

**BOARD FOR BRANCH PILOTS MEETING  
MINUTES**

The Virginia Board for Branch Pilots met on September 12, 2024, at the Virginia Port Authority, 600 World Trade Center, Norfolk, Virginia, with the following members present:

Aaron Anseeuw  
Captain E. Waightstill Avery  
I. Vincent Behm, Jr  
Captain J.W. Whiting Chisman, III  
Michael W. Coleman  
Captain January N. Collins  
Christine N. Piersall  
Captain Clarence M. Young

Staff present for all, or part of the meeting were:

Brian P. Wolford, Director  
Steve Kirschner, LRPD Deputy Director  
Kate R. Nobsch, Executive Director  
Ecila Williams, Licensing Operations Administrator  
Karen Reid, Administrative Coordinator  
Ernie Atkins, Tidewater Investigator

Jeb Wilkinson, Special Assistant to the Director, and Patrick B. McDermott, Citizen Member, were not present with regrets.

Elizabeth Peay, Assistant Attorney General with the Office of the Attorney General, was present.

Member of the Audience included:

William A. Burket, Jr., Senior Director, Maritime Incident Response Team (MIRT) and Business Continuity

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

**Call to Order**

Mr. Burket advised the Board of the emergency evacuation procedures.

**Safety**  
**Evacuation**  
**Instructions**

Ms. Nosbisch announced Brian Wolford's recent appointment as Agency Director. She introduced Karen Reid, new Administrative Coordinator, and Ernie Atkins, Investigator.

**Welcome/Intro  
ductions/Anno  
uncements**

Ms. Piersall moved to approve the agenda. Captain Chisman seconded the motion which was unanimously approved by Messrs., Mme. and Captains: Anseeuw, Avery, Behm, Chisman, Coleman, Collins, Piersall and Young.

**Approval of  
Agenda**

Mr. Behm moved to approve the minutes with an amendment from the June 13, 2024, Board Meeting. Ms. Piersall seconded the motion which was unanimously approved by Messrs., Mme. and Captains: Anseeuw, Avery, Behm, Chisman, Coleman, Collins, Piersall and Young.

**Approval of  
Minutes**

There was no public comment.

**Public  
Comment  
Period**

LRPD Deputy Director Kirschner arrived at 10:37 a.m.

**Arrival of  
DPOR Staff**

Mr. Burket presented to the Board an overview of the Virginia Port Authority (VPA) Maritime Incident Response Team (MIRT) for information purposes.

**VPA Maritime  
Incident  
Response Team  
Presentation**

He shared with the Board the Virginia Department of Transportation's transportation network impacts, emergency operations at bridges and tunnels, and the structure vulnerability assessment of the key bridge collapse for information purposes.

He informed the Board of the 2024 National Port Partner Emergency Response Summit will be held on November 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> in Norfolk, Virginia.

Captain Avery provided the Board with a report of examinations conducted by the Exam Administrators on September 11, 2024. The following committee members were present, Captains: Avery, Chisman, Collins, and Young. The following report was made:

**Exam  
Administrator's  
Report**

Matthew C. Morse answered oral questions related to the raise in grade. The subjects included safe anchoring positions in Lynnhaven, Sewell's Point, Cape Charles and York River, safe anchoring techniques, under keel clearance, inner harbor transits, vessel traffic management, determination of adequate tugboat power in adverse weather, vessel interaction during overtaking and meeting situations, bank suction and cushion, effectiveness of bow thrusters, and safe vessel speed.

Matthew C. Morse successfully completed the oral examination with the Board for Branch Pilots Examining committee. After considering the results of the examination, Captain Avery moved Matthew C. Morse for a raise in grade from a Delta license (45,000 gross tons and 36 feet maximum draft) to an Echo license (55,000 gross tons and 39 feet maximum draft). Mr. Behm seconded the motion which was unanimously approved by Messrs., Mme. and Captains: Anseeuw, Avery, Behm, Chisman, Coleman, Collins, Piersall and Young.

Austin C. Capps answered oral questions related to the raise in grade. The subjects included safe anchoring positions in Lynnhaven, Sewell's Point, Cape Charles and York River, safe anchoring techniques, under keel clearance, inner harbor transits, vessel traffic management, determination of adequate tugboat power in adverse weather, vessel interaction during overtaking and meeting situations, bank suction and cushion, effectiveness of bow thrusters, and safe vessel speed.

Austin C. Capps successfully completed the oral examination with the Board for Branch Pilots Examining committee. After considering the results of the examination, Captain Avery moved Austin C. Capps for a raise in grade from a Delta license (45,000 gross tons and 36 feet maximum draft) to Echo License (55,000 gross tons and 39 feet maximum draft). Mr. Behm seconded the motion which was unanimously approved by Messrs., Mme. and Captains: Anseeuw, Avery, Behm, Chisman, Coleman, Collins, Piersall and Young.

Zachary Stewart Dodson answered oral questions related to the extension of route. The subjects included courses and distances from the James River Bridge to Richmond with a detailed description of navigating to Richmond, local traffic, safe anchoring positions, vessel positioning when approaching various turns in anticipation of bank and cushion effect, narrow channel navigation techniques, docking and undocking in Hopewell, characteristics of the James River Bridge and the Benjamin Harrison Memorial Bridge, adverse tidal situations and safe vessel speed.

Zachary Stewart Dodson successfully completed the oral examination with the Board for Branch Pilots Examining committee. After considering the results of the examination, Captain Avery moved Zachary Stewart Dodson for an extension of route from the James River Bridge to Richmond, Virginia. Mr. Behm seconded the motion which was unanimously approved by Messrs., Mme. and Captains: Anseeuw, Avery, Behm, Chisman, Coleman, Collins, Piersall and Young.

Ms. Nobsisch informed the Board there is nothing to report at this time.

**Regulatory  
Update**

The Board reviewed a letter from Captain Dodson, regarding an incident on June 8, 2024, involving the M/V Nickolas D IMO 9474723

**Notification  
Letter-  
Captain  
Dodson- M/V  
Nickolas D  
IMO 9474723**

On June 8, 2024, Captain Dodson was ordered to the M/V NICKOLAS D for a 1400 move from Cape Charles Anchorage to Kinder Morgan Pier 9 in Newport News. The M/V NICKOLAS Dis a bulk carrier 751' in length and 105' in breadth. Upon arrival on the vessel Captain Dodson conducted a master pilot exchange and began the transit to the berth. At Newport News Point a McCallister docking pilot and docking pilot apprentice boarded the vessel to conduct the docking operation. Captain Dodson was relieved and the docking pilot and took the conn. Captain Dodson remained in the wheelhouse observing the maneuver from the bridge and bridge wing. At that time the current was ebbing at approximately 1 knot and the wind was out of the west at 14kts.

The vessel was docking on the north side of pier 9 which is constructed with a knuckle at the end of the pier with fendering to allow a ship setting from the current to contact the end of the pier and use it to turn into the berth. At approximately 17 46 the docking pilot allowed the vessel to contact the knuckle and turned into the berth. Docking continued as normal and approximately 15 minutes Captain Dodson disembarked from the vessel. The maneuver appeared normal, he did not observe any damage, and there was no mention of any damage or abnormalities made to him by either the docking pilot, pilot apprentice, or Captain of the vessel.

On June 13, 2024, Captain Dodson was advised by another McAllister docking pilot that there had been damage to the knuckle at the end of the pier when the NICKLOLAS D had docked. Captain Dodson contacted the original docking pilot who had docked the ship, and he advised that he saw the damage to the dolphin after his next job and went back aboard the ship to tell the captain and show him the damage. Captain Dodson advised he understand that the damage consisted of a paint scrape and 5cm dent on the vessel and chipping of the concrete on the pier. The knuckle was missing one section of tubular fendering approximately four feet in length. This missing fendering allowed the vessel to contact the concrete of the pier. Captain Dodson has brought ships in and out of the pier since and have seen that the large rubber fender has been replaced and the knuckle appears the same as before June 8.

Captain Dodson has no further information and has not conducted his own investigation other than his call to the docking pilot yesterday, June 13. Having been unaware of the incident, Captain Dodson did not have a drug or alcohol test.

The File Review Committee made a recommendation that the letter be filed, and the Board take no action, as there appears to be no violation of the Board's regulations or statutes. The Board moved to accept the recommendation and it was approved by Messrs., Mme., and Captains: Anseeuw, Avery, Behm, Chisman, Coleman, Collins, Piersall and Young.

The Board reviewed a letter from Captain Morse, regarding an incident on July 10, 2024, involving the M/V MRC Belize (IMO# 9335044).

On the morning of 10 July 2024, Captain Morse was ordered to sail the tanker M/V MRC BELIZE (IMO# 9335044) from KMI South Hill terminal to sea. The weather conditions were fine with the wind about 10 knots from the south and mostly flood current for the entire outbound trip. High water was around 1200 that day with 3 feet over MLLW, meaning the true clearance of the bridge around this time was close to 135 feet. The ship was set to get underway at 1130 and I arrived around 1110 to the ship.

During the master/pilot exchange, the captain informed Captain Morse the engine had been tested and everything was in good working order. Captain Morse asked him the air draft to which he replied 40.56 meters (133.07 feet), and he represented that the conditions were the same as when they came in, as he had taken on ballast to make up for the discharged cargo and therefore would clear the bridge. After reviewing the pilot card which reaffirmed the air draft to be 40.56 meters, Captain Morse advised the captain the anticipated traffic as well as weather conditions for the transit. The tugboats CLAYTON MORAN and MAXWELL MORAN arrived around 1150 and dropped the docking pilot by the port side (offshore) ladder. Once the docking pilot was aboard, Captain Morse informed him of the air draft given to him by the captain and told him traffic looked clear for an outbound transit.

The Old Virginia Railroad Bridge had closed and opened once during the time of waiting for the tugboats to arrive. During this time, Captain Morse spoke with the bridge tender via VHF radio to inform him that the vessel would be departing soon and would need a full lift. Once Captain Morse saw the bridge return to the open position, he made a security call on VHF channel 13 that the vessel was getting underway.

The ship undocked around 1200 with the MAXWELL MORAN made fast to the starboard bow and the CLAYTON MORAN made fast at the center-lead aft. The docking pilot discussed with me his plan to back through the Old Virginia Railroad Bridge then spin the ship around between Enviva and Perdue Piers. At about 1220 the MRC BELIZE began the transit through the bridge. The docking pilot was situated on the port side bridge wing while Captain Morse was on the starboard side bridge wing watching the clearance on each side of the vessel as it backed through the bridge opening. Shortly after 1220,

**Notification**  
**Letter-**  
**Captain**  
**Morse- M/V**  
**MRC Belize**  
**IMO#9335044**

he heard the sound of a rattle above the ship at the bridge and looked up to see what appeared to be a mast light covering falling to the roof of the ship's bridge. Upon this discovery, he went over to the port side bridge wing to confirm the docking pilot also saw it. After confirming that the docking pilot had seen the same object fall, Captain Morse reported to the Coast Guard his name, the vessel, and location and to explain that it had appeared the MRC BELIZE had come into contact with the bottom of the Old Virginia Railroad Bridge, but that he could see no damage to the bridge. A representative from the Coast Guard environmental department called Captain Morse around 1235 to ask more questions about the incident, specifically if there was anything from the ship that fell into the water, to which he replied "no." There have been no other communications with Coast Guard.

Later in the transit, a mate from the ship went up to the top of the ship's bridge to retrieve the plastic covering of the mast light that seemed to have been broken free.

The bridge span had stopped moving up for some time before the transit and appeared to be fully opened, though the difference of a few inches would not be noticeable from the deck of a ship. Captain Morse believe that the master's calculation of air draft was off. After the passage he re-calculated air draft with consideration for the trim of the ship and came up with an air draft of about 136 feet, compared to 133 feet as advised by the master.

The rest of the outbound transit was conducted with no other significant occurrence. Shortly after arriving back at Lynnhaven (1600) Captain Morse reported for a Virginia State drug and alcohol test. He has not received the test results.

The File Review Committee made a recommendation that the letter be filed, and the Board take no action, as there appears to be no violation of the Board's regulations or statutes. The Board moved to accept the recommendation and it was approved by Messrs., Mme., and Captains: Anseeuw, Avery, Behm, Chisman, Coleman, Collins, Piersall and Young.

Ms. Nobsisch stated the financial statements were provided for informational purposes.

**Financial  
Statements**

Ms. Nobsisch and Mr. Wolford reminded the Board that the Board Member Training Conference is scheduled for October 10, 2024, to October 11, 2024, in Williamsburg, VA.

**Other Business**

Ms. Nobsisch and Mr. Wolford provided an EpicX update.

Conflict of Interest forms and travel vouchers were completed by all members present.

**Conflict of Interest Forms and Travel Vouchers**

The meeting adjourned at 11:23 a.m.

**Adjourn**

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Michael Coleman, President

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Brain P. Wolford, Secretary

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