



Woods Hole, Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket Steamship Authority

Media Contact

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FALMOUTH (February 8, 2018) – The Woods Hole, Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket Steamship Authority has released the public communications supplement to the final report issued by HMS Consulting, Glosten Associates and Rigor Analytics in December 2018 regarding their comprehensive review of the Authority's operations. The review covered five topics: vessel operations, fleet maintenance, management structure, information technology systems and public communications.

“We are gratified to have the complete report produced by HMS Consulting, Glosten Associates and Rigor Analytics in hand so we can continue to review and implement the recommendations contained in the report, a process that has already begun,” General Manager Robert Davis said. “The Authority Board, our Port Council, our senior management team and all of our employees are united in our effort to improve our operations and service to the public, and communications is no less important an aspect of our performance than any other.”

As the report notes, the Authority has already taken several positive steps in improving its approach to public communication, the most notable and impactful being the addition of a communications director to its senior staff – a position identified as a need by Mr. Davis in January 2018, prior to the unprecedented service disruptions that prompted the Authority Board to issue a request for proposals for a review of the Authority's operations.

Other steps to improve the Authority's communications that have already been initiated include:

- Establishing an Operations and Communications Center at the Authority's Falmouth administrative offices, which will serve as a “nerve center” for the Authority's operations and allow for more timely communications to customers about ferry service.
- Sourcing new digital signage for the Authority's five ports that will allow for real-time communications to customers waiting both inside and outside the ferry terminals.
- Sharing information via social media through the creation of a Twitter account (@SteamshipMA) and relaunching its Facebook account (facebook.com/SteamshipAuthorityMA) to allow for proactive, timely and frequent communication with its customers.
- Updating a crisis communications plan that provides the Authority with a clear and established chain of communication and a plan to gather and disseminate information to keep both the public and its employees armed with up-to-date and accurate information in urgent situations.

The previously released portions of the report highlighted many things the Authority already does well; similarly, the Authority had, at the time of its release, already made strides in a number of areas of concern identified in the report. Since then, the Authority has hired marine recruiting firm Flagship Management to lead national searches for its vacant port captain position and for its first director of marine operations, a new position suggested in the HMS report. It also is finalizing a request for proposals from consulting firms to assist the Authority in developing and implementing a Safety Management System and Quality Management System and has identified a leading software program to serve as the Authority's Learning Management System; all three are part of the transition to a process-based management culture at the Authority and were recommended in the HMS report.

"These are the first steps in a long process that is likely to carry significant costs, both financially and logistically," Mr. Davis said. "But these are necessary to help the Authority emerge from one of the most challenging periods in its history and regain its deserved reputation as the Lifeline to the Islands. The Board, management and staff are committed to embracing the recommendations proposed by HMS to improve the organization."

The first release of the HMS report also noted the Authority's unique funding structure, in that it does not rely on annual government subsidies and that its roughly \$100,000,000 budget is supported nearly entirely by fares. Since 1962, the Authority has had only four annual operating deficits and it has not had to assess its port communities for monetary support since 1963.

The public communications supplement to the report, as well as the prior release, is available on the Authority's website, www.steamshipauthority.com/about/news. The public communications report will be the first item on the agenda of a special board meeting scheduled for 9:00 a.m. Saturday, February 9th at the Authority's Hyannis terminal, 69 South Street, Hyannis, Massachusetts. Mr. Davis and Board Members will be available for further comment after the meeting.