

**BOARD FOR BRANCH PILOTS MEETING  
MINUTES**

The Virginia Board for Branch Pilots met on Wednesday, November 2, 2011, at the Virginia Port Authority, 600 World Trade Center, Norfolk, Virginia, with the following members present:

Charles R. Amory, Jr.  
Captain Robert H. Callis, III  
Bruce R. Cherry  
Captain J. William Cofer  
Captain Milton B. Edmunds  
William M. Martin III  
Captain John A. Morgan, Jr.  
Meade G. Stone, Jr.

Board member Thomas P. Host III was not present for the meeting

Staff present for the meeting were:

Gordon N. Dixon, Director  
Kathleen (Kate) R. Nosbisch, Executive Director  
Amy Goobic, Administrative Assistant

There was no representative present from the Office of the Attorney General.

Finding a quorum of the Board present, Mr. Cherry, President, called the meeting to order at 10:31 a.m.

**Call to Order**

Captain Callis moved to approve the agenda as amended. Mr. Stone seconded the motion which was unanimously approved by Messrs. and Captains: Amory, Callis, Cherry, Cofer, Edmunds, Martin, Morgan and Stone.

**Approval of  
Agenda**

Ms. Nosbisch introduced Elizabeth (Bet) Cake, the new board liaison from the Board for Professional and Occupational Regulation. Ms. Nosbisch introduced the members of the Board for Branch Pilots. Mr. Cherry welcomed Ms. Cake.

**Introduction of  
Elizabeth Cake,  
Liaison from the  
Board for  
Professional and  
Occupational  
Regulation**

Captain Cofer moved to approve the minutes from the July 29, 2011, board meeting. Mr. Stone seconded the motion which was unanimously approved by Messrs. and Captains: Amory, Callis, Cherry, Edmunds, Morgan and Stone.

**Approval of  
Minutes**

Discussion was held on correspondence received from Captain Charles A. Huffman V. As required by the board's regulations, Captain Huffman

**Communication  
from Captain**

reported to the Board that he was diagnosed with a medical condition and is undergoing treatment. Captain Huffman provided the Board correspondence from the Medical Review Officer (MRO) declaring him fit for duty. Captain Huffman also informed the United States Coast Guard and was told that he could continue to use his unlimited Federal Inland Masters License with First Class Pilot endorsement. Captain Huffman would be required to make up any time off to fulfill the hours necessary for the Foxtrot designation of his Unlimited Branch Pilot license.

**Charles A.  
Huffman V**

Captain Cofer stated that Captain Huffman has followed the regulations by self reporting and being deemed fit for duty by the MRO. The Virginia Pilot Association does not determine fitness. Mr. Dixon reiterated that according to the regulations, it comes down to the judgment of the MRO.

Captain Callis informed the Board that there may be an issue with the licensing schedule due to sick days taken by Captain Huffman, that there may need to be an additional meeting of the Exam Committee.

Mr. Cherry requested the number of ships Captain Huffman has piloted and the number of sick days taken since his diagnosis for the next board meeting.

Ms. Nosbisch informed the Board that the proposed regulations have been at the Governor's office for 30 days. Following approval the regulations must be at the Register's office within 14 days for publication, after which there will be a 30 day final adoption and public comment period. At the close of the 30 days, the final regulations become effective.

**Regulatory  
Review Update**

Mr. Cherry asked Captain Cofer to explain the dual license requirements of a Branch Pilot for Ms. Cake, as this was mentioned during the discussion regarding Captain Huffman. Captain Cofer explained that a branch pilot is licensed through the Commonwealth, but must also hold an unlimited Federal Inland Masters License with First Class Pilot endorsement United States Coast Guard (USCG) which is the minimum standard. The state license requirements are more stringent. Holding both licenses enables the pilots to service more waters and any type of vessel.

**Other Business**

Ms. Nosbisch read correspondence written to Captains J. William Cofer and William L. Counselman from Captain M. S. Ogle, USCG, Port Captain Sector Hampton Roads, regarding their efforts during Hurricane Irene. Captain Ogle complimented Captains Cofer and Counselman on their advice and action before, during and after the hurricane which allowed the speedy reopening of the Port and the safe return of numerous ships, including 37 naval ships that had been sent out to sea.



Sector Commander  
Sector Hampton Roads

September 6, 2011

Captains Bill Cofer and Billy Comsolman  
Virginia Pilot Association  
3329 Shore Drive  
Virginia Beach, VA 23451

Dear Bill and Billy:

Please accept my thanks to both of you for "always" being on the end of the phone to discuss vital issues to our port. Regardless of the time of day, nature of concern or even when you're in a duck blind, you guys are always there with superb counsel.

Hurricane Irene was no exception. I was very anxious about the 9 coal ships moving to anchor off Cape Charles. You helped abate that fear by moving them north and supporting the recommendation to ballast. None of these ships would have issues during the storm. But the real moment came when we had reports of possible shoaling. I must admit bringing in the ships Sunday night had big risks. If we had grounded a vessel and blocked a channel, it meant potentially long delays for a growing queue of commercial ships as well as 37 warships. Career wise, I'm not sure I would have survived that. Not allowing the transit had its downside as well, creating significant delays of commercial traffic now competing for the same waterways with the Navy. My staff was split on the way forward. You convinced me that indeed you could get the ships in safely and you did! I did not sleep well that night but when I drove in early Monday morning, I was thrilled to see that 1000' container ship at APM.

You are true maritime leaders and my best mentors in the port. Thanks for everything you do for our nation!

Sincerely,

M.S. OGILE  
Captain, U.S. Coast Guard

Captain Cofer reported that the Pilot Association developed a plan 15 years ago for hurricane preparedness with regards to the Port of Hampton Roads, instead of shutting down the port. With regards to Hurricane Irene, the Pilot Association, along with the USCG, Army Corps of Engineers, Navy and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), worked to safely prepare the port and ships for the storm. Following the hurricane the agencies swiftly corrected buoy placement, checked for shoaling, and were able to begin moving ships back to port Sunday night.

The Board recessed from 11:16 a.m. until 11:21 a.m.

Recess

Board members participated in the Conflict of Interests Act training as it is

Conflict of

required of all board members. Board members signed certificates verifying that they had completed the training course.

**Interests Act Training**

Conflict of Interest forms were completed by all members present.

**Conflict of Interest Forms**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:11 p.m.

**Adjourn**

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Bruce R. Cherry, President

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Gordon N. Dixon, Secretary

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