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1 STATE OF LOUISIANA
2 BOARD OF EXAMINERS FOR
3 NEW ORLEANS - BATON ROUGE STEAMSHIP
4 PILOTS FOR THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER
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10 QUARTERLY MEETING HELD
11 TUESDAY, MARCH 25, 2025
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17 At the offices of New Orleans - Baton
18 Rouge Steamship Pilots Association, 2805 Harvard
19 Avenue, Suite 101, Metairie, Louisiana 70006,
20 commencing at 2:00 p.m.
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23

24 REPORTED BY:
25 LESLIE L. NICOSIA
CERTIFIED COURT REPORTER
0002

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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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ALSO PRESENT:
Brian Eiselen, Esquire

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Leslie L. Nicosia, a Certified Court Reporter in
and for the State of Louisiana,
did report the following:

BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

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

Lee Jackson, Commissioner.

BY CAPTAIN RITTINER:

Chris Rittiner.

BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

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

BY CAPTAIN RITTINER:

No questions. Motion to adopt
the minutes.

BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

I second that. All in favor.

BY CAPTAIN RITTINER:

Aye.

BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

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

BY MR. EISELEN:

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

BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

Good, good, good.

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

25 our rules. We are going to wait until
0006
1 probably later in the year when things
2 quiet up a little bit.
3

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

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

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

4 BY CAPTAIN RITTINER:

5 I present the motion to ratify
6 the letter.

7 BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

8 I second that. All in favor.

9 BY CAPTAIN RITTINER:

10 Aye.

11 BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

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

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

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

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

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

22 BY CAPTAIN RITTINER:

23 No one is asking us to do
24 anything right now?

25 BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

0009 1 It's at the state level right
2 now. I think they are taking charge.

3 Mike, do you have --

4 BY MR. THOMAS:

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

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

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

0010 1 to the sensors on bridges, the buoys.
2 Everything about these bridges that
3 needs to be improved was discussed.

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

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

0011 1 BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

2 It's your appreciation that the

Coast Guard is working with --
BY MR. THOMAS:
I don't know if they are
working with the NTSB or not. I know
for a fact they were going to issue a
report on that eight-hour data. I
have not heard any news from that
meeting.

BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHAT WE DO. BY MR. THOMAS.

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

The fendering at the bottom of

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

0014 1 was at a time of day when it wasn't
2 rush hour, if you hit the Huey P. with
3 a train on it, you got serious --

4 BY CAPTAIN RITTINER:

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

10 BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

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

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

0015 1 Mississippi River, it's not a
2 single-port destination. It doesn't
3 matter. If the bridge in Baton Rouge
4 gets hit, that means the entire
5 Mississippi River is done, because the
6 grain is coming down from the north
7 and flowing all the way through
8 NOBRA's route, Crescent's route. Coal
9 does the same thing.

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

15 BY MR. THOMAS:

16 Not counting human life.

17 BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

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

0016 1 It's going to be interesting.

2 BY MR. THOMAS:

3 If -- When the container
4 terminal is built in Violet, it's
5 going to take away a size difference
6 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:

0017 That's even more now. You
1 really need to make sure you manage
2 that. You are right, Mike. Container
3 vessels are probably -- It's a major
4 height issue for container vessels.

5 BY MR. THOMAS:

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

10 BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

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

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

0018 a problem. That's going to require
1 phone calls, some sort of engagement
2 with all parties.

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

12 BY MR. THOMAS:

13 The Coast Guard is not --

14 BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

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

22 will be great to share with the board
23 so we can make sure we are making the
24 right decisions and the right moves.
25

0019 Next part, we will move to old
1 business. I want to give you all an
2 update on how the apprentices are
3 going currently. We have 32 in the
4 system. You will see a breakdown, a
5 sheet here. This basically gives you
6 -- My assistant, I don't know how she
7 did this. You have to pull it apart.
8

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

18 But for the most part, the vast
19 majority of the folks are over 100,
20 which is a good number. We have a few
21 that Chris and I are probably going to
22 sit down and have a conversation with.
23

24 We had one issue, had a medical
25 issue with one of the apprentices. He
0020 had a gallbladder that was going to

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

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

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

25 I feel good about -- Chris, you
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1 can weigh in. I feel good about where
2 we are with these 32. We have a few
3 that we probably are going to have to
4 have some conversations with. Again,
5 I do believe they can get it too.

6 BY CAPTAIN RITTINER:

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

11 kind of got a good base of where
12 everybody's at. There are a couple
13 here and there. Everything seems to
14 be going pretty well.
15 BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

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

25 The board is going to sit down
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1 before then, and we are going to
2 establish a criteria for restrictions
3 for them when they are released. We
4 will do that at our next meeting where
5 they will go through their phases of
6 restrictions on what size class ships
7 they can move while they are alone.
8 That goes for a two-year period.

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

17 BY MR. THOMAS:

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

21 BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

22 I think by the time we have our
23 next meeting, I think between Chris
24 and I, we will have a good gauge as to
25 where we are. I would say I feel -- I
0023

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

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

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

20 BY MR. THOMAS:

21 It's a scheduling issue.

22 That's all?

23 BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

24 Yeah.

25 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

15 rule book.

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

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

0027 we -- I need a motion.

1 BY CAPTAIN RITTINER:

2 A motion to go into executive
3 session.

4 BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

5 I second the motion. All in
6 favor.

7 BY CAPTAIN RITTINER:

8 Aye.

9 (OFF THE RECORD FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION)

10 BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

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

15 BY CAPTAIN RITTINER:

16 I make the motion to adjourn.

17 BY CAPTAIN JACKSON:

18 All in favor.

19 BY CAPTAIN RITTINER:

20 Aye.

21 (WHEREUPON THE MEETING WAS

22 CONCLUDED AT 2:40 P.M.)

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1 REPORTER'S PAGE

2
3 I, Leslie L. Nicosia, Certified Court
4 Reporter, in and for the State of Louisiana, the
5 officer, as defined in Rule 28 of the Federal
6 Rules of Civil Procedure and/or Article 1434 (B)
7 of the Louisiana Code of Civil Procedure, before
8 whom this testimony was taken, do hereby state
9 on the record;

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

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22

Leslie L. Nicosia, C.C.R.

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1 C E R T I F I C A T E

2 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

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