a large unanticipated costs will need to be amortized over many years so as not to have "difficult to digest" spikes in fares.

Jennifer Rogers

From: Sandy McKean <smckean@pobox.com>
Sent: Sunday, February 26, 2023 4:22 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Amortize fare increases and punch card rates

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#####

My name is Sandy McKean. I live full time on Guemes Island.

Now that the steep fare increases have been made public, I have a couple of suggestions to help smooth the transition to this new paradigm.

1. Phase in the increase over 2, 3, 4 years to reduce "sticker shock".

The entire increase should be approved, but implemented in yearly phases with the end goal for fares clearly understood by the public.

2. Sell punched cards at the non-peak rates year-round as is done today.

This has several benefits. Many islanders feel that full time residents should get some sort of price break given how often they use the ferry.

Selling cards year-round at non-peak prices would benefit full timers the most, as well as keeping their monthly costs the same year-round. A further benefit would be the avoidance of the very awkward situation of a Guemes resident who, for example, has 10 punches remaining on his/her non-peak card, but is forced to buy a vehicle+driver peak card on the day peak rates go into effect. Since cards are only valid for 4 months, half the trips on their old non-peak card will have gone to waste by the time non-peak rates roll around again. Of course, this awkward situation assumes one can't use a non-peak card during the peak rate period; but even if the concession of using non-peak cards during peak period is made, an islander would still be be faced with having to plan their card purchases so that they don't buy a peak card just days before the non-peak rates go into effect. Many other awkward situations can be imagined when it comes to the timing of card purchases if year-round non-peak cards are not allowed. I believe this would become a constant source of annoyance to island residents.

Jennifer Rogers

From: Sandy McKean <smckean@pobox.com>
Sent: Monday, February 27, 2023 12:51 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: KPFF's use of 2023 budget for needed revenue is flawed

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The fare revenue analysis is flawed in the Rate Study presentation. It uses the \$3.2MM 2023 budget figure as the needed revenue to operate the ferry. It would be more appropriate to use the existing 5 year rolling average O&M figure which is closer to \$2MM. In essence the analysis is flawed because one can't use the budget number from a single year in such an analysis because of the haulout. The haulout typically occurs every OTHER year (2023 is one such year); so in haulout years the O&M costs for the ferry are typically \$1MM higher than in non-haulout years.

Since the conclusion regarding needed fare increases in Rate Study totally depends on which of these numbers is chosen for needed revenue to cover O&M expenses, this entire analysis needs to be re-examined. Certainly the huge jump in O&M costs year to year due to the biennial haulout needs to be taken into consideration.

Jennifer Rogers

From: Sandy McKean <smckean@pobox.com>
Sent: Saturday, March 4, 2023 2:29 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Is the haulout expense correctly handled in the projected 2023 ferry budget?

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#####

I attended the Feb 28th meeting via Zoom. I asked a question during the Q&A: whether the sawtooth nature of ferry O&M expenditures due to the expense of the haulout (\$500,00 to \$1,000,000 that normally only occurs every other year) was taken into account in the KPFF analysis. The answer given was that the haulout expense had been divided and assigned to both haulout and non-haulout years in the KPFF analysis. I hope this is correct since without taking the biennial nature of the haulout expense into account, the entire KPFF fare analysis is severely flawed.

I did a preliminary analysis of the biennial haulout expense as documented in the "Ferry Fare Revenue Target Report" for the last several years (2022 numbers are not yet available) I then compared those numbers to the \$3,169,000 "Projected Revenue Required for Operations" used by KPFF for "2023 Approved Budget (after minor adjustments)". Here's what I found:

2016=\$1,942,226
2017=\$2,863,906
2018=\$1,995,242
2019=\$3,103,772
2020=\$1,886,139
2021=\$3,144,332

5 year average = \$2,598,678

We see the typical sawtooth pattern. Non-haulout years are in the neighborhood of \$2MM, whereas the haulout years are around \$3MM. The last haulout year was 2021 with a "Operation & Maintenance Expenditures" of \$3,144,332 which is VERY close to KPFF's 2023 estimate of \$3,169,000. Frankly, I don't see how this could be. How could the 2023 number fit right into the expected sawtooth pattern that's held true for the last several years if something like \$500,000 of the haulout expense expected in 2023 was moved to 2024? Something doesn't make sense.

I hope my analysis is in error in some way, or that there is an omission that I am unaware of; but if I'm correct, the entire KPFF fare analysis needs to be re-evaluated immediately.

Jennifer Rogers

From: Sandy McKean <smckean@pobox.com>
Sent: Sunday, March 5, 2023 6:08 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: 14 foot length for the standard automobile lower rate

#####

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#####

I applaud the rate plan for including 2 rates for standard sized automobiles at 14 feet and 22 feet as opposed to the current 20 feet.

However, as your 2/28 presentation that stated only 6% of an average fleet of standard sized automobiles are 14 feet or shorter. I think the

14 foot length should be reconsidered and expanded to 15 feet, or 16 feet, or whatever length such that the lower rate would include at least 30% to 40% of all standard sized automobiles. Even at 16 feet the gap between 16 feet and 22 feet would still be a significant gap of 6 feet.

Jennifer Rogers

From: Sandy McKean <smckean@pobox.com>
Sent: Monday, March 6, 2023 12:57 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: 5 foot or 10 foot increments for long vehicles (commercial)

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#####

Please retain the 5 foot increment break points for long vehicles.

I have worked out a few test fares under the 2/28/23 proposed fares schedule. First off, most, if not all, of these fares are ~250% increase over existing fares. Such a large increase will certainly have long lasting, or even permanent, changes to how commerce is conducted on the island. Vendors with fixed charges may well decide to stop serving Guemes altogether. (Remember, unlike the large San Juan Islands served by the WA state ferries, Guemes island has essentially no services based on the island....there are no options).

Beyond that, if a large vehicle misses a 10 foot break point, even by 1 foot, the fares typically jump by \$50. To pay the 50 foot rate when you are a 41 foot truck is going to be smart. Keep the current 5 foot increments. The painful bump in fares for a vehicle that just misses the lower rate for a 5 minute ferry ride is going to be an ongoing sore point. (Such a bump for a 1.5 hour ferry ride such as on the WA state ferries is much easier to swallow.)

Jennifer Rogers

From: Sandy McKean <smckean@pobox.com>
Sent: Monday, March 6, 2023 1:09 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Too much influence of the WA state ferry system

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#####

I think we can all agree that the WA state ferry fares and routes are VERY different from the Guemes ferry. The Guemes ferry ride is only 5 minutes. The Guemes ferry holds 20 vehicles (28 with the new electric ferry). The destination islands for Wa state ferries have services which those residents can use on their island rather than being forced to use the ferry (even basic food market shopping requires the use of the ferry on Guemes).

If you look at the 2/28/23 proposed rate schedule for Guemes, it looks almost like a clone of the WA state ferry schedule with lower prices.

Surely taking the WA state ferry rate schedule as a near 1 for 1 template for the development of a Guemes rate schedule is far to simplistic. It just can't be that what works for the WA state ferry system works for the Skagit county system. The specific needs and constraints of Guemes need to be more thoughtfully taken into account.

Jennifer Rogers

From: Sandy McKean <smckean@pobox.com>
Sent: Sunday, May 14, 2023 11:34 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Guemes Island Ferry System 2023 Rate Study (5/11/23 version) - Passenger pass

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#####

Congratulation on the creation of a much improved plan over the initial plan!

It is my opinion that a major logistical mistake exists in the 5/11/23 plan: multi-ride passes for passengers ("Passenger pass" found on page 11). This pass is for 25 rides for a passenger without a vehicle. The expiration period for this pass is proposed to be shortened from one year to 90 days. I believe this change will prove to be unworkable. One class of riders will be able to use such a pass; namely, commuters who keep a vehicle on both sides of the channel (they normally ride as a passenger five days per week); however, the vast majority of Guemes frequent riders use the Vehicle & Driver pass when crossing, and only use the Passenger passes occasionally when walking into town, or during haulout, and other less frequent uses. One could argue that since such riders are not riding frequently as a passenger they have no need for such a pass. HOWEVER, this change likely means that for every boat ride there will be at least some full-time Guemes residents who will be purchasing a passenger ticket via credit card. I predict that these unnecessary single ride ticket sales will be a burden on the purser, on the crew generally, and on Guemes residents.....not to mention possible impact on on-time sailing performance.

If county believes the 90 day expiration period is required, then at least drop the number of trips to ten. Ten trips in 90 days would equate to approximately one trip per week which may work for most Guemes residents. OTOH, a ten trip pass would then become awkward for those commuters who keep a vehicle on both sides. Frankly, I see no need to change the current expiration date of one year. The current procedure appears to be working well for all classes of riders. I don't think the current one year expiration date for Passenger passes would enable infrequent riders to undeservedly obtain the discount since such riders almost certainly arrive with a vehicle.

Basically, I believe a 90 day expiration period for a 25 ride Passenger pass will create an unnecessary burden on the crew since many more single ride passenger tickets will have to be sold via credit card.

Today, most of us "full-timers" who use the ferry frequently have both types of punch cards (passenger only and vehicle/driver); we almost never need to slow things down with a credit card purchase. If the proposed change is implemented, be prepared for far more credit card transactions (of small dollar amounts to boot).

Jennifer Rogers

From: Sandy McKean <smckean@pobox.com>
Sent: Sunday, May 21, 2023 1:53 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Guemes Island Ferry System 2023 Rate Study (5/11/23 version) - Passenger pass (part2)

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#####

Please see my comment on this same subject on 5/14/23

I just thought of another unfortunate scenario that is bound to occur again and again IF the passenger punch cards expiration date is only 90 days. As I stated on this subject on 5/14/23, I believe many frequent ferry users (primarily full time residents), who do NOT commute, will not purchase the 25 ride passenger pass if the expiry date is only 90 days. So now imagine this scenario.....many vehicles will have 2 occupants (could be more too). The driver may well have a vehicle+driver card, but the passenger will not. So the purser will punch the vehicle card, but have to run a credit card transaction for the passenger. I believe this likely all too common scenario will become an "irritation of process" for all involved.

Jennifer Rogers

From: Sandy McKean <smckean@pobox.com>
Sent: Monday, June 12, 2023 5:29 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Passenger Multi-Ride card

#####

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#####

I believe the county will regret shortening the validity period for the Passenger Multi-Ride card from 1 year to 90 days. A consequence of this change will likely place an unnecessary burden on the crew who will need to sell many more single ride passenger tickets via credit card in the vehicle line. Credit card sales are awkward and greatly slow down the loading of the boat.

Here is my reasoning: although full time residents (or other frequent users) can use the Vehicle & Drive Multi-ride card within 90 days, we can not use the 25 punches on a Passenger Multi-Ride card within 90 days. We make many driver only trips for such mundane chores as grocery shopping, medical appointments, a quick trip to the hardware store, and so forth. So there are many vehicle & driver trips, but far fewer trips with both a driver and a passenger. (The exception to this is commuters and other folks who have vehicles on both sides -- this is a minority.) Here's what's going to happen if the 90 day validity period for Passenger Multi-Ride cards goes into affect. Frequent users will continue to purchase the 90 day Vehicle & Drive Multi-ride card, but will NOT purchase the 90 day Passenger Multi-Ride card. Therefore for those trips where a passenger is along, there will be a punched card transaction for the driver AND a credit card transaction for the passenger.....two transactions instead of one!

The only benefit I can see to shorten the validity period for the Passenger multi-ride card would be to deter abuse of the 1 year Passenger Multi-Ride card by those who are not truly frequent users. I submit this benefit is not going to be worth the cost of additional credit card transactions. Infrequent users are unlikely to buy any type of multi-ride card. Furthermore, I see no additional incentive for an infrequent user to buy a 1 year Passenger Multi-Ride card if their use is so infrequent that they have already decided not to purchase the 90 day Vehicle & Drive Multi-ride card. (Note: very few, if any, infrequent users arrive at Guemes without a vehicle.)

Jennifer Rogers

From: Sandy McKean <smckean@pobox.com>
Sent: Thursday, June 15, 2023 12:11 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Self-correcting process

#####

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#####

I note your public announcement via email on 6/8 was in error. It stated: "However, the Commissioners extended the public comment period to the close of business (4:30 p.m.) Wednesday, June 15." It should have said "Thursday". Since today is 6/15, it is my expectation that this email has met the deadline.

There are many improvements in the 2nd version of the rate study plan over the the 1st version. Two key changes are: spreading the required increase over 5 years instead of 1 year; and the re-introduction of the concept that the fare setting process meet the requirement that the fare box deliver 65% of the O&M costs of running the ferry.

My input here is in the realm of PR. In the presentations I've seen, it has been emphasized that the "pain" of the fare increase is greatly lessened by doing "only" a ~15% increase each year for 5 years. Clearly, this is true; however, I think everyone at the county from the Commissioners on down should emphasize more strongly the self-correcting nature of the 65% calculation. One of the biggest complaints I hear from islanders is that the initial, and critical, budget number of \$3.2MM for 2023 is artificially high. Many think that this high number will raise more money for the county over 5 years than will really be required.

What most people are missing is that the re-introduction 65% in the fare setting calculation means that any over or under estimating of future costs will self-correct within the 5 year rolling average calculation. For example, if it turns out that the fare are set too high in 2023/2024, then by virtue of the 65% calculation, LOWER fares will be set than would otherwise occur in the following years since the 65% requirement will be met earlier than expected. The 65% element automatically means that over time the fares will reach their "proper" level regardless of how high or low they are set initially. Furthermore, issues such as the possible lower O&M costs once the new electric ferry is in service are also automatically taken into account by t4eh 65% calculation.

I recommend that all county employees emphasize this self-correcting aspect of the new plan rather than simply stating that the initial full fare increase will not hit all at once. (Indeed, the initial expectation that the fares will eventually double may turn out to NEVER be necessary.)

Jennifer Rogers

From: Sandy McKean <smckean@pobox.com>
Sent: Friday, July 21, 2023 4:12 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Proposed ferry fare resolution dated 7-17-23

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#####

My name is Sandy McKean. I live on Guemes Island full time at 7208 Square Harbor Lane.

I am requesting two changes to the proposed resolution. The 2 paragraphs I am concerned about both mention the Guemes Island Ferry Committee (GIFC) as if it were the primary contact for all property owners on Guemes Island for ferry related issues. Unfortunately the GIFC only represents about 1/3 of all property owners on the island. For historical reasons, only registered voters in the Guemes Island precinct are allowed to vote for the five GIFC members. This restriction results in the GIFC only representing a minority of Guemes Island property owners. Since non full time property owners typically retain their voter registration in the county where their primary residence is located; the vast majority of non full time residents are not allowed to vote for GIFC members. This means that 2/3 of Guemes Island property owners, who pay the same taxes to support the ferry as everyone else, have no say in who is on the GIFC.

At a well attended GIFC meeting on 12/12/21, GIFC Charter Amendments were voted on to remove this outdated historical "registered voters only" restriction so that ALL property owners on Guemes Island could be represented by the GIFC. Although a simple majority of those eligible to vote wanted to adopt the amendments, the amendments did not get the 2/3 majority required for adoption (179 people voted; 102 people voted in favor; 77 people voted against). Therefore less than 2 years ago, the GIFC reaffirmed that they only wanted to represent approximately 1/3 of Guemes Island property owners.

Given that the GIFC represents a minority of the property owners on the island, it is not appropriate to single out that organization as if the GIFC speaks for all Guemes Island Skagit County property tax payers. There are 2 sections of the proposed resolution that should be changed to clarify the county's desire to gather input from ALL Guemes Island property owners. I have reproduced these 2 sections below: first as proposed; and second as I suggest they be rewritten.

[PROPOSED]

WHEREAS, while the Board recognizes that the "Guemes Island Ferry Operations Public Forum" process described per R20100050 (as amended by R20110382) is not feasible from a practical and logistical perspective, but nevertheless the Board desires for Public Works Department staff to continue to reasonably communicate and provide timely financial information to the advisory Guemes Island Ferry Committee, and solicit recommendations therefrom; and

[REWRITTEN]

WHEREAS, while the Board recognizes that the "Guemes Island Ferry Operations Public Forum" process described per R20100050 (as amended by R20110382) is not feasible from a practical and logistical perspective, but nevertheless the Board desires for Public Works Department staff to continue to reasonably communicate and provide timely financial information to Guemes Island property owners and to various citizen groups on the island (such as the Guemes Island Ferry Committee), and solicit recommendations

[PROPOSED]

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED AND IT IS HEREBY FURTHER ORDERED, that Public Works Department staff shall make reasonable efforts to continue to communicate with and obtain advice and recommendations from the Guemes Island Ferry Committee concerning matters related to the operation of the Guemes Island Ferry, specifically including, but not necessarily limited to holding at least one (1) public meeting with representatives of the Guemes Island Ferry Committee and other interested parties each year, at locations, dates, and times to be determined by the Public Works Director, or designee.

[REWRITTEN]

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED AND IT IS HEREBY FURTHER ORDERED, that Public Works Department staff shall make reasonable efforts to continue to communicate with and obtain advice and recommendations from the property owners on Guemes Island concerning matters related to the operation of the Guemes Island Ferry, specifically including, but not necessarily limited to holding at least one (1) public meeting with Guemes Island property owners, representatives of Guemes Island citizen groups (such as the Guemes Island Ferry Committee), and other interested parties each year, at locations, dates, and times to be determined by the Public Works Director, or designee.

Jennifer Rogers

From: Sarah Poyen <sarahpoyen@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 7, 2023 7:31 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Guemes Island Ferry Proposed Fare increase

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Ron Wesen
Peter Browning
Lisa Janicki

Greetings Skagit County Commissioners,

My name is Sarah Poyen. My husband and I reside at 7327 Holiday Blvd on Guemes Island. We purchased our home in 2016 and have been full time residents since 2019. We also own a 20 acre farm at 6694 Guemes Island Road.

I have many concerns about the proposed changes, some ideological and others more concrete.

First, the impact of these rates on islanders is twofold. We will not only pay increased fares personally when we travel off island to get groceries, supplies and go to medical appointments, but the costs of services on the island will greatly increase. Services such as: plumbers, electricians, roofers, lumber delivery, septic pumping, contractors, propane delivery, tree service, garbage and recycling pickup and so on, will become unaffordable. This is not a wealthy community and these price increases will greatly change who lives here and how they use the ferry.

Second, I would like you to look at the vehicle length designation of 14'. Mike Anderson states these are the "smaller vehicles that a lot of folks are driving". Carla Sawyer went on to state this represents about 6% of ferry riders. Many small vehicles exceed 14' including Toyota Prius, Ford Focus, and even Volkswagen Beetle to name a few. These cars are commonly driven to save money on gas and lower CO2 emissions. Increasing the small vehicle designation a mere 12 inches to 15' would have a big impact on many seniors on the island who drive Prius'.

Lastly, I own livestock on Guemes Island and I already pay exorbitant fees for large animal veterinary care, hay delivery, farrier services, etc. These are all going to climb. Farmers, ranchers, and horse owners will be priced out of living here. This will greatly change the rural/agriculture flavor of the island. I suspect with time, much of the island residences will be purchased as second homes for the richest 1% in Seattle and Bellevue. With this comes a loss of a sense of community as people will only visit on weekends or the summer months. Vacation rentals will increase, as will crime with the absence of full time residents.

Thank you for your time and please consider a slower, more gradual, and more reasonable rate of increase.

Sincerely,

Sarah B Poyen

Jennifer Rogers

From: Sarah Winston <swinston05@comcast.net>
Sent: Sunday, February 26, 2023 7:40 PM
To: Ferry Comments; Sarah Winston
Subject: Proposed ferry fares Guemes Island Ferry

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*Although fares/rates have not increased in recent years, this new proposal of increases is exceptionally steep. A better approach should have been incremental over time! Incremental increases are generally palatable, but a 71% increase all at once is just not acceptable for the ferry ridership. The commissioners are quoted as saying the new rates “ appear fair”. Oh? Imagine a 71% increase on a toll bridge or road in other parts of Skagit County that the commissioners must face. Would hardly appear fair.

*The proposed fare schedule appears to be modeled to increase revenue because the Skagit County Road Fund Manager wants to limit the road fund contribution by a significant amount, creating a very steep increase in fares to the ferry ridership. The study suggests narrowing the expenditure designated (for years) to the ferry, giving the revenue deficit burden to the ferry users. It would seem more practical to gradually limit the contribution over time, not all at once.

*Surely the county road fund has and will see an increase in overall revenue based on property values and tax increases. Guemes Island property owners pay into that county wide road fund. Is that reflected in the study numbers?

* There are, of course, the Guemes Island residents that must commute from the island to work that will be impacted, but there are quite a number of people that commute TO Guemes Island to work that will also be impacted.

* At one time it was suggested that the Skagit County Road crews, trucks and equipment that frequent use of the ferry would pay for that use as a credit to the revenue “ bucket”. Let’s hope that concise records have been kept of the cost of hauling all those trucks, equipment and crew and that number is reflected in the revenue stream. The county road fund needs to balance that “ lost” revenue.

*An increase in fares may be necessary but the current strategic proposal is harsh. Along with dozens of other Guemes Islander, I strongly suggest a re-think on the current proposal. Think smaller increments, gradualism.

Thank you for your time and considerations.
Sarah Winston swinston05@comcast.net

Sent from my iPad

Jennifer Rogers

From: Sarah Winston <swinston05@comcast.net>
Sent: Friday, June 16, 2023 10:17 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Fwd: Proposed ferry fares Guemes Island Ferry

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Sent from my iPad

Begin forwarded message:

From: Sarah Winston <swinston05@comcast.net>
Date: February 26, 2023 at 7:40:27 PM PST
To: ferrycomments@co.skagit.wa.us, Sarah Winston <swinston05@comcast.net>
Subject: Proposed ferry fares Guemes Island Ferry

*Although fares/rates have not increased in recent years, this new proposal of increases is exceptionally steep. A better approach should have been incremental over time! Incremental increases are generally palatable, but a 71% increase all at once is just not acceptable for the ferry ridership. The commissioners are quoted as saying the new rates “ appear fair”. Oh? Imagine a 71% increase on a toll bridge or road in other parts of Skagit County that the commissioners must face. Would hardly appear fair.

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*An increase in fares may be necessary but the current strategic proposal is harsh. Along with dozens of other Guemes Islander, I strongly suggest a re-think on the current proposal. Think smaller increments, gradualism.

Thank you for your time and considerations.
Sarah Winston swinston05@comcast.net

Sent from my iPad

Jennifer Rogers

From: ksjander@juno.com
Sent: Monday, February 27, 2023 2:16 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Proposed Guemes Island ferry fare increase

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To Grace Kane, Rachel Rowe, Ron Wesen, Peter Browning, and Lisa Janicki:

I am a full time resident of Guemes Island, and I am writing to express my concerns with the proposed fare increases for the Guemes Island ferry service, as proposed by the KPFF consulting group. Their published proposals endorse a fare increase, depending on how the accounting is applied, of 71% (range of increase from 52 - 92%). The stated reason for this increase is to free up other monies for road projects in the county.

There are several troubling aspects to this proposal:

- 1) Island demographics. Guemes Island population is listed as 620 full time residents (2023 figures). Note that 174 (36%) of this total are people over 60 years old. Much of this older population is on a fixed income, who will have a difficult time managing a 52-92% fare increase, especially with medical issues and mobility issues that require one or more ferry trips per week, in a car. This rate increase will fall heaviest on our seniors and islanders of limited means, which will serve to make the ferry unaffordable for many.
- 2) Walk-ons/bicycles. An additional issue is the steep increase in proposed fares for bicycle riders and pedestrians. If the ferry is to run most efficiently, and minimize the cars left behind for each run, it would make sense to incentivize pedestrian and bicycle ridership by keeping prices lower. Sadly, the proposed rate increases do not incentivize non-car ridership.
- 3) Comparable ferry service. At a meeting on 2/23, Captain Rowe stated that Guemes ferry fare prices are on a par with other ferry systems. While this may be true, I would challenge Skagit County government to state which other ferry jurisdiction is proposing a 71% fare increase. The closest direct comparator to the Guemes ferry is the Lummi Island ferry service (both are county run, with roughly the same boat size and crossing time). Somehow, the Lummi ferry can make 36 runs per day on a weekday, compared to 26 a day (on a Friday) for Guemes Island, and charge a similar fare. Perhaps KPFF should be studying the Lummi ferry service, and see if there are efficiencies that Skagit County could adopt.
- 4) Road Maintenance. My property taxes, which increased 50% since last year, include a substantial distribution for the upkeep of roads in the county. At the 2/23 meeting, commissioner Kane stated that "island residents need to pay their share toward ferry operations". Between county property taxes and ferry fares, I believe that I am doing exactly that. To finance repairs to the Fonk Road culvert at the expense of Guemes Island commuters does not seem equitable.

In summary, I understand that ferry fares will go up over time. However, the scale of this proposed increase is unprecedented in any ferry system I am familiar with. I ask the commissioners to consider: smaller rate increases, especially for Island residents, seniors, and islanders of modest means, as well as monetary incentives for non-car passengers.

I thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,

Scott Anderson
7306 Channel View Drive
Anacortes, WA 98221
email: ksjander@juno.com

Jennifer Rogers

From: Commissioners
Sent: Thursday, March 9, 2023 10:10 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: FW: Guemes Ferry proposed increase in fare.

From: Scott Parker <eaglewolf605@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, February 24, 2023 1:07 PM
To: Commissioners <commissioners@co.skagit.wa.us>
Subject: Guemes Ferry proposed increase in fare.

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To whom it may concern,

As a resident of Guemes island, I am aware of the possible increases for the fares.

To the best of knowledge the increase will be an unrealistic amount based on COSI, and repayment of the new ferry. It should be one or the other. Not both.

I am in hopes of having a total transparent meeting with actual figures in the budget that will show what the breakdown will be.

I understand that the ferry workers are not compensated enough for their hard work and motivation.

An increase I know we all understand, however the proposed is outrageous. This seriously needs a vote and agreement with the residents who use this everyday.

I propose that cards be offered to all of the residents only with at least at the minimum of 15% decrease. Compared to someone who does not reside here.

Looking forward to hearing from the committee.

Regards,

Scott Parker

Jennifer Rogers

From: Sharon <sharon@makus.com>
Sent: Monday, March 13, 2023 1:11 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Cc: Commissioners
Subject: Ferry fares

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I write in protest to the unfair raise in ferry rates. I am one of many island residents who are elderly and on a fixed income. The inequitable raise in ferry fares will impact those of us who are most vulnerable. Comparing Guemes to other islands served by ferry is apples and oranges. Guemes has very limited services. There is no full scale grocery, no pharmacy, no health care, no post office, no veterinary, no hospital, and until there is a ferry contract, no emergency medical ferry callout. The ferry is our state highway and the 800 permanent residences should not be penalized to fund other projects. The county is not representing or looking out for their constituents! Sharon Bennett

Jennifer Rogers

From: Shar Hughlitt <sharhughlitt@yahoo.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 9, 2023 4:24 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Ferry increase

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Commissioners

I have lived on Guemes since 1995. I retired here and live on Social Security. This high increase in ferry fares will cause a heartship for me and for others like me who live on fixed incomes. 71% increase seems ridiculously high.

Sincerely

Sharon Hughlitt

[Sent from Yahoo Mail on Android](#)

Jennifer Rogers

From: Sheriboddy <sheriboddy@yahoo.com>
Sent: Friday, March 10, 2023 1:00 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Guemes ferry

#####

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Hello, Do the accounting figures used by the county include the fact that for several months during the onset of the Covid pandemic, the county did NOT charge ferry fees for several months? Including this lack of funding in to the equation of your assessment of why the ferry fees need to be increased is of the utmost importance!! You must know that running the ferry with no revenue for those months needs to be considered and “ refigured” when you come up with your ideas for ferry fee increases. Not doing so would be very, very negligent. Thank you, s Boddy

Sent from my iPad

Jennifer Rogers

From: Sherry Tamone <sltamone@alaska.edu>
Sent: Friday, March 10, 2023 9:45 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Guemes Ferry

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I spoke at tge zoom meeting but I want to emphasize that an increase in fares to the extent that is being considered is unfair to Guemes Island residents.

- 1) we are not all wealthy and the property taxes that have been assessed over tge past 3 years are already causing hardships for people with fixed incomes. That increase in property tax is a windfall for Skagit County.
- 2) I would not charge for bicycles because if the fare for passenger plus bike increases by over 100% this will discourage bike travel
- 3) guemes ferry is an extention of the road system and while many people don't use the ferry because they don't live here, I could just as well guarantee that many people don't drive up into the Skyline development yet we support O&M of all roads.
- 4) increasing fares will generate another obstacle for young people of diverse incomes living on Guemes.
- 5) I see the public transport servicing Skagit County running empty larde diesel busses and wonder if Skagit couldn't run smaller busses at non peak hours
6. Why not look for federal funds/grants to help subsidize public transport including tge Guemes ferry,

Thank you for not raising fares to capture skagit road maintenance funds.

Sherry Tamone
Skagit County Tax payer since 1991. Full time resident since 2020

Jennifer Rogers

From: Stephanie Kavanaugh <stephanie.kavanaugh@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 9, 2023 3:09 PM
To: Commissioners; Ferry Comments
Cc: guemesferry@gmail.com
Subject: Guemes Island Ferry Rate Increase Proposal!

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To: Skagit County Commissioners: Ron Wesen, Lisa Janicki, Peter Browning
Public Works Director/County Engineer: Grace Kane P.E.
Ferry Operations Division Manager: Captain Rachel Rowe
1800 Continental Place
Mount Vernon, WA. 98273

Re: SKAGIT COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS FERRY DIVISION
2023 GUEMES ISLAND FERRY FARE INCREASE

From: Stephanie Kavanaugh
5943 S Shore Road
Anacortes WA 98221

Dear Commissioners, Director, and Captain:

We have been on Island since early 2002. What drew us here was that, while Guemes was an Island, it was easily accessible Island.

For some reason 'Skagit County' doesn't really seem to consider Guemes Island and the people that live here as part of Skagit County. Whenever Ferry issues come up, it seems that the first response is to remind us that we chose to live here (true--one does choose to live somewhere). And then the second response is that some other place in the county is more deserving of funds, etc. Do you tell the folks living in the far eastern part of the County that they live too far out in the woods? We are all in this County together, whether in rural Skagit County or on an Island in Skagit County. Please don't try to make us, the folks who live and travel to Guemes Island, somehow out be the bad guys, taking all the money. We aren't. The County Road Fund which covers all rural roads including the Guemes Ferry (which really creates a marine road in rural Skagit County), is quite well supported by our property tax portion.

And yet, you feel the need to increase ferry fares an exorbitant amount! We all understand that the price of doing just about everything goes up. We do expect that ferry fares would need to be increased some. However the rate of increase proposed by KPFF is absurd, not to mention the new categories of fares.

All of us on Guemes Island support businesses, services, medical offices, etc on the mainland of Skagit County. We have to--we have only minimal services on the Island. Everything done on the Island-- construction, repairs, utilities, eating dinner at home--has to come over on the Ferry. All suppliers/workers make money by coming to Guemes Island. If the County wishes to raise more revenue from the Ferry users, perhaps making the fares as reasonable as possible would do that. We each make more runs, more ferry fare collected. If fares are raised so high that we all chose to just not go to town, the County will not collect nearly as much.

Or is that really the County's end game? Raise the rates, discourage ridership, say 'oh dear, we just don't have enough money to run the Ferry', cut runs and continue the downward spiral?

Maybe instead the County could consider Guemes Island an asset to the county! A tourist attraction which brings folks through town-who shop in town on their way to Guemes Island. An attraction for entertainment--take the ferry over for an evening of music and dinner at the Store. Come over for a hike or a bike ride around the Island. And the flip side, if Ferry fares are reasonable, more Islanders head to town for dining, entertainment, etc, supporting the local economy. If the rates are raised too much, all those sorts of discretionary trips just won't happen. All those 'extra' trips that bring in revenue for the Ferry. But please, don't misinterpret my words. I'm not hoping for more runs or late weeknight runs. I just don't want to see the County cut our existing schedule to 'save money'.

One last comment has to do with streamlining operations/reducing operating expenses. There are always two sides to a budget. Let's skip the idea of a toll booth for now. What earthly purpose would that serve, other than adding expense, delaying loading the ferry and making it more difficult to leave on time with a full boat? Why don't we get the new ferry up and running and all those bugs sorted out first. Perhaps at some later date a toll booth will make sense. Let's not add that to the reason why ferry fares have to increase right now.

Respectfully,
Stephanie Kavanaugh
happily living on the jewel of Skagit County

Jennifer Rogers

From: Stephen Orsini <sailingorsini@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, February 4, 2023 11:18 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Electronic ticketing for the Guemes Island ferry

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An electronic ticketing system has three goals: 1. increase efficiency and ticketing by allowing passengers to purchase their own tickets on line. 2. Remove the position of full-time Purser. 3. Provide an often-visited website to which Skagit County can sell outside advertising. There are a number of firms that can provide this electronic ticketing/web platform. One example is American Eagle because they have specific ticketing experience in the Pacific Northwest for the Pierce County ferries. It was Pierce County's choice to add another position when this electronic ticketing system was adopted but it was unnecessary according to American Eagle. Instituting an electronic ticketing platform would reduce the need for a ticketing booth somewhere on the Anacortes side. A ticketing booth has proven to be a restriction point to adequately load in a short time the number of vehicles necessary for a larger ferry both in the case of Pierce County and the Edmunds-Mukilteo run.

A concern was expressed by ferry management at the January 3, 2023 public meeting that an outside ticketing firm could go out of business. This is not the case with American Eagle which has supplied electronic ticketing for such large entities as the Chicago Transit Authority and has also worked with SKAT to improve their ticketing system. As to creating a ticketing system in-house, this has been tried by Skagit County previously with expensive, disastrous results.

At the January 3 meeting, the laudable statement was made that ferry management wants to think outside the box and is considering selling advertising on billboards near the ferry landings. A firm like American Eagle can also create a ticketing platform as an avenue for selling advertising to increase Skagit County revenue. This will be a more cost effective method than installing physical billboards.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a comment.

Stephen Orsini

4971 Guemes Island Road

Anacortes, WA 98221

Jennifer Rogers

From: Stephen Orsini <sailingorsini@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 6, 2023 6:06 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Cc: Commissioners; guemesferry@gmail.com
Subject: Fare increase for the Guemes Ferry

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To: Skagit County Public Works and the Board of County Commissioners
Re: The Proposed Rate Increase for the Guemes Island Ferry from the KPFF Rate Study Presented February 28, 2023
From: Stephen Orsini
4971 Guemes Island Rd.
Anacortes, WA 98221

Grace Kahn, Skagit County Public Works Director, was quoted in the March 1 edition of the Anacortes American article on the Guemes Ferry, “ We’re coming to a point where we can’t afford \$1.0 million per year coming out of the road fund, . . . adding that island residents need to pay their share toward ferry operations.”

Guemes Island, like other areas of unincorporated Skagit County, pays a tax annually into the county road fund based on assessed land value. The assessed value for Guemes Island for 2023 is an impressive \$605,785,292. The current rate is \$1.30/\$1000 of the assessed value. This means that Guemes Island will subsidize the County Road Fund in the amount of \$787,521.00 in 2023. The County does not in its accounting methodology allow this Road Fund revenue to be applied directly against the operating cost of the Guemes Ferry. The implication in Ms Kahn’s statement is that the islander’s only take from the road fund for the Guemes Island Ferry.

In addition to the tax contribution to the road fund, the ridership of the Guemes Ferry pays fares, termed fare box revenue. The fare box revenue is augmented annually by two State contributions to counties which have ferries: one from the Motor Vehicle Fuel Tax and the other from the Washington State Department of Revenue Deficit Reimbursement Fund. This gives a five-year income average of \$1,501,939 annually. But the five-year total cost of running the Guemes Ferry, which includes haul-outs as operations and maintenance, is \$2,598,678 annually. So the County’s contribution from the road fund, not offset by the Island road fund tax contribution, has a five-year average of \$1,096,739.

Over time, a number of County decisions ranging from significant scheduling changes, to adding more crew and refusing to apply for new free engines from the Volkswagen settlement fund have added significantly to the cost of running the Guemes. Moving cars is how the ferry generates the

most fare box revenue, but the car and driver ridership remains frozen due to operational changes. The only way to address this situation is to increase fares. Cost savings were not presented as part of the KPFF Plan.

Looking at the proposed fare increase on the individual level, in 2022 my wife and I paid \$1800.00 in ferry fares and \$1189.00 in road fund tax. For 2023, our payment into the road fund based on increased property valuation rises to \$1460.00 Applying the overall proposed fare increase of **71%** to last year's fare expense of \$1800, our cost of fares will rise to \$3,078 making our 2023 contribution to the road fund plus cost to ride the Guemes Ferry \$4,538.00.

In the fall of 2022, the Lummi Island Ferry instituted a fare increase. One outcome is that their fare for individual car and driver rose from \$14.00 to \$17.00. (Guemes Ferry's car and driver will increase from \$15.00 to \$25.00.) They managed this fare increase process internally without paying a consultant \$80,000 - \$100,000 which is what Skagit County did in hiring KPFF, for this specific task.

What remains today is a much more expensive operation for the Skagit County Ferry, moving less cars than in the past, sharply rising property tax payments and no recognition of the increasing tax revenue accruing from the island to the County Road Fund.

Jennifer Rogers

From: Stephen Orsini <sailingorsini@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 7, 2023 11:10 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Cc: Commissioners; Ferry Committee
Subject: An equitable fare increase for the Guemes Island Ferry

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Date: March 7, 2023

**To: ferrycomments@co.skagit.wa.us
commissioners@co.skagit.wa.us**

Re: Toward achieving an equitable fare increase for the Guemes Ferry.

From: Stephen Orsini

**4971 Guemes Island Rd.
Anacortes, WA 98221**

1. The current fare increase proposal put forth in the KPFF study results in fare increases with most categories seeing an increase of 100% or more. Many of the figures used in the study, such as the projected budget of \$3,213,000, have no background data that is available to the public until after the fare increase has been made. Why did KPFF not use the 5 year average Adjusted O&M expenditure of \$2,250,816? The time frame to adopt this plan is exceedingly short and must be extended by 45 days to allow further study of options mentioned below and for adequate public input with transparency of shared information.
2. The current resolution, **R20180123**, and its ferry fare calculation methodology should not be abandoned. The historical data it provides is extremely valuable. Fare adjustment amounts can be accomplished within the adjustable components of this model.
3. Credit has to be given in the current ferry fare calculation methodology for the substantial amount of Road Fund Tax, \$787,521.00 for 2023, that Guemes Island is subsidizing the County Road Fund. The difference between this subsidy and the amount actually paid from the Road Fund annually for the ferry can then be used in the existing fare calculation methodology.
4. The County should investigate changing the use of the surcharge, currently raising about \$250,000 annually, to be applied to haul out costs at least until the planned new vessel is operational with expected reduction in haul out costs.
5. The County should not spend money on a ticket booth but instead should institute an electronic, scanner-based ticketing system that allows riders of all categories to purchase their own tickets via cell phone or ticket machine in the waiting room prior to boarding the ferry. The goal of this system is to reduce loading time and reduce the need for a full-time pursuer. Once up and running

this active ticketing web-site can also be used to sell advertising as another revenue stream for the County.

6. As a method to control the continuing cost increases in the manning of the Guemes Ferry and provide a cap to operational expenditures, the County, with proper pre-notification of the Inland Boatman's Union, should investigate, via a Request for Proposal, employing a marine management firm like HMS or Crowley Maritime Services to operate the Guemes Ferry. HMS is the company which operates the Pierce County ferries under a lease contract arrangement. One of the advantages is that the management company is responsible for hiring ferry personnel and negotiating pay with the Inland Boatman's Union.

Jennifer Rogers

From: Stephen Orsini <sailingorsini@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, April 14, 2023 8:58 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Cc: Commissioners; Ferry Committee
Subject: Ferry Fare Increase Comments: Retain the Ferry Fare Revenue Target Report

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The Guemes Island Fare Recovery Methodology is not Broken.

The Guemes Island Ferry Management consistently cites the failure of the Guemes Island Fare Recovery Methodology to meet its 65% Ridership Farebox Revenue Target since 2018. This is a prime reason given for hiring a consultant to explore a fare increase which in its first iteration resulted in proposed increases in many categories of 100%. The Fare Recovery Methodology (model) was created by the County and codified in 2010-2011 by Resolutions R2010050/R20110382. To achieve the amount of the proposed fare increase, the County wants to do away with the current fare resolution in favor of a system which raises fares based on projected budgets two years into the future and includes the Consumer Price Index no matter what the actual cost to operate the ferry. It is time for an analysis of the Fare Recovery Methodology keeping in mind this is the County's model.

From 2012 to 2017, the Fare Recovery Methodology exceeded its 65% farebox revenue by amounts ranging from \$8, 419 in 2012 to a high of \$94,097 in 2016. (The amounts exceeding the revenue target are folded back into the Road Fund offsetting the target 35% paid out of the Fund.) Going back to 2012 from 2022, the fare box revenue has exceeded its target in 6 years out of the last 10.

In 2018, the fare box revenue was below the target by \$50,080. This deficit normally would have engendered a serious discussion of a fare increase. In 2018, however, to ensure capital funding for a new vessel from CRAB, the County was required to have "skin in the game" so the County imposed a surcharge of 20% plus per ticket to build a capital fund for a new vessel in the future. This surcharge, the highest ticket percentage of any ferry system in the State of Washington, is generating about \$245,000 annually but cannot be accounted in the fare recovery model. For the ridership, however, this represented a major increase in the fares. So in 2018 the County Commissioners chose not to raise fares that would be shown in the fare recovery model. This was the same for the 2019 year in which the recovery model missed the 65% target by \$129,729.

The year 2020 saw the fare box revenue miss its target by the largest amount, \$296,847 in the history of the model. This was the first year of the Covid 19 Pandemic. The response of Ferry Management to the Pandemic, in order to protect the crew, was to suspend collecting any fares for 43 days with an estimated loss in revenue of \$114,000. Although fares were collected normally in

2021, this was still a year affected by the pandemic. Travel was still down. In 2021, the fare box revenue missed the target by \$185,587, its second largest miss in its history.

During these years, although money was pouring out of the Federal Government to sustain wages and employment in all sectors, no credit toward crew wages appears in the model. Compare this with the Pierce County Ferries as quoted in the *Pierce County Ferry Comparative Analysis*, “Pierce County has also benefited a great deal through the various Coronavirus relief bills (increased 5307 revenues via Cares in 2020, and almost 40% of the usual revenue collection from CRRSA in 2021), which directed some federal dollars to ferries.” The Guemes Island Ferry Manager stated that the loss in revenue in 2020 was made up by a special sale of punch cards—without their normal expiration date. This brought in cash but effectively froze those punch cards from any future fare increase. (One person reportedly bought \$14,000 worth of these punch cards.) The fact remains that no Federal relief money was applied to offset crew wages in the model. Wages remain a major cost in the operation of the vessel, in 2020, a non-haul out year, 64%.

In looking just at the last five years, the model shows that the 65% target was missed but there is no analysis of why. Further the model is the messenger, it worked as designed, but this is not a justification for throwing the model out. This is akin to shooting the messenger. No doubt that it is time for another fare increase for the Guemes Island Ferry but one that is similar to that recently achieved by the Whatcom Ferry which has a fare recovery model and used it to arrive at about a 20% increase in fares. They did not see the need to throw out their model, nor did they spend an estimated \$80,000- \$100,000 to hire a consultant to achieve the fare increase. (All consultant fees are included in the model as a cost.)

In these periodic fare increase episodes, no analysis is made of costs and whether the increase in costs actually achieves operational efficiencies. This is termed a cost/benefit analysis, a tool used often in private business. As the Guemes Ferry earns most of its income from vehicular traffic, a major consideration in adding cost should be whether the cost increase actually moves more vehicular traffic. In 2013, the total cost of salaries including benefits for the ferry amounted to \$782,759. By 2021 this total had risen to \$1,279,922, an increase in 8 years of 63.5%. In that same period the vehicular traffic remained flat. The 63.5% increase in wages was mainly due to addition of staff but achieved no corresponding increase in the efficiency of moving vehicles. The 63.5% increase far exceeds any national indices for cost increases in that same period.

Another quote from the *Pierce County Ferry Comparative Analysis*: “The Guemes Island Ferry vessel *M/V Guemes* was built in 1979 and runs on diesel and has extremely high maintenance costs.” The *M/V Whatcom Chief*, also a diesel ferry, is about 60 years old and the *M/V Guemes* is about 40 years old. The question remains why is the *Guemes* running such high maintenance costs?

The major advantage of keeping the current fare increase methodology is that it tracks the increases in the overall cost of operating the Guemes Ferry. It also averages out the expensive years of haul out with the much less expensive years when no haul out is performed.

The current KPPF (consultant to Skagit County) analysis and budget projection is based on 2023, a haul out year, so the proposed increase in fares and the new budget projection, the highest in the history of the operation of the ferry at \$3,169,000, can only result in a massive fare increase for the Guemes Island Ferry ridership. The projected budget for the following year will not include a haul out, but the fares will not go down—guaranteed.

Another reason given by County management for removing their ferry fare target revenue model is that it is “old”, i.e. created in 2010-11. Actually, the model has proved its value and flexibility over the years and continues to do so. Just because something is “old “is not necessarily a viable analytical tool. Further, the model, by adjusting say the fare box revenue target of 65%, can accommodate a very significant fare increase while maintaining a valuable tool for analysis of the overall cost of the Guemes Island Ferry operation and maintenance.

The 2023 Fare Revenue Target Report has not been generated and is usually not available prior to its April 30, 2023 due date. Given the direction of the current fare review, it is not clear that the 2023 report will be generated.

Submitted by:
Stephen Orsini
4971 Guemes Island Rd
Anacortes, WA 98221

From: Stephen Orsini <sailingorsini@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, June 8, 2023 7:48 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Cc: Commissioners; Commissioners; Commissioners; Ferry Committee
Subject: Retain the Current Fare Methodology for the Guemes Ferry

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Retain the Current Fare Methodology

The fare increase proposed by the consultant KPFF is artifice that avoids any relationship to the cost of operating the Guemes Ferry. Although it purports to look two years back at costs and then project a budget two years into the future, the proposal already locks in a five year fare increase of about 100% based on a budget projection for 2023 of \$3,412,191 which is the highest in the history of the Guemes Ferry operation. This baseline budget is set to increase by 20% through 2028. Fares will increase about 14% per year which achieves a compounding effect. This model will reflect no reduction in operations and maintenance long promised with the introduction of the new hybrid-electric vessel with a projected on-line date of 2025. The State of Washington support to counties with ferries will be folded into the County Road Fund as is the Guemes road fund tax, amounting to \$787,521 this year.

Of interest is that Guemes Island is not alone this time around. Other small communities, like Lake Cavanaugh, are being told there is no money to fix their roads although they too have paid their road fund tax over the years. The County is currently employing a consultant to investigate creating taxing districts singling out small communities that have higher demands on the road fund. This approach begs the question, where is the road fund being spent and is it destined only for “larger” communities within the County? By focusing these additional taxing districts on smaller communities, the County Commissioners will avoid the politically unpopular but fairer county-wide increase in the road fund tax.

The County has a complete monopoly on the operation of the Guemes Ferry. It is a transit system. No transit system, be it SKAT or the Guemes Ferry, can pay its O&M and capital costs completely from fare box revenue, just like no single smaller community in this county can pay for the bridge or road system that might serve it.

The current fare methodology laid down in 2010 is best because it accurately tracks the operational costs and indicates when and how much of a fare increase is warranted. The KPFF Model will not have the same level of cost transparency and already ignores the actual costs of O&M of the ferry for the next five years. This model should not be accepted by the Skagit

County Commissioners who have a responsibility to run an equitably priced ferry transportation system for the majority of the ridership. Without this approach and facing what amounts to a 100% fare increase, Guemes farmers will be forced out of business. Families, with parents who work daily off island, long the backbone of the Guemes Island community, will be forced to move from the island. With this decline in year-round ridership, the ferry system will engender a decline in revenue which may not rebound with time.

Submitted by:

Stephen Orsini

4971 Guemes Island Rd

Anacortes, WA 98221

360 202 7280

Jennifer Rogers

From: Stephen Orsini <sailingorsini@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, July 25, 2023 10:01 AM
To: Commissioners
Cc: Ferry Comments
Subject: Proposed Resoulution and fare increase

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#####

To: The Board of County Commissioners
Re: RESOLUTION RESCINDING RESOLUTION R20180123 AND R20100050 (AMENDED BY R20110382), REVISING THE FERRY FARE REVENUE TARGET METHODOLOGY AND ESTABLISHING THE 2023/2024 FERRY FARE SCHEDULE

1. In the ninth “Whereas”, change the word “desires for” to “mandates” and remove the word “reasonably”.
2. The 14 ft. and under category makes little sense for the Guemes Ferry. It adds a ticket category in the face of the long standing goal of reducing the number of ticket categories. Further, few cars will qualify- the Toyota Prius, for example is over 14 feet. This will be a difficult category to enforce by the crew. Please remove it.
3. Likewise, the youth under 18 riding for free is difficult and time consuming for the purser to monitor. Youth on the island already ride back to the island free coming home from school. What will be lost will be the revenue for non-resident youth transiting to Guemes in the summers, many on vacation or attending concerts. The relief intended for Guemes resident families will have little financial impact on the substantial fare increases facing working parents.
4. Please institute an e-ticketing system that allows the ferry riders to ticket themselves so that a simple scan is all that is needed to check ridership payment before boarding. This will reduce the time for ticketing and reduce the need for a full time purser. It will also reduce the amount of time to ticket the walk-ons during summers especially on concert nights held at the Guemes Island Store.
5. After decades of struggling to manage the Guemes Ferry, and following this year's fare increase, it is time for the County, after proper notification of the union, to solicit bids to privatize the Guemes Ferry operation. One savings will be that the operator will be responsible for negotiating wage and benefits with the union instead of the County. The often heard threat that fares will increase massively has not been the case in Pierce County but should be checked through a bid process. Under the County management, fares will essentially double over the next five years irrespective of the actual cost to run this vessel or the next.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this information.

Stephen Orsini
4971 Guemes Island Rd
Anacortes, WA 98221

Jennifer Rogers

From: Sue Eriksen <sueeriksen@outlook.com>
Sent: Friday, March 10, 2023 3:05 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Cc: Sue Eriksen
Subject: SKAGIT COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS FERRY DIVISION - 2023 Guemes Island Ferry Fare Increase

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To: Skagit County Commissioners Ron Wesen, Lisa Janicki, and Peter Browning
Public Works Director/County Engineer Grace Kane P.E.
Ferry Operations Division Manager Captain Rachel Rowe
1800 Continental Place
Mount Vernon, WA 98273

From: Sue Eriksen
5123 Guemes Island Rd.
Anacortes, WA 98221

Dear Commissioners, Director and Captain:

As a home owner on Guemes Island, I have concern over the process by which the ferry rates are being reviewed and over the proposed new rate structure. From listening to the full public meeting and reading articles and comments, I suggest a more collaborative process that would include the Ferry Committee at minimum, if not additional property owners. Surely the Commissioners wish to serve their constituents fairly. Let's find reasonable solutions together that work for all needs. Clearly the current process and plan risk securing the projected funds from KPFF's study and the county's goal. Property owners are understandably angry, frustrated, and concerned about their ability to afford the extraordinary proposed rates. As a result, many will change their use of the ferry, walking on to save money if transportation can be secured on the Guemes and Anacortes sides. Or they may severely reduce ferry usage. Not only would this inconvenience residents and reduce the expected ferry fare revenue, it impacts the county's economy, as many have explained.

Again, I hope you will put the current process on hold and work in collaboration with residents to consider best solutions from the many of the excellent suggestions being putting forth.

Thank you for your consideration.

Jennifer Rogers

From: s f <foxas1@msn.com>
Sent: Saturday, March 11, 2023 4:35 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Guemes Island fare increase

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As year around residents of Guemes Island my husband and I along with our neighbors will feel the full brute of the proposed fare increases on the Guemes ferry. The increase will cause us to rethink and readjust our trips to town. Currently we spend approximately \$1200.00 annually for senior drive-on and walk-on punch tickets. Your proposed fare schedule is so confusing, I am unable to figure out if I have to purchase separate tickets for a SUV and or a pick-up truck. If there is ever a question, simpler is a much better idea. Why make it confusing?

My husband is disabled so there are no more walk-on opportunities for him. I walk on as much as possible to be cost effective but doctor's appointments in Bellingham mean using a vehicle that will get us there and back, so a drive on is necessary.

The idea that year around residents should have to pay grossly inflated fares along with AirBnB renters, weekenders, and once in a lifetime visitor is ludicrous. The economic impact on the small businesses who service the Island will be passed on to the residents as well.

Has the county ever done a demographic study to find the median income on Guemes? Just because the real estate market estimates that property values are over a million dollars does not make us millionaires, just middle and lower income homeowners who have to pay higher property taxes.

Then we don't even get the credit for the road fund assessed value of our inflated property values! The \$780,000.00 should be part of our contribution to help with ferry expenses. Other Washington counties with ferries allow this why is Skagit County unique in this case?

To sum up we are within a few thousand dollars of qualifying for a freeze on our property tax. So we are fixed low income year around residents who can not afford your proposed rate increase.

Sincerely yours,

Susan Fox

Anthony Fox

5795 South Shore Road

Jennifer Rogers

From: Talya Makus <talya329@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, March 10, 2023 12:54 PM
To: Ferry Comments; Commissioners; guemesferry@gmail.com
Subject: Guemes Ferry Rate Hike

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Hello,

I was 13 or 14 years old when I was introduced to Guemes. Currently 3 generations of my family live here. My grandparents bought undeveloped property here and built a home which they hoped would remain in our family for generations to come. Your proposed rate increase could easily force my family from being able to enjoy what they worked so hard to create. There are many people here on a fixed income that the rate hike would force to leave. Ripping the fabric of this community. You can see the same islands from all over this area. It is the people here that make this place special. All of them.

Sincerely,

Talya Makus

Jennifer Rogers

From: Taunya Sell <taunya_sell@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, March 6, 2023 7:07 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: GUEMES ISLAND RESIDENT --- DO NOT IMPLEMENT PROPOSED FARE INCREASES

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To whom it may concern:

Seeing the proposed ferry fare increases, I am aghast. We are living in a time where 40% of Americans are struggling to pay for the basics of food, shelter and basic transportation -- and Skagit county thinks it is a good idea to implement a more than 100% cost increase for off-island travel on Guemes residents. This huge fare increase comes at a time where inflation is already pinching the wallets of Americans, making it very difficult for a large swath of the population. In addition to the continually rising inflation, this year's real estate taxes have risen more than 50% from last year. Has that been considered by Skagit county government - if so, why is Skagit county trying to take even more of my income with this ferry fare increase? This seems over the top.

Guemes is not an island of residents that consist of 1%. In fact, most year-round residents are not wealthy but fall somewhere in the middle class and many are at the lower end on the income spectrum. A rise of more than 100% in ferry fares takes away meaningfully from spending on other essentials such as food. Ferry fares are a basic and essential expense for island residents as there are no grocery stores on the island. In addition, there are many other essential services and amenities that do not exist on Guemes.

This is an unconscionable and an egregious very, very large tax increase on the people that live on Guemes. While this is not an actual tax increase, for all practical purposes it is. All residents need to leave to buy food and some need to get water off-island too. Many residents work off-island and need to commute to make money for their families, so the fare increase acts like an additional tax on their income. This will lead to a meaningful reduction in discretionary spending for residents, but more importantly to non-discretionary items like food and the cost of heating your home.

For small businesses on island, these higher fares will make it almost impossible to attract labor to the island, especially services-oriented labor. This comes at a time where the labor market is the tightest its been in 40 years. This is apt to lead to Guemes Island small businesses shuttering their or reducing their operations. Definitely not a positive for the economy of Guemes Island.

For those on a fixed income, this is a nightmare. This will also be a further tax on anyone who needs to bring essential services to the island. Say you need work done on your home. Cha-ching!

Furthermore, the implementation of this tax increase is being implemented with virtually no notice to residents. The largest ferry fare increase in the history of the island is being implemented without time for residents to even brace for the impact. This fare increase will put extreme pressure on households and on the entire economy of Guemes Island.

My children play basketball, football and have various hobbies that we as parents want to support. In 2022, alone, we spent \$1277 on ferry fares for just football - this includes fares for traveling to practices, games and car washes and other events. With the proposed fares, our ferry costs will rise to \$2687, a \$1410 increase, or a

rise of 110%. This calls into question football next year. I am sure others with kids in sports or those with regular medical treatments or those that commute for work are going to greatly feel the pinch if these proposed fares are implemented.

Please, please, do not raise fares to the level of the proposed rates. Skagit county should also take into account the 50% rise in taxes we are paying the county. This fare increase feels very out of touch with what is going on the real world. Don't make it harder for parents, commuters or those with requirements off-island. This is an egregious tax increase on Guemes resident. **DO NOT IMPLEMENT IT.**

Taunya Sell

Jennifer Rogers

From: Taunya Sell <taunya_sell@yahoo.com>
Sent: Saturday, April 15, 2023 3:27 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Guemes Island Resident - Adamantly Oppose Ferry Increase Plan

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Skagit Valley Board of Commissioners:

Me, my family and residents of Guemes Island vehemently oppose the egregious fare increase the Skagit County Board of Commissioner is proposing. The entire resident population of Guemes is up in arms at the proposed fare increases of greater than 100% in many instances. This is so over-the-top, it's really nuts. The county government is missing the point of the job they have, which is to serve and represent the people of their county in a fair and transparent way. Instead, we get a slap in the face. And you hope we don't notice. Believe me, we do.

We are also opposed to the new plan to charge different rates for peak vs non-peak as well the creation of several new categories of fares. Why would there be any need to increase the fare categories? Simple is always the most fair system - and this system has seemed to work just fine since Guemes ferry's inception. The most obvious answer to the new categories is to complicate things for the residents of Guemes and to obscure the truly deleterious impacts on of these increases.

In addition, the plan to immediately implement the higher fare schedule screams of the ram-it-through methodology of the federal government that is frustrating voters across the country, akin to the Pelosi comment that "you can read the bill once you vote on it". Let's be clear that no one is a fan of the federal government today and if your methods such as: non-transparency, fudging the numbers, confiscating funds, and trying to ram through policy before the voters understand what has happened to them, is your policy too, we will all work to get the incumbents out. Citizens are tired of this corruption and deceit and overstep.

Let's be clear: most islanders are lower to middle income people and with the island a home to many retirees, many are on a fixed income. This fare increase is basically a huge tax increase that will make all other necessities for life much harder to attain. Especially with lower income folks that populate this island, of which there are many.

These fare increases are especially hard to stomach when one realizes that the county has used our budget -- a budget you are saying is under-funded -- to spend money on consultants to see how they can increase fare revenue the most without creating a squeal from residents. Well, let's be clear. There is a squeal and we are all aware of your underhanded tactics to ram this fare increase through and how you have used our budget to

achieve your ends of more and more revenue to spend. And our committee has made residents of Guemes and Anacortes aware that these are the tactics you are taking.

If there was one sense of fairness in your analysis, you would also consider in your thinking that we pay a higher percentage of ferry operating costs through fares than other neighboring counties – in that their road funds pay more of the ferry costs. Both Whatcom and Pierce county contribute 45% of the ferry budget from the Road fund but Skagit is only contributing 35% of the budget in our case. Why is there this disparity? Have the consultants you hired with our budget incorporated this into their analysis? No, they haven't. And why? Because the goal is to sock to the residents of Guemes and to travelers to the island and workers coming to the island to try to justify these increases. This goes both ways: as many folks here on Guemes need to make a living off island, so this tends to hit these people even harder since their travel is more regular and compulsory. These ferry increases are a worse hit to the bottom line for most resident than increasing gas prices 100%. Even Biden has a keen focus on the cost of travel, which is why he is working hard to keep gas prices low. It is a harder hit to the average resident.

Lastly, have you thought about the impacts to the island economy outside the residents? I think not. These huge fare increases are going to make it very difficult to bring much needed labor to the island from surrounding areas. Many of the island's businesses will be in peril because bringing lower wage labor to the island will be very challenging. Bringing contractors to fix homes and improve homes will also skyrocket in cost.

This all comes in a year where inflation is the highest its been in 40 years and Skagit County homeowners received a 50% increase in our real estate taxes. My road taxes are up 20% in one year. None of these things have been a concern to you.

Every islander or worker that comes to the island from Skagit county is opposed this ferry fare increase. If you listen to your constituents, you will not increase fares at all. Make things more equal with how much the county pays toward the Guemes ferry's operating budget, stop using our budget to pay for consultants that benefit only you, look for reasonable ways to reduce costs vs only looking through the lens/mindset that more revenue from your constituents is always better. This is an egregious power grab (money is power you know) and this kind of crazy has inflamed the residents. Do the right thing! Leave fares unchanged.

Taunya Sell, Guemes resident, wife and mother of two boys.

Jennifer Rogers

From: Tom Mayes <mgt.403m@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 28, 2023 1:03 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Comments on Guemes ferry rate increase

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I attended the February 28 meeting of the Skagit county commissioners to discuss the proposed rate increase for the Guemes Island ferry and was pleased with the information presented. I can sympathize with the residents in having their current situation changed but unfortunately we all have to change, look what the pandemic did. Skagit county has a job to perform to the best of their ability with the funds available. The county cannot continue to take funds from the road budget serving all of Skagit county to make up for the shortfalls in the O & M budget of the Guemes ferry. I support implementation of the proposal presented by KPFF with a maximum of \$750,000 cap on the amount taken from the road department each year. Additionally I believe Skagit county should review whether it may make sense in the future to contract out or sell the ferry system and or lease out the terminal.

Thomas Mayes
22972 Osborne Dr
Mount Vernon WA 98274

Jennifer Rogers

From: Tim Alaniz <tralaniz@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, March 10, 2023 2:29 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Guemes Ferry Fare Increase

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I am writing to protest the proposed Guemes ferry rate increase. A fare increase of this magnitude presents an unaffordable burden to families with children in school and low-income seniors. This would be on top of the large increases in the assessed value of our homes and resulting tax hike. I urge the commissioners to reject this unfair rate hike.

Thank you,

Tim Alaniz
5237 W Shore Road
Anacortes, WA 98221

Jennifer Rogers

From: Dr Tim Wittman <dogislander@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, June 8, 2023 6:38 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Find another source

#####

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#####

It is common knowledge that Anacortes and Guemes Island are the proverbial "Honey Pot" of the Skagit County taxation system. But enough is enough. Find your shortcomings somewhere else. Perhaps let go of your ties to Fisher road Construction. This has become obvious and ridiculous.

Dr Tim Wittman
Psychologist, NCSP

"I have not failed. I have just discovered 10,000 ways that do not work" (Thomas Edison)

Jennifer Rogers

From: guemestom@gmail.com
Sent: Monday, March 13, 2023 10:44 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Cc: Commissioners; guemesferry.@gmail.com
Subject: SOLUTIONS!

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FERRY COST HELP—TRY THIS

In 2018 the International Maritime Organization adopted a decarbonization goal of 50% by 2050. Recently our Federal Government has committed to net carbon maritime goal of zero by 2050. This goal has only 27 years to be realized. Considering our countries recent efforts to achieve carbon reductions through grants, low interest loans, and cost reductions for equipment, I believe we have the ability to harvest significant financial support for our electric ferry for the foreseeable future.

Should this be the case, I think any resources our new ferry can harvest must be applied directly to ferry operations and ticket costs. The road fund could be benefitted for all Skagit residents by efforts to secure these potential grants. To insure Skagit County takes advantage of all assets available to the electric ferry I would like to see an agreement to enlist the Guemes Ferry Committee as a resource locator for potential monies and grants available for the foreseeable future. To ensure equitable compliance with Skagit County and the Guemes Ferry Committee regarding the above agreement it needs to be underwritten by contract.

I realize considerable angst has been generated regarding the new ferry rates among Islanders and with good reasons. However, this situation is a dose of reality. It is my belief that working together Guemes Islanders and the Skagit County Commissioners will provide fare relief in the near future.

Tom Fouts



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Jennifer Rogers

From: Commissioners
Sent: Friday, March 17, 2023 2:00 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: FW: Guemes Island Ferry Workers

-----Original Message-----

From: Tom Godwin <ctomgodwin@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, March 17, 2023 1:25 PM
To: Commissioners <commissioners@co.skagit.wa.us>
Subject: Guemes Island Ferry Workers

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Dear Sir and Madam,

I am a 20+ year resident of Guemes Island. The Ferry workers have been the backbone of the Island service.

Given my property taxes have increase by 41% in the past calendar year, I would expect the Commissioners to share some of the largesse with the Ferry staff.

I encourage the County pay the Ferry staff a working wage and offer realistic inflation adjustments in the contract.

Respectfully yours,

Tom Godwin
7746 Guemes Island Road
Anacortes, Washington 98221

Jennifer Rogers

From: Thomas Murphy <murphy5162@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, March 1, 2023 2:36 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Proposed Ferry Fare Increase

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Good afternoon Commissioners,

I clearly understand the bind the county is in regarding their operating costs associated with the Guemes Island Ferry. And, while I recognize the need to increase revenue, I would ask that the Commissioners consider the following:

Implement the increase over a two- or three-year period of time.

Include an automatic yearly fare increase tied to the COL or Consumer Price index.

Continue with punch cards and discounts but remove the "usage dates" on some of the cards.

Consider some kind of bar code insignia or QR code for Guemes Island property owners to distinguish them from visitors, and charge visitors a higher fare. These can be placed in vehicle windows and/or carried as an ID card.

Completely redesign the Guemes parking lot to include grading, paving, and stripping, so that the entire property may be used. I would be willing to pay to park in a lot like that. A sticker purchased from the county and attached to your windshield would allow you to park in a ferry lot. All others would have to pay like they do at the State Ferry lots.

Do the same with the parking by the fence to Anchor Cove Marina and the "K" Street lot...

Thank you for your consideration and the work you do on behalf of us all.

Tom Murphy
5162 Totem Trail
Anacortes, WA 98221

Jennifer Rogers

From: Tom Smiley <etstreedoc@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, March 9, 2023 1:07 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Guemes ferry rates

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#####

Hi
I am writing to comment on the Guemes Island ferry rate proposal.

The proposed rate increase is outrageous. Going up over 70% is just too much. Working people and those of us who will be on fixed incomes are going to be severely impacted.

In this day and age of climate change, you shouldn't even be considering changing for bicycles. The more we can promote carbon free transportation, the more our children and grand children will appreciate us.

Keep our ferry toll minimal, don't cut off this part of the county.

Tom Smiley
4717 Guemes Island Road

Jennifer Rogers

From: Patricia Bradley <pbradley57@hotmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, June 15, 2023 11:03 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Guemes Ferry Rate Proposal

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Commissioners,

With all due respect, we do not need a consulting firm (KPFF) to tell us how to raise fares. Pretty sure that's why you have a ferry manager. She is the one responsible for setting the budget. From past experience, that's what managers do. KPFF has cast out the line and reeled the County in, and wants you to stay on the hook for the next five years. Come on, let's use a little common sense here.

Reference the proposal itself, you know that it is still not viable. As I have said before, the Guemes Island Ferry Committee (past & present members) is an extremely knowledgeable group. I would hazard a guess, and say that they know more about ferry operations than anyone at the county. They will offer you a counter proposal, (hopefully submitted on time) that should be considered.

On a final note, where are the cost saving strategies and ideas? The out of control spending (KPFF, insurance) has hurt ferry operations tremendously. We can all work together on this, like what was done in the past.

Thank you,
Trish Bradley
Sent from my iPhone

Jennifer Rogers

From: Stephen & Virginia Orsini <islandorsini@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, March 10, 2023 10:45 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Cc: guemesferry@gmail.com
Subject: 2023 Guemes Ferry rate hike proposal

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*Skagit County Commissioners: Ron Wesen, Lisa Janicki, Peter Brownig
Public Works Director/County Engineer: Grace Kane P.E.
Ferry Operations Division Manager: Captain Rachel Rowe
1800 Continental Place
Mount Vernon, WA. 98273*

*Re: SKAGIT COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS FERRY DIVISION
2023 GUEMES ISLAND FERRY FARE INCREASE*

*From: Virginia (Ginger) Orsini
4971 Guemes Island Rd.
Anacortes, WA 98221*

Dear Commissioners, Director, and Captain:

Given that:

The residents and businesses of Guemes Island cannot afford the 2023 proposed fare increases and maintain their current relationship with the ferry, their homes, farms, or jobs.

The residents of Guemes have deep connections with their homes, act responsibly toward their environment, pay their taxes, and are no different than the rest of the people of Skagit County. They pay their fair share of everything as long as it is reasonable. The proposed fare increase is not reasonable.

Residents of the island depend on jobs, food and services obtainable only from Anacortes. The ferry is considered an essential service, and is a huge part of the lives of the residents.

The "choices" that we made to live on Guemes were calculated choices based heavily on the ferry schedule and costs. Subsequently, the County has made all of the "choices" regarding the functioning of the ferry, and road maintenance without any transparency to, or representation from the ferry users. There has been no evidence of attempts to save costs. The County has kept their cards close to the vest. Why? The costs of Guemes Ferry haul outs are the highest of the four county-run ferries systems. Why? These are consequences of choices that the public works and ferry management have made, not the ferry users.

Visitors to the island can more easily absorb a larger share of the ferry tolls. During the peak season they create a huge increase in demand on the ferry, the roads, the staff, and the residents, and do not rely on the ferry to get to their jobs.

Skagit County has made expensive mistakes in regard to the ferry operation, and Guemes road maintenance that must be acknowledged before making another radical ferry rate increase. These mistakes are not the fault of the residents. Some of these are:

1. Moving a sensibly located gravel depository to a non-sensical area, and opening up 1.5 acres of forested land without a permit to do so, or an environmental review.
2. Refusing to try Beaver Deceivers in a created wetlands, crossed by an important access route, and using the wrong type of fill to repair that road, then having to do it over twice.
3. Not collecting fares during the Covid outbreak, hiring an operations manager that was not budgeted for, and hiring consultants where in-house and ferry committee input should have been sufficient.
4. Even considering the construction of a toll booth in a tight area that will only cost more, serve to back-up traffic, delay sailings, and be obsolete when patrons can ticket themselves.

Therefore, I suggest the following adjustments to your fare proposal:

1. Full-time residents that purchase multi-ride cards should not be subject to the "peak" fare rates
2. Residents with a punch card can take their bicycles for no extra charge. Charge a bike fee to visitors without punch cards.
3. Eliminate the under 14' car/driver category,
4. Limit the fare increases to around 20%- 25% across the board. For instance, raise non-peak adult passenger fares from \$4 to \$5, raise adult senior from \$2 to \$3. Adult punch card from \$77 to \$93, senior punch card from \$46 to \$58; raise car/driver ticket from \$12 to \$15, and senior car/driver from \$10 to \$12; raise car/driver punch card from \$196 to \$240, and senior car/driver punch card from \$156 to \$190. This should net you approximately \$200,000 to \$240,000 more toward the operation of the ferry and still fit the existing model.
5. Manage the road fund more efficiently, and look for more federal and state grants for large road projects.
6. Collaborate and share all accounting with the elected Ferry Committee as representatives of the patrons of this system.

Jennifer Rogers

From: Stephen & Virginia Orsini <islandorsini@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 6, 2023 7:24 PM
To: Ferry Comments
Cc: guemesferry@gmail.com
Subject: 2023 Ferry Fare Proposal - Final draft

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Virginia Orsini
4971 Guemes Island Road

June 6, 2023

Dear Commissioners:

It seems you have been taken off-guard by the fact that Public Works expenses, including ferry expenses have risen in the past year, especially since all costs have gone up, (including groceries and property taxes).

Financial mistakes were made by County workers during Covid by letting people ride free for more than a month and then selling limitless frequent-user cards. There has also been a shift in accounting since construction of a new ferry has been added into consideration - now ALL ferry expenses are considered "operations and maintenance". There were also several PW mistakes made on repair of the new "where did these beavers come from?" road, and the replacement of a storage site for road materials. Guemes Islanders have been blamed for not paying their fair share when questionable county actions may actually be at fault.

Islanders have always willingly paid fairly for their transport, so they should not bear the cost of losses to ferry revenue through county policy or errors. The 65 percent model based on a 5-year actual costs should be kept in place. Otherwise, the County has total control over this service with NO oversight or obligations to its users. That would be a situation ripe for corruption. Neither would this "let's gaze into the crystal ball" method of predicting expenses each year allow for the ups and downs of the cost of ferry maintenance. It would constantly predict upward, and essentially create another taxation during down-years.

Spreading out a draconian fare increase over five years will still have a negative impact on the day to day functioning of Island residents. In five years there will be another fare increase based on what? Insurance? A new assistant ferry manager? A toll booth? Parking? Cutting service? A comment like, "Well, you chose to live there" is getting pretty old, tired, and insulting. Everyone chooses to live somewhere for a variety of reasoned considerations. Make a distinction between those who live on Guemes and pay the bulk of ferry costs, and those that recreate here who pay a whole lot less of their budget.

Here are a few specific areas of concern in the fare proposal:

1. Bicycle tickets: Frequent user card holders should be able to bring a bike onto the island for no extra charge. They are either young and poor, or they are trying to assure they make the ferry, and are not a burden on the environment or the system. And of course, as frequent users, they are bearing the greater cost of the ferry, and are taking exceptional

measures to be able to live on the Island. Visitors to the Island, however should pay extra since, for them, it is recreation.

2. Eliminate the “under 14 feet” automobile category. It was state that one of the purposes of this proposal was to simplify the fare structure, and this complicates it. We scratch our heads. Give the benefit to bicycle riders instead. We do not need to have the same exact policies as the State Ferries.

3. Keep the current payment structure for children intact. Island kids get one free ride home from school each school day. Charge all other trips in line with senior fares. Eliminating this fare on children will drop revenue, but also unfairly benefit visitors who come to recreate.

4. Here’s the big one: Raise the millage rate for the Road Fund across the board, county-wide. If you are short on funds, you must consider that everyone in the county uses county roads, whether they are bridges, roundabouts, or a ferry (for maintenance of which you already get money from the State), and they must share the burden of these expenses according to their property values. This includes developers and expanding corporations. This year alone our property taxes have increased twenty-five percent. That means next year you should also see an increase in revenue for the Road Fund. If not, you need to consider changing some general County funding structures.

Therefore, the managers of the ferry and Public Works must work diligently to keep costs under control, and administer a reasonable fare structure that does not ruin working people, businesses, artists, and retired individuals that happen to live on Guemes. They must administer the fare structure in collaboration with the duly elected Guemes Ferry Committee. Then look at sharing any inflation growth taxation County-wide.

Sincerely,

Ginger Orsini

Jennifer Rogers

From: Nigel Cushing <cushlaza1@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, June 9, 2023 6:52 AM
To: Ferry Comments
Subject: Guemes Island Rate Study

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I am a Guemes Island resident and senior citizen, dependent on the ferry to access vital services, including medical and hospital facilities.

I view the ferry as a well managed county activity, with a dependable schedule offering safe and friendly service. I admire the management, masters and deck hands and their devotion to maintaining a sustainable, needed resource.

I regard the ferry as part and parcel of the county road system, not as a luxury, but as a normal part of Skagit County's public transportation system. Just as cars freely access the road system, so should they be able to access ferry service to the island at a reasonable cost.

When I decided to move to Guemes Island, almost 10 years ago I accepted the cost of accessing the island by paying a reasonable fare. So I am not advocating a fare-free ferry service. But at the same time, I do not believe fares should be unreasonable. They should reflect inflationary rises in costs, although not unduly so.

As a Skagit County real estate taxpayer, I expect the ferry district commissioners to act in a fair and equitable manner with regard to raising ferry fares. Many residents of the island are either living below the poverty level, or are living on fixed incomes that are reduced by inflation. This should be kept in mind.

Thank you for considering my views.

William Cushing,
5344 Beechnut Tree Lane
Guemes Island

Guemes Ferry Public Comment 2023 Ferry Fare Proposal

William Heft
7437 Holiday Blvd.
Anacortes, WA 98221
360-319-6588
billheft47@gmail.com

I as most of the residents on Guemes understand after several years of having the same ferry fares that an increase in fares is necessary. I suggest that the proposal is trying to do too many things at once. Changing the categories and the pricing at the same time causes huge variations to the users fare increases from -.05% to 215%. I have attached a spreadsheet that helped me see what was happening to proposed fares in relationship to what we are paying presently. Please note the far right column where I have noted the fares that islanders most often use.

In the Oversize Vehicles section I have noted the 30' to under 35' section as "Often used by islanders". This was mentioned by a speaker at your meeting on 2/28/23 when he explained that he has a small trailer he hauls things on and off the island with. In this combination his vehicle length is 31'. I also have a trailer that I tow with my pickup and it comes to 33' in length. Many other islanders also have a need to haul small trailers from time to time. As you will note from the spreadsheet that fare has raised 215% in the proposal. While vehicles with trailers cause the ferry staff to take care in the way they load the car deck these small trailers and their vehicles properly parked take up no more space than an under 14' vehicle and one under 22'. The vehicle and trailer combination proposed fare would be 167% higher than the proposed under 14' and under 22' vehicles parked separately.

Since it has been calculated that a 71% increase is needed in fares to meet your target, I suggest that a 71% increase on each of the categories on the present fare chart would be much easier to handle from an islanders prospective than the proposal presented. A 50% increase this year with an additional 21% + inflation next year would likely go down easier.

I can see there are many reasons that a fare collection machine would be nice but I have these thoughts. Can the riders and machine operate fast enough to meet the schedule demands on loading the boat. Often there is only a five minute window to load the vehicles and walkers. If the schedule is adjusted to allow more time for loading will a larger than 28 car new boat be needed to handle the traffic? If that is the case will you save money and headaches?

Good Luck on your tough decisions!

Thanks for asking!

Bill Heft

Guemes Ferry Fare Proposal

| Passenger | Percentage Price Increase | |
|--|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Adult | 60.00% | |
| Senior/Disabled/Youth | 100.00% | |
| Passenger Punch Card | | |
| 25 Trip Adult | 149.00% | Often used by Islanders |
| 25 Trip Senior/Disabled/Youth | 143.00% | Often used by Islanders |
| Vehicles | | |
| Motorcycle & Driver | 70.00% | |
| Vehicle 14' or under | 27.00% New Category | |
| Vehicle 14' or under Senior | 42.00% New Category | |
| Vehicle and Driver under 20' | 108.00% | |
| Vehicle and Driver 20' & under 22' | 19.00% New Category 2' added | |
| Vehicle & Senior/Disabled under 20' | 67.00% | |
| Vehicle & Senior/Disabled under 22' | -0.05% New Category 2' added | |
| Vehicle & Driver Multi-Ride | | |
| 20 Trip under 14' | 100.00% New Category | |
| 20 Trip Senior/Disabled under 14' | 76.00% New Category | |
| 20 Trip under 20' | 104.00% | Often used by Islanders |
| 20 Trip under 22' | New Category 2' added | |
| 20 Trip Senior/Disabled under 20' | 132.00% | Often used by Islanders |
| 20 Trip Senior/Disabled under 22' | New Category 2' added | |
| Oversize Vehicles | | |
| 22' to under 30' | 80.00% | |
| 30' to under 35' | 215.00% | Often used by Islanders |
| 35' to under 40' | 141.00% | |
| 40' to under 45' | 170.00% | |
| 45' to under 50' | 122.00% | |
| 50' to under 55' | 167.00% | |
| 55' to under 60' | 130.00% | |