

LOCAL VESSELS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of Special Meeting

Date : 20 January 2009 (Tuesday)
Time : 3:00 p.m.
Place : Conference Room A, 24/F, Harbour Building

Present

Chairman: Mr. H P LIU Deputy Director, Marine Department (MD)

Member: Mr. LO Ngok-yang, Ken Representing Ship Building and Repairing Industry
Mr. LUK Pak-hung Representing Seafarers' Training
Mr. LAI Hoi-ping Representing Seafarers' Associations
Ms. Gladys TSE Representing Cargo Vessels' Operations
(on behalf of Mr. WONG Miu-sang)

Mr. KWOK Tak-kee Representing Launch & Excursion Vessels' Operations
Mr. CHAK Kwok-leung Representing Ferry Vessels' Operations
Mr. Danny WU Representing River Trade Cargo Operations
Dr. LAU Kwok-lam, Alan Representing Pleasure Boating Operations
(on behalf of Mr. LO Hoi-yin, Ambrose)

Mr. LIU Chiu-fai S(S)/LVS, MD
(on behalf of Mr. SO Ping-chi)

Mr. BUTT Lee-yuen GM/Ops, MD

Secretary: Mr. John LEUNG ADS/C&G, MD

In Attendance

Mr. KEUNG Siu-fai Hong Kong & Kowloon Floating Fisherman Welfare Promotion Association
Mr. WONG Yiu-kan Hong Kong Cargo Vessel Traders' Association
Mr. Bosco CHAU Hongkong & Yaumati Ferry Co. Ltd.
Mr. WU Ka-shun Hong Kong Shipping Staff Association
Mr. LEE Shing-hing Sai Kung Ferry Traders Association
Ms. CHING Ngon-lai Small Craft Workers Union

Absent with apologies

Mr. TAM Mo-pun Representing Naval Architects
Mr. ZHU Qi Representing Ship Survey Work
Miss HO Pui-ling, Vivian Representing Marine Insurance Industry
Hon. WONG Yung-kan, JP Representing Fishing Industry
Mr. YUEN Chung-biu Hong Kong Police Force

Presentation of Papers

Paper No. 5/2009 Mr. CHAN Kwong-chun SMO/LP, MD

I. Opening Remarks

1. The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting. He extended, in particular, welcome to the following members who were attending the LVAC meeting on behalf of other members: -

Ms. Gladys TSE

Dr. LAU Kwok-lam, Alan

Mr. LIU Chiu-fai

2. The Chairman also welcomed Mr. CHAN Kwong-chun who would present the LVAC Paper at the meeting.
3. The Chairman explained that the reason for this special meeting was that MD would like to discuss the proposal of reduction in port fees thoroughly, and subject to members' endorsement on the proposal, MD would like to implement the reduction as soon as possible.

II. Presentation of Paper

LVAC Paper No. 5/2009 – “Reduction in Port Fees”

4. Mr. CHAN Kwong-chun briefed members on the details of the proposed reduction in port fees, and the proposed removal of the requirement of ‘an interval of at least 24 hours between each visit’ for the Multiple Entry Permit (MEP). Members were invited to give their views and comments on the proposals.
5. Mr. KWOK Tak-kee said that he supported the proposal of reduction in port fees. As for MEP, Mr. KWOK said that relaxing the requirement of an interval of at least 24 hours between visits might encourage river-trade vessels to perform unlawful operations in the Hong Kong port, and that because of the large number of river-trade vessels, it would be difficult for

MD to monitor the vessels' movement. Mr. BUTT Lee-yuen replied that there was no direct relationship between the requirement in question and the unlawful operations as suggested by Mr. KWOK. Mr. BUTT added that to tackle the unlawful operations, MD had been closely liaising with the Guangdong authority to develop a monitoring system for tracking the movement of the river-trade vessels. Mr. Danny WU said that all river-trade vessels had been equipped with GPS, and their movements could be monitored through the China Interactive Customs Declaration Service Platform (the Platform). Mr. WU also said that because of the speed of the river-trade vessels nowadays, it was quite possible for a vessel to return to a port in Mainland China and to come back to the Hong Kong port within 24 hours. Mr. BUTT said that MD had been looking into the Platform and found that there were technical problems with data sharing through the Platform and reception of signals across the boundary.

6. Mr. WONG Yiu-kan said that the proposed reduction in port fees would benefit high speed craft and ocean going vessels. Mr. WONG asked if other charges, such as licence fees, survey fees, charges for PCWAs, etc., might also be reduced to render some assistance to local vessel operators under the current economic crisis. The Chairman replied that the proposed reduction in port fees was a result of a review of the costs for the relevant services. The underlying principle of the proposed reduction was different from that of Mr. WONG's request. The Chairman understood that Mr. WONG had already raised similar requests through other avenues for consideration separately.
7. Mr. Danny WU suggested that for MEP, the vessels should be allowed to stay for three days instead of two per visit as they might be required to do so during emergency situations such as typhoons, mechanical breakdown, etc. Mr. BUTT Lee-yuen replied that it would not be very useful to extend to the requirement to three days as MEP allowed 10 visits within one month. Mr. WU also suggested that as the number of vessels with length under 50 metres but of more than 1,000 tonnes had increased, the requirement of compulsory pilotage for vessels of more than 1,000 tonnes berthing at the Kwai Chung terminals should be relaxed to 3,000 tonnes. Mr. BUTT said that the administration was in the process of reviewing the legislation.
8. Mr. KEUNG Siu-fai asked about the methods used to calculate the costs for providing the services. The Chairman replied that the costs were calculated based on Government's established methods and practices.

9. Ms. CHING Ngon-lai said that she supported the proposed reduction in port fees. Ms. CHING appealed to MD for its support in introducing any other initiatives which would be beneficial to the local vessel industry. The Chairman noted the concern and said that any proposed changes to the fees and charges under MD's purview would have to be duly considered by the Government.

10. The Chairman concluded that the proposal of reduction in port fees was endorsed and fully supported. As for MEP, after detailed discussion the meeting agreed that the requirement of 'calls at an interval of at least 24 hours between each visit' could be removed, but the requirement of 'stays for a maximum of two days per visit' would be retained. In cases of emergency, operators might apply for an extension to the two days' limit and MD would consider such requests on a case-by-case basis.

III. Any Other Business

11. No other business had been raised by members.

IV. Date of Next Meeting

12. The meeting ended at 4:00 p.m.