

PILOTAGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Ref. : HQ/COM 928/29 (20)

Minutes of the Pilotage Advisory Committee Meeting

Date : 15 December 2010 (Wednesday)
Place : Conference Room A, 24/F, Harbour Building
Time : 2:30 p.m.

Present

Chairman: Mr. Francis LIU	Deputy Director of Marine
Member: Capt. CHAN Lok-ching	HK Shipowners Association
Mr. Peter YIM	HK Liner Shipping Association
Ms. Gloria CHOY	Containers Terminal Operators
Mr. Roger CHEN	Dry Bulk Cargo Operators
<i>(on behalf of Mr. CHIU On-tin, Edward)</i>	Break Bulk Cargo Operators
Mr. TO Wing-sing	Oil Terminal Operators
Mr. CHENG Siu-lun	Dockyard Industry
Mr. NG Ming-fai	Tug Operators
Mr. Phileas FONG	Master Mariner
Mr. NG Kin-man	HK Pilots Association
Capt. CHEN Yu-chi	HK Pilots Association
Mr. SIU Wai-lim	AD/PC, MD
Mr. Raymond CHUNG	GM/VTS, MD
Mr. FUNG Kwok-ming	S(N)EX, MD
Mr. CHAN Tim	
Secretary: Ms. Ivy CHAN	EO(C&G), MD

In Attendance

Mr. K F CHAN	HK General Chamber of Commerce
Ms. Yvette CHAN	HK Pilots Association
Mr. HUI Chui-chor	HK Pilots Association
Mr. CHAN Ming-shun	HK Pilots Association
Mr. LAI Chi-tung	SMO/VTC, MD
Mr. Andrew NG	MO/Pilotage, MD

Absent with Apologies

Mr. LAM Wing-shing
Capt. David WATKINS

Master Mariner
Master Mariner

OPENING REMARKS

1. The Chairman welcomed all present. He extended particular welcome to the following members –
 - (a) Mr. Roger CHEN, who was attending the meeting on behalf of Mr. CHIU On-lin, Edward representing the dry bulk cargo operators;
 - (b) Mr. K F CHAN, who was attending the meeting on behalf of Mr. Dickson CHIN of the HK General Chamber of Commerce;
 - (c) Mr. CHAN Ming-shun, who was the newly elected Chairman of HKPA and was attending the meeting for the first time; and
 - (d) Mr. FUNG Kwok-ming, GM/VTS of MD, vice Mr. Raymond CHUNG and was attending the meeting for the first time.

2. The Chairman told the meeting that Mr. LAM Wing-shing and Capt. David WATKINS were not able to attend the meeting and had sent apologies for absence.

AGENDA ITEMS

I. Confirmation of Minutes of Last Meeting

3. The minutes were sent to members for comments on 6.7.2010. In response to HKPA's proposed amendments, the minutes had been revised and sent to members on 12.10.2010. No further comments had been received so far. No further amendments were proposed at the meeting, the minutes of the last meeting were confirmed without further amendments.

II. Interview of Apprentice Pilots

4. The Chairman informed the meeting that six applicants, Mr. CHAN Man-bor, Mr. KUNG Wing-kai, Mr. LEUNG Chi-yi, Mr. TSANG Kam-hei, Mr. WONG Kam-sing and Mr. YUEN Wai-ming who had already passed the necessary medical examinations would be interviewed.
5. Before the interview, Mr. CHAN Lok-ching raised the point that some candidates had been working on high-speed ferries for a long time without much recent experience in handling ocean-going vessels and would like to know more about the training to be provided to those candidates.
6. Capt. CHEN Yu-chi responded that an intensive six-month training on ship handling and piloting skills would be given to the successful candidates during their apprenticeship. To ensure their proficiency in taking up a pilot's role, HKPA would conduct internal practical assessments for every individual apprentice pilot before recommending him for the upgrading examination. During the six-month training period, an apprentice pilot who was unable to achieve satisfactory performance would have his training period extended.
7. The six applicants were then interviewed by members individually. The Chairman and Mr. Raymond CHUNG declared that they knew Mr. LEUNG Chi-yi during his cadetship and pre-sea training respectively dated back years ago. Having interviewed the six applicants, members were satisfied with the six candidates' qualifications and experience, and agreed to recommend them to the Pilotage Authority for registration as apprentice pilots.

[Post-meeting note: With the approval from the Pilotage Authority, the above six applicants were registered as apprentice pilots on 16.12.2010.]

III. Matters Arising from Previous Minutes of Meeting

PAC Paper No. 2/2010 – “Acceptance of Licence (Deck Officer) Class I for the Registration of Apprentice Pilots”

8. The Chairman enquired HKPA whether the study on the acceptability of Class 1 (Deck Officer) licence issued by the Marine Department had to be continued given that more applicants holding Certificates of Competency (Deck Officer) Class 1 (Master Mariner) were applying to be registered as apprentice pilots after HKPA lifted the entry age limit earlier this year.
9. Capt. CHEN Yu-chi said that HKPA had created 5 more pilot posts in their establishment in early December 2010 giving a total of 105 pilot posts now. Amongst six applicants just interviewed, five of them would fill up those newly created posts. In fact, after the lifting of the entry age limit, more applications from potential applicants around the age 50 were received and there were three to four applicants on the waiting list. It was anticipated that HKPA might not have manpower shortage in the coming two years and thus there was no urgent need to conduct the study.
10. The Chairman concluded that there was no imminent need to continue the study at the moment. The need of the study would be revisited later when required. He also added that it was encouraging to note that after the launching of the Sea-going Training Incentive Scheme in 2004, more youngsters had displayed increasing interest in the sea-going training and the sea-going profession in the recent years. With a series of activities held during the Maritime Awareness Week from 25 October to 31 October 2010, it was hoped that more youngsters would join the maritime industry.

Government Mooring Buoy (GMB) Mooring Arrangement

11. Mr. Andrew NG reported that another on-site observation would be arranged in consultation with HKPA. He further reported that one of the cruise ferries had arranged its own mooring gang to carry out the mooring/unmooring operations since September 2010, and in fact fewer ships were using GMB nowadays. On an enquiry by the Chairman, Mr. SIU Wai-lim responded that as the video filmed on 12.3.2010 could not reflect the more representative working condition, another observation should be arranged and follow-up action on this matter should continue. The Chairman concluded that parties concerned should keep in view the matter and further communicate with each other when there was suitable timing for arranging the observation.

PAC Paper No. 5/2010 – “Berthing Guidelines Amendment Procedures”

12. Mr. Andrew NG reported that after several discussions with Capt. CHEN Yu-chi, HKPA considered that paragraph 8 of Chapter 2 of BGL should not be deleted but to fine-tune to “All entries in these Guidelines are subject to change with short notice in special circumstances”. Capt. CHEN Yu-chi said that after discussing with Mr. Andrew NG on a few versions, HKPA considered that it would be more appropriate to adopt the above version because for some special circumstances such as imminent suspension due to a typhoon which could not be discussed at a PAC meeting and only short notice could be provided.
13. Mr. Raymond CHUNG agreed that the above proposed paragraph 8 was better than the existing version but paragraph 7 of Chapter 2 had already covered special circumstances and thus some overlapping existed. He also pointed out that according to paragraph 7, in special circumstances “special requirements for tugs, working condition, servicing time, etc. need to be further consulted”, and would be different from the arrangement of giving short notice under the proposed paragraph 8. He suggested that more time should be given to further study the wordings of paragraphs 7, 8 and 9 to yield an appropriate amendment.

14. Ms. Gloria CHOY said that while agreeing that there should be some provisions to cater for special circumstances, she considered that there was some duplication in paragraphs 7, 8 and 9 of Chapter 2 and fine-tuning of these paragraphs was required.
15. The Chairman also agreed that special treatments would be required for some emergency situations. However, it would be more desirable to arrange consultations and to seek inputs from parties concerned for occasions other than emergency situations.
16. Mr. SIU Wai-lim pointed out that the wording “All entries in these Guidelines” in paragraph 8 should refer to a particular section/part. This paragraph was crucial as it was to cater for unforeseen situations. He agreed with Mr. Raymond CHUNG’s suggestion to allow more time to study the appropriate wording.
17. After discussions, the meeting agreed with Mr. Raymond CHUNG’s proposal to work out the proposed amendments of paragraphs 7, 8 and 9 of Chapter 2 with parties concerned through emails in the form of a “working group by correspondence”.

PAC Paper No. 7/2010 – “Retaining the Same Class of Licence for Pilots to Work beyond the Age of 65 Years”

18. Mr. Andrew NG reported that the draft drafting instructions concerning the proposed amendments of the Pilotage Ordinance had been cleared by the Department of Justice (DoJ) and submitted to the Transport and Housing Bureau on 23.7.2010 for follow up actions. Mr. Raymond CHUNG said that there were no available time slots in the second half of the 2010-2011 legislative session for processing the above proposed amendments and effort was being made to secure the first available time slot in the 2011-2012 legislative session.

19. Capt. CHEN Yu-chi said that two pilots would reach the age of 65 in mid to late 2011 and he was concerned about the arrangements in case the legislation could not be amended by mid-2011. Mr. Andrew NG responded that as advised by the DoJ, once the pilot reached age 65, he would be downgraded to Class IIC if he wished to continue as a pilot. However, a transitional provision could be included in the legislative amendments for the downgraded pilot to revert to Class I once the legislative amendments came into effect. In response to the enquiry raised by Mr. CHAN Lok-ching, Mr. Raymond CHUNG said that under the Pilotage Ordinance, the Pilotage Authority had no discretion to issue a Class I licence to a pilot who wished to work beyond the age of 65.
20. The Chairman said that as there were numerous urgent legislative proposals within the Government to be submitted to the Legislative Council, the competition of securing a time slot in the legislative session was always very keen. Having said that, MD would accord high priority to the above amendments and best endeavours would be made to submit them to the Legislative Council as early as possible.

Ocean-going tugs transiting north of Lantau

21. Mr. Andrew NG reported that according to records, about three to four ocean-going tugs transited Hong Kong via north of Lantau daily and most of them proceeded outside the buoyed channel. In case it was found that some of them proceeded along the buoyed channel, Vessel Traffic Centre would remind them to keep to the starboard side of the channel. The present traffic situation was considered satisfactory. As most of these ocean-going tugs were under the China Merchant agency, Mr. NG said that he had contacted its Manager and asked him to inform their ocean-going tugs to avoid transiting north of Lantau unless necessary. The Manager of China Merchant agency undertook to inform his colleagues in Shenzhen in a meeting to be held one week later. Mr. LAI Chi-tung added that the arrangement of appealing for these tugs to transit south of Lantau had already been in place before the last meeting held in June 2010.

22. Capt. CHEN Yu-chi said that the two black spots concerned were areas between UR2 to UR1 and between Ha Pang and Ma Wan. In view of the casualties caused by the ‘Yao Hai’ case, some measures such as compulsory pilotage should be imposed to tighten control of these tugs and small craft. The Chairman responded that the ships subject to compulsory pilotage had been specified in the Pilotage Ordinance and thus MD could not impose compulsory pilotage for ships less than 3,000 gross tonnage.
23. Capt. CHEN Yu-chi said that HKPA would send out passage plans electronically to the agents upon the receipt of pilot orders. To facilitate the masters of those ocean-going tugs to acquaint themselves with the route, he suggested that all ocean-going tugs should also submit a passage plan. Mr. LAI Chi-tung said that MD was also developing a passage plan system. The Chairman added that inputs from HKPA would be sought so as to better develop the system and to resolve the problem.
24. After discussion, the meeting agreed that MD and HKPA would together work out a recommended route from Shekou to Ngan Chau and vice versa for ocean-going tugs. In response to Mr. CHAN Lok-ching’s enquiry on whether penalty would be imposed if these tugs did not follow the route, the Chairman responded that such vessels would need to follow the recommended route and prosecution might be initiated when there was a breach of the legislation.

IV. New Discussion Item

PAC Paper No. 8/2010 - “Proposed Amendments to the Pilotage Order, Cap. 84C”

25. Mr. Andrew NG presented the paper in detail. The proposed amendments of Schedule 1 to the Pilotage Order were to reflect the current berth situations. The number of berthing/unberthing operations required for the apprentice pilots

under the revised Schedule would be increased. Mr. Phileas FONG pointed out that Floating Dock (Whampao) should be amended as Floating Dock (United).

26. Mr. Andrew NG added that since it might take some time to go through the legislative procedures to amend the Schedule, it was proposed to adopt the revised Schedule through administrative measure with immediate effect and all new apprentice pilots registered after 15.12.2010 should follow the revised Schedule. Members had no further comments on the paper. The paper was endorsed with the supplementary amendment of Mr. Phileas FONG.

V. **Any Other Business**

Busy traffic to/from West Shenzhen ports causing delay of vessel arrivals at Urmston Road Pilot Station (URMPS)

27. Mr. Peter YIM said that the number and size of vessels calling at West Shenzhen ports was increasing and the traffic was getting busier. Better communications between Hong Kong and Shekou pilots were therefore required so as to avoid pilot detentions due to delay of vessels arriving at URMPS. He also expressed concern that Shekou pilot was considering to impose pilot detention fee similar to Hong Kong which would increase carriers' burden. Mr. Andrew NG told members that he learnt from one major liner that vessel delays in Western Shenzhen were mainly caused by problems in scheduling tugs, pilots and cargo operations etc. However, pilot detentions could be avoided through more effective communication between their local agents in Shenzhen and Hong Kong.
28. Capt. CHEN Yu-chi said that they had regular meetings with Shekou pilots around once a month and he would convey the liners' concern at the coming Spring reception. Mr. Phileas FONG added that there were regular meetings

between Hong Kong and Shenzhen tug companies (on a biannual basis) and he undertook to convey the liners' concern at the coming meeting to be held on 11.1.2011.

Air-draft limitation at Tsing Ma Bridge

29. Mr. Peter YIM said that the air-draft limitation at Tsing Ma Bridge was now 53m. He suggested relaxing the air-draft limitation to exceed 53m by an amount based on the effect of height of tide so that vessels with air-draft slightly exceeding 53m could pass through Tsing Ma Bridge during low tide. Capt. CHEN Yu-chi supported the proposal but said that some safety measures e.g. tidal gauge had to be considered before implementation. Mr. Phileas FONG added that the clearance of Tsing Ma Bridge was 62m and its width was 41m. It would only take around five to six seconds to pass underneath the bridge and the tide would not suddenly change during such a short period. The Chairman concluded that members' feedbacks towards the proposal were positive and the matter would be further discussed at the meeting of Port Operations Committee (POC).

Length of vessels in Schedules 2 and 3 to the Pilotage Order (Cap. 84C)

30. Capt. CHEN Yu-chi said that Schedules 2 and 3 to the Pilotage Order which set out the length of vessels handled by different classes of pilots were last revised in 1996. The length of vessels had increased over the years. On the other hand, the number of vessels not exceeding 150m in length dropped from 15,274 in 2004 to 12,500 in 2010 and there were sometimes no suitable vessels for junior pilots. Besides, it was considered not desirable for a new Class I pilot to jump from handling of vessels below 260m LOA previously to 398m immediately after upgrading. Given the above, HKPA proposed to relax the length of vessels as follows:

Pilot Class	Current length	Proposed length
II D	150m	165m
II C	165m	185m
II B	220m	235m
II A	260m	275m
I	Pilotage of ships of any length	Unchanged

Capt. CHAN Lok-ching agreed an increase of 15m for each class was reasonable given the substantial increase of vessels length in recent years and supported HKPA's proposal.

31. Mr. Andrew NG said that the last revision of lengths in 1996 was based on a comprehensive consultancy study. In fact, the difference between the current maximum length for Class II A pilots at 260m and the proposed 275m was somewhat insignificant, however, it might be still undesirable for a new Class I pilot who handled vessels below 275m LOA previously to handle a vessel of 398m immediately after being upgraded from Class II A to Class I. Mr. LAI Chi-tung added that due to the large difference between 260m and 398m, it might be necessary to add a grade in between for better demarcation. Capt. CHEN Yu-chi said that internal training would be given to Class II A pilots before their upgrading and it was not necessary to add a grade in between. Nevertheless, to reflect the current length of vessels, it was necessary to revise Schedules 2 and 3.
32. Mr. Raymond CHUNG agreed that there was a need to review the Schedules 2 and 3 in view of the increasing length of vessels. However, to facilitate members' consideration, a proposal setting out the corresponding enhancement of trainings to be provided for different classes of pilots was required. Capt. CHEN Yu-chi reiterated that the suggested amendments had been submitted for quite some time. HKPA was in charge of training of pilots and, hence, in a distinct position to comment on the requirements and needs of pilotage. After discussion, it was agreed that the issue would be discussed at the next meeting with more details.

Establishing of a Government Mooring Buoy in Yam O

33. Mr. NG Ming-fai said that there were limited number of typhoon buoys for vessels of over 183m. The length of vessels had increased over the years. Hong Kong, as a busy container port, should have better facilities to attract shipowners. He therefore proposed to establish a GMB for vessels of 300m in Yam O for emergency use in typhoon and other safety purposes. Mr. K F CHAN supported the proposal as they also encountered problems of finding suitable buoys for their barges for unloading large sized cargoes. He said that he enquired MD earlier and was advised that the area in Yam O could not be used for his semi-submersible barge for unloading yachts. He considered that the buoy proposed by Mr. NG Ming-fai could also serve the above purpose. The Chairman said that as these matters were related to port operations, it would be more appropriate to discuss the proposal at POC meeting.

Thank-you message to members

34. The Chairman informed the meeting that a total of nine members (listed below) would step down in the coming term. He expressed thanks and gratitude to them for their contributions and valuable advice given to PAC during their tenure. Thank-you letters would be sent to them later.
- (a) Mr. Peter YIM
 - (b) Mr. CHIU On-tin, Edward
 - (c) Mr. TO Wing-sing
 - (d) Mr. CHENG Siu-lun
 - (e) Mr. NG Ming-fai
 - (f) Mr. Phileas FONG
 - (g) Capt. CHEN Yu-chi
 - (h) Mr. LAM Wing-shing
 - (i) Capt. David WATKINS

[Post-meeting note: Thank-you letters to the above members were issued on 24.12.2010.]

VI. Date of Next Meeting

35. The meeting ended at 5:50 p.m. The date of the next meeting would be announced in due course.