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STATE OF LOUISIANA
BOARD OF EXAMINERS FOR
NEW ORLEANS - BATON ROUGE STEAMSHIP
PILOTS FOR THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER

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QUARTERLY MEETING HELD
TUESDAY, MARCH 25, 2025

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At the offices of New Orleans - Baton
Rouge Steamship Pilots Association, 2805 Harvard
Avenue, Suite 101, Metairie, Louisiana 70006,
commencing at 2:00 p.m.

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REPORTED BY:
LESLIE L. NICOSIA
CERTIFIED COURT REPORTER

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A P P E A R A N C E S

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD:

CAPTAIN LEE JACKSON
CAPTAIN CHRIS RITTNER

COUNSEL FOR THE STATE OF LOUISIANA
NEW ORLEANS - BATON ROUGE STEAMSHIP PILOTS:

MICHAEL THOMAS, ESQUIRE
RICK WARD, ESQUIRE

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12 ALSO PRESENT:
13 Brian Eiselen, Esquire
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2 Leslie L. Nicosia, a Certified Court Reporter in
3 and for the State of Louisiana,
4 did report the following:

5 BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

6 We will call the meeting to
7 order of the Board of Examiners New
8 Orleans - Baton Rouge Steamship Pilots
9 of the Mississippi River. We will do
10 a roll call at this point.

11 Lee Jackson, Commissioner.

12 BY CAPTAIN RITTINER:

13 Chris Rittiner.

14 BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

15 Two members present in the
16 quorum. At this time in your packet,
17 you will see the Q4 2024 minutes. I
18 sent that out in advance of the
19 meeting. So, we will need a motion to
20 approve those minutes, if there are no
21 questions.

22 BY CAPTAIN RITTINER:

23 No questions. Motion to adopt
24 the minutes.

25 BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

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1 I second that. All in favor.

2 BY CAPTAIN RITTINER:

3 Aye.

4 BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

5 Here's the point in time in the
6 meeting where we ask for public
7 comments. Anyone from the public has
8 any comments? I see we have one
9 person present.

10 BY MR. EISELEN:

11 Brian Eiselen on behalf of the
12 New Orleans - Baton Rouge Steamship
13 Pilots Association. Thanks for
14 asking, Captain, but no comments.

15 BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

16 Good, good, good.

17 We will move over into new
18 business. This may be in your packet.
19 It's just after the minutes. Before
20 we go into the ratification, Part B of
21 Section 5, I just want to note to the
22 board that rule revisions, I think at
23 some point this year, we will be
24 looking at adding the ADA language to

25 our rules. We are going to wait until
0006 probably later in the year when things
1 quiet up a little bit.

2 We will also be looking at
3 probably -- We have a 12-hour rest
4 rule that's been done on a temporary
5 basis over and over. Now is the time
6 for us to really put that in the rules
7 so that it's codified. It's been on
8 the emergency basis we have been using
9 it. So, we will look at that. Again,
10 I just want the board to be aware of
11 it. We are going to be looking at
12 that at some point later in the year
13 after session. We will begin to look
14 at that.

15 Next thing on the agenda is
16 high-water letter ratification. As
17 you all know, the river reached up on
18 -- I think it was the 27th of
19 February. So, I sent a letter over to
20 the board of directors to NOBRA
21 letting them know we were implementing
22 our high-water restrictions. And so,
23 I just need a ratification of that
24 letter as a part of the process.

25
0007 Obviously, it's just so that we can
1 get it in the system and let everyone
2 know it's there. I need a motion.

3 BY CAPTAIN RITTINER:
4 I present the motion to ratify
5 the letter.

6 BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:
7 I second that. All in favor.
8 BY CAPTAIN RITTINER:

9 Aye.
10 BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:
11 Moving on, which may require a
12 little bit more discussion, but just
13 for everyone's thought, as you all are
14 aware, the Dali incident that happened
15 in Baltimore, the NTSB recently came
16 out with just, I guess, to be aware to
17 all states that have bridges that --
18 to do some sort of assessment of where
19 you are in your bridges in your
20 section.

21 I don't know whether it's
22 fortunate or unfortunate. Our
23 section, we have a total of six
24 bridges, which is probably NOBRA's

25
0008 entire route is encompassed with
1 bridges. Some of those bridges are
2 labeled as critical. I just wanted to
3 get it on the record that at some
4 point we probably are going to have to
5 look at what we can do as a board from
6 the pilot's perspective, what rules we
7 can put in place.

8 We don't want to get in front
9 of anyone. I'm sure the governor's
10 office is aware of it. I'm sure DOTD
11 is managing it. The different ports
12 are probably looking at it. From a
13

pilot's perspective, I think there are some things we can talk about maybe implementing at some point. I just want everyone to know this is probably going to be a hot-button item. We will have to manage -- figure out how we manage it from the board's standpoint.

BY CAPTAIN RITTNER:

No one is asking us to do anything right now?

BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

It's at the state level right now. I think they are taking charge.

Mike, do you have --

BY MR. THOMAS:

From the port's perspective and from a pilot's perspective, we all attended the seminar in October at Crescent that the Coast Guard put on in light of the Francis Scott Key incident where they did a risk assessment of, basically, the river from right below Algiers Point to right past Huey P.

They said, "What are the biggest risk assessments for this region?" It came out to be the bridges. During that time, we had several stakeholders there from all the pilot associations, all the ports, Corps of Engineers, National Weather Association.

It was brought up about the sensors in all the bridges, how lacking that was, the radar, the lack of radar capabilities on vessels due

to the sensors on bridges, the buoys. Everything about these bridges that needs to be improved was discussed.

They were going to take this information from nine different site visits across the country and compile, basically, a study review. I told the port -- I would give you the same advice -- to reach back out to the commander of the Coast Guard here and say, "Where is that study in the process?" I don't want anybody to get ahead of themselves when the studies come out that may give you recommendations, and then you are going to ask to do something against the recommendations.

If their studies are coming out in a month, you probably just need to hang tight. I think the more people that request, not demand, just request advice on where they are in the process will kind of maybe light a little fire or get those confirmations.

BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

It's your appreciation that the

3 Coast Guard is working with --

4 BY MR. THOMAS:

5 I don't know if they are
6 working with the NTSB or not. I know
7 for a fact they were going to issue a
8 report on that eight-hour data. I
9 have not heard any news from that
10 meeting.

11 BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

12 It sounds like -- Just for the
13 board's understanding, it seems as if
14 something was released, but it was
15 more about -- I couldn't wrap my head
16 around it. It's more about being
17 reactive than proactive. I think from
18 a down-below standpoint, how do you
19 prevent it from happening, not -- The
20 sensors are when it has happened,
21 right?

22 I'm trying to figure out what
23 can be done to actually -- There's no
24 way you can 100 percent mitigate a
25 thing like this. I think you can put

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1 a lot of things on the table, like
2 measures, making sure of a slow, safe
3 speed. Maybe there's some discussion
4 about escort tugs.

5 I know from the pilot's
6 perspective, when we have incidents,
7 you know, this is some of the reasons
8 why this board has promoted to pilot
9 jobs. When you are in the middle of
10 the chaos, there's two critical things
11 that have to take place. One is
12 stabilize the ship. The second piece
13 is letting the general public know
14 what's going on.

15 For a very long time, pilots
16 have done both. I can tell you, and,
17 Chris, you can testify, when you are
18 going through it, it's like you are
19 trying to juggle it. You can think
20 about what the poor pilots were going
21 through when they hit that bridge.
22 You lose site of those steps. Having
23 key lines of responsibility in a
24 situation like that, I think, is
25 paramount, it really is.

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1 Those are some of the things I
2 look at in how can we be proactive
3 versus reactive. That's where, I
4 think, truly understanding what they
5 are doing and how they are doing it
6 can really help us to try to shape
7 what we do.

8 BY MR. THOMAS:

9 Speaking from a port's
10 perspective, when you have the Huey P.
11 owned by the Public Belt maintained by
12 the railroads -- I don't know how many
13 people realize that, 98, 99 percent of
14 the maintenance is funded by the class
15 one railroads that go over that
16 bridge.

17 The fendering at the bottom of

that bridge as well as the fendering at the Crescent City Connection is, basically, 2-by-6s or 2-by-12s. I don't know what ship is going to get stopped by a 2-by-12. None, right? If you thought the accident in Baltimore was bad when they were able to have notices to stop traffic and it

was at a time of day when it wasn't rush hour, if you hit the Huey P. with a train on it, you got serious --

BY CAPTAIN RITTINER:

They were able to shut the bridge down. It was at night. The other thing I haven't seen from that is what are they going to do from here on out.

BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

I've spoken to someone there, one of the pilots. They are now -- If a ship has a mechanical issue at any point in time, escort tugs all the way to the bridge. As to certain class of vessels, they are now putting two pilots on. That is even before NTSB finalizes. They have decided we are going to move forward with our own strategy to try to prevent something like that from happening.

I think people need to understand the magnitude of what we are talking about, six bridges. The way commerce works here in the

Mississippi River, it's not a single-port destination. It doesn't matter. If the bridge in Baton Rouge gets hit, that means the entire Mississippi River is done, because the grain is coming down from the north and flowing all the way through NOBRA's route, Crescent's route. Coal does the same thing.

We need to appreciate the magnitude of what we are talking about. One of these collapses, it's over. It's over for everyone, even the port of New Orleans.

BY MR. THOMAS:

Not counting human life.

BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

That's right. That's why I see Louisiana being a unique place versus all the others. Even in Baltimore, Maryland, that bridge, they still had operations going on. It was just that one component was segregated off. We are not -- We don't have that luxury because we are one flowing river.

It's going to be interesting.

BY MR. THOMAS:

If -- When the container terminal is built in Violet, it's going to take away a size difference from moving under those bridges, but

7 it's not going to take away a volume
8 difference.

9 What we have been told, almost
10 guaranteed by our operator at the
11 Uptown wharf, is that break bulk is
12 going to go through the roof. You are
13 going to have a dramatic uptick over
14 and above container vessel movements
15 or break bulk movements.

16 Those ships -- correct me if
17 I'm wrong -- aren't as big and aren't
18 as delicate to handle as container
19 vessels, so you have a little more
20 latitude moving in and out under the
21 bridges. They aren't as dangerous.
22 That's a good thing. Nevertheless,
23 you still have the volume. You are
24 not going to lose volume.

25 BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

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1 That's even more now. You
2 really need to make sure you manage
3 that. You are right, Mike. Container
4 vessels are probably -- It's a major
5 height issue for container vessels.

6 BY MR. THOMAS:

7 Last week, one of them cleared
8 about 22 inches. I was at the port
9 and watched. It didn't make me feel
10 good.

11 BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

12 It's a delicate thing. Most
13 importantly, I just want to make sure
14 we memorialize that we understand
15 what's going on. We know at some
16 point we are going to have to make
17 some decisions on our route on how we
18 can be proactive and not reactive,
19 understanding if we can work
20 collaboratively with the different
21 agencies.

22 Anything you do up top on the
23 bridge to traffic, you absolutely need
24 to do because somebody on that ship
25 has to notify that system that I have

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1 a problem. That's going to require
2 phone calls, some sort of engagement
3 with all parties.

4 I just wanted to bring that up
5 because I'm sure it will be continued
6 -- to be continued, if you will,
7 because the NTSB is -- they are
8 strange like that. I think most ports
9 are probably going to get caught
10 flatfooted. Again, they are just a
11 recommendation body, but the amount of
12 weight that it carries, you know --

13 BY MR. THOMAS:

14 The Coast Guard is not --

15 BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

16 The Coast Guard and NTSB
17 typically don't agree on how things
18 should move. We will see how it goes.
19 I just want to make sure that point
20 was stressed to the board so we all
21 know. Mike, anything you hear, it

will be great to share with the board
so we can make sure we are making the
right decisions and the right moves.

Next part, we will move to old

business. I want to give you all an
update on how the apprentices are
going currently. We have 32 in the
system. You will see a breakdown, a
sheet here. This basically gives you
-- My assistant, I don't know how she
did this. You have to pull it apart.

This -- This is a breakdown of
turn count per apprentices at the end
of the fifth month. At the end of
this month, we will be at the halfway
mark. So, you can see everyone, for
the most part, is trending well. We
have a couple ones that are lagging a
little bit. Some of it could be
centered around timing that the pilot
gets a turn, things like that.

But for the most part, the vast
majority of the folks are over 100,
which is a good number. We have a few
that Chris and I are probably going to
sit down and have a conversation with.

We had one issue, had a medical
issue with one of the apprentices. He
had a gallbladder that was going to

explode, if you will. We had to take
him off. He took some time off. At
first, it was thought he would be out
of the system for six weeks.
Thankfully, he recovered quickly. He
was only out for a couple of weeks.
He's back in the system.

The plan is with these 32 is
next month sometime, the board is
going to start bringing them in
individually and do a midpoint
assessment on how they are and what
they are doing. We are going to
develop a criteria so that -- You
know, the old adage is if you don't
know you are doing wrong, you can't
fix it.

We want to be brutally honest
with each one of them and let them
know where we see they are in the
program. So, that will give them --
For the back half of this program,
that will give them something to work
hard to.

I feel good about -- Chris, you

can weigh in. I feel good about where
we are with these 32. We have a few
that we probably are going to have to
have some conversations with. Again,
I do believe they can get it too.

BY CAPTAIN RITTINER:

I feel the same way.
Monitoring pretty much everybody
throughout the last couple of months
is really -- dial it in last month,

kind of got a good base of where everybody's at. There are a couple here and there. Everything seems to be going pretty well.

BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

I will say that just on a very preliminary basis, the goal would be, Rick and Mike, is to have these 32 commissioned somewhere between the second or the third week in September. So, that way, October 1st, the first group will be ready to go and be released, if you will, on a restricted basis.

The board is going to sit down

before then, and we are going to establish a criteria for restrictions for them when they are released. We will do that at our next meeting where they will go through their phases of restrictions on what size class ships they can move while they are alone. That goes for a two-year period.

They will do eight months at one phase of draft or one phase of LOA or size, dead weight. Then they will do eight months at another. You gradually move them up until they are at the final point of total release in a two-year period. We will establish that here as a board.

BY MR. THOMAS:

When do you think you'll have an idea on the number of commissions that will be requested?

BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

I think by the time we have our next meeting, I think between Chris and I, we will have a good gauge as to where we are. I would say I feel -- I

really do feel like the two that are in question, I feel like with six more months, they really could get it. I don't want to say they can't. I think they can make it happen.

I would absolutely say it's going to be 32. The board has this discretion. If we do apply for 32 and at the last minute we can decide we can hold them, we can. Because they are under the deputy pilot program, we have that latitude to hold back, of course, with the governor's concurrence.

That would be the plan, Mike, is to -- Now you need to tell us how much time we will need prior to the second or third week in September to start getting everything together.

BY MR. THOMAS:

It's a scheduling issue.

That's all?

BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

Yeah.

BY CAPTAIN RITTINER:

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1 October is a pretty --

2 BY MR. THOMAS:

3 We will be able to fit it in
4 somewhere. I need to know where and
5 when. Then we will figure that out.

6 BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

7 We will keep everyone apprised
8 on how that's going. Chris and I are
9 going to look at next month starting
10 these sit-down meetings. It will take
11 15, 20 minutes with each one of them,
12 very private. It's going to allow us
13 to memorialize their progress or lack
14 thereof.

15 Classroom work is going fine.
16 All that is trending well. Everyone
17 is really doing a great job. We have
18 a few exceptions. I will tell you, in
19 any program that I've been a part of,
20 we have had one or two that we've had
21 to deal with. They eventually got it.

22 We have had one or two cases
23 where we had to extend their
24 apprenticeship, which the rules allow
25 it to extend up to an additional 12

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1 months. That would be worst-case
2 scenario.

3 BY CAPTAIN RITTINER:

4 Didn't we have one that
5 requested an extension?

6 BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

7 Yes. That's a good point. If
8 they feel like they are not ready --

9 BY MR. WARD:

10 If they get sick, break their
11 leg --

12 BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

13 Yeah. We have the ability.
14 Even if an individual requires -- if
15 they feel like they are just not ready
16 to be turned loose on their own, the
17 system allows for that. That's why
18 the additional 12 months is there.

19 Next item is -- Any additional
20 questions, Rick or Mike, on that?

21 BY MR. WARD:

22 No.

23 BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

24 Next one is BOE Drug Testing
25 Policy. Things are going well on

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1 that. There's a -- Just for the
2 board's knowledge, I did send out our
3 rules as it pertains to drug and
4 alcohol. I sent it out to our
5 provider for our drug testing
6 facility.

7 I sent it out to them so they
8 can review it to make sure there
9 hasn't been any changes in the drug
10 and alcohol policy world to ensure
11 that we are still up to speed and up
12 to code. Because if there are some
13 changes we need to make in the policy,
14 we want to do it when we open up the

rule book.

So that everyone is aware, that review is going on currently with Global. They are doing the review of the rules. They will get back to us as to where we are on that. Other than that, nothing else to change there.

With that said, unless anyone has any questions or comments from the public, this is about the time where

we -- I need a motion.

BY CAPTAIN RITTINER:

A motion to go into executive session.

BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

I second the motion. All in favor.

BY CAPTAIN RITTINER:

Aye.

(OFF THE RECORD FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION)

BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

Nothing -- No votes will be required in regular session coming out of executive session. I entertain a motion to adjourn.

BY CAPTAIN RITTINER:

I make the motion to adjourn.

BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

All in favor.

BY CAPTAIN RITTINER:

Aye.

(WHEREUPON THE MEETING WAS
CONCLUDED AT 2:40 P.M.)

REPORTER'S PAGE

I, Leslie L. Nicosia, Certified Court Reporter, in and for the State of Louisiana, the officer, as defined in Rule 28 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and/or Article 1434 (B) of the Louisiana Code of Civil Procedure, before whom this testimony was taken, do hereby state on the record;

That due to the interaction and the spontaneous discourse of this proceeding, dashes (--) have been used to indicate pauses, changes in thought, and/or talk-overs; that same is the proper method for a court reporter's transcription of proceeding, and that the dashes (--) do not indicate that words or phrases have been left out of this transcript; that any words and/or names which could not be verified through reference material have been denoted with the phrase "phonetically spelled."

Leslie L. Nicosia, C.C.R.

C E R T I F I C A T E

This certification is valid only for a transcript with my

original signature and original required seal on this page.

I, LESLIE L. NICOSIA, Certified Court Reporter in and for the State of Louisiana, the "Officer" before whom this testimony was taken, do hereby certify:

That this proceeding and testimony was reported by me in stenotype method, was prepared and transcribed by me or under my personal direction and supervision, and is a true and correct transcript to the best of my ability and understanding;

That this transcript has been prepared in compliance with transcript format guidelines required by statute or rules of the Board, and I am informed about the complete arrangement, financial or otherwise, with the person or entity making arrangements for deposition services;

That I have acted in compliance with the prohibition on contractual relationships as defined by Louisiana Code of Civil Procedure Article 1434 and in rules and advisory opinions of the Board;

That I have no actual knowledge of any prohibited employment or contractual relationship, direct or indirect, between a court reporting firm and any party litigant in this matter, nor is there any such relationship between myself and a party litigant in this matter;

That I am not related to counsel or to the parties herein, nor am I otherwise interested in the outcome of this matter.

LESLIE L. NICOSIA, CCR
Cert. No. 95004