

February 28, 2023

From Nancy Beye, Town Council President

Public Statement from the Jamestown Town Council

This afternoon, the Town Council met with Mr. William Munger and representatives from Conanicut Marine Services (CMS) and the Jamestown Ferry to discuss the use of the Town owned space at East Ferry for the operation of the ferry business. Despite numerous meetings with Town Staff and the Town Council, we remain at an impasse.

I would like to take the opportunity to outline the history that has led us to this point

For decades, CMS was a tenant of the Town, leasing the Town owned marina at East Ferry. In 2017, Mr. Munger proposed to the Town a joint project that would achieve two objectives. The project was narrowly focused on the area south of the Town owned woodpile pier. It included replacing the 40' public touch and go dock at that specific location and the construction a 130-foot wooden float immediately adjacent to the southern edge of the woodpile pier. This touch and go dock has been available to the public for years as a place to temporarily tie up boats and access the shore at no cost.

The proposal included the use of private funds and a federal grant, administered through RIDOT, to improve the public facility. The first objective was to create a safe handicap accessible dock for the public use. The second objective would have allowed the 50-foot Coastal Queen Ferry to dock adjacent to the public dock. The project was reviewed by the Jamestown Harbor Commission, the Planning Board and the federal grant application was approved by the Town Council. At each and every level of the review process, Mr. Munger assured the Town that the public space would be unaffected.

CMS and Mr. Munger never completed the project as proposed.

The private marina located to the south of the Town owned marina was sold in 2021. In addition, the long-standing lease between the Town and CMS was transferred to TPG at which time CMS interest in the East Ferry location no longer existed.

In the spring of 2022, Town staff learned of the Jamestown Ferry's intent to occupy the public dock space in order to operate its smaller ferries, the Katherine and Jamestown. This prevented public access to this area. This takeover of public space was done without the approval of the Town and without a use agreement.

In recognizing the long-standing business relationship between the Town and Mr. Munger, the Town exerted tremendous effort to reach a use agreement that protected the public access to this dock, while allowing the ferries to run uninterrupted. Following numerous meetings over several months with Town Staff, the Harbor Commission and the Jamestown Ferry, an agreement was proposed to Mr. Munger and CMS, the operators of the Jamestown Newport Ferry. This agreement would have restored the public access to this area and allowed the ferries to operate in the same manner as they had during the 2022 season. CMS rejected this agreement.

The Town's maintains that it owns and controls the use of the public touch and go space at East Ferry and remains committed to protecting public access to Town owned facilities and the waterfront.