

BOARD FOR BRANCH PILOTS MEETING MINUTES

The Virginia Board for Branch Pilots met on September 10, 2026, 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
Patrick B. McDermott
Captain Clarence M. Young

Board Member Christine N. Piersall was not present at the meeting with regret.

Staff present for all or part of the meeting were:

Steve Kirschner, LRPD Director
Kate Nosbisch, Executive Director
Davon Jones, Administrative Coordinator

Director Laura McClintock was not present at the meeting with regret.

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

Gaby Rengifo, BPOR Liaison, was not present at the meeting with regret.

Members of the Audience included:

Austin Capps, VA Pilot
Mark Coberly, Woods Rogers
Tony Mazzeo, Woods Rogers
Max Morse, VA Pilot
Abigail Sinisi, VA Pilot
Daniel V. Sinisi, Citizen
Amey Steele, Citizen
Sophia Thompson, Citizen
Alanna Withee, Citizen

Finding a quorum of the Board present, Michael W. Coleman, President, called the meeting to order at 2:02 p.m.

Call to Order

Ms. Nosbisch advised the Board of Emergency Evacuation Procedures.

**Emergency
Evacuation
Procedures**

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

**Approval of
Agenda**

Mr. McDermott moved to approve the minutes from the June 11, 2026, Board meeting, with the correction to remove Captain in front of President Coleman's name. Captain Young seconded the motion which was approved by Messrs. and Captains: Anseeuw, Avery, Behm, Chisman, Coleman, Collins, McDermott, and Young.

**Approval of
Minutes**

Ms. Nosbisch welcomed the guests in attendance and introduced them to the Board.

**Welcome and
Introductions**

There was no public comment.

**Public Comment
Period**

Captain Avery provided the Board with a report of examinations conducted by the Exam Administrators Committee, noting the committee met in accordance with procedures and entered closed session for examinations on September 10, 2026. The following committee members were present, Captains: Avery, Chisman, Collins and Young.

**Exam
Administrators'
Report**

Abigail S. Sinisi answered oral questions related to the initial license. The subjects included courses and distances from CH Buoy to the James River Bridge and to Town Point, local traffic, safe anchoring positions in Lynnhaven, Sewell's Point and Newport News, anchoring techniques, bridge clearances, docking and undocking situations with, and without tugboats, pilot/dockmaster relationship, the master/pilot exchange of information, use of the auxiliary channel, bank cushion and suction, meeting and overtaking situations, propulsion and steering systems, safe vessel speed, under keel clearance, reduced visibility, proper usage of personal and ship's navigation equipment, emergency ship handling, vessel and terminal security, state and federal regulations, the duties of a Limited Branch Pilot, personal conduct, fatigue, prescription drugs, chemical testing, the role of the MRO (medical review officer) and reportable incidents.

Abigail S. Sinisi successfully completed the oral examination with the Board for Branch Pilots Examining Committee. After considering the results of the examination, Captain Avery moved Abigail S. Sinisi for an Alpha License (25,000 gross tons and 28 feet maximum draft). Mr. Behm seconded the motion which was unanimously approved by Messrs. and Captains: Anseeuw, Avery, Behm, Chisman, Coleman, Collins, McDermott, and Young.

Mark S. Anderson, Jr., answered oral questions related to the raise in grade. The subjects included safe anchoring positions in Lynnhaven, Sewell's Point, and Cape Charles, safe anchoring techniques, cell phone usage, 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, maneuvering in restricted visibility and safe vessel speed.

Exam
Administrators'
Report (cont.)

Mark S. Anderson, Jr. successfully completed the oral examination with the Board for Branch Pilots Examining Committee. After considering the results of the examination, Captain Avery moved Mark S. Anderson, Jr. 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. and Captains: Anseeuw, Avery, Behm, Chisman, Coleman, Collins, McDermott, and Young.

John A. Hanna, IV, answered oral questions related to the raise in grade. The subjects included safe anchoring positions in Lynnhaven, Sewell's Point, and Cape Charles, safe anchoring techniques, cell phone usage, 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, maneuvering in restricted visibility and safe vessel speed.

John A. Hanna, IV successfully completed the oral examination with the Board for Branch Pilots Examining Committee. After considering the results of the examination, Captain Avery moved John A. Hanna, IV 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. and Captains: Anseeuw, Avery, Behm, Chisman, Coleman, Collins, McDermott, and Young.

Austin C. Capps provided a chart sketch of the sea lanes and answered oral questions related to the raise in grade. The subjects included safe anchoring positions in Lynnhaven, Sewell's Point, and Cape Charles, anchoring deep loaded vessels, tidal sailings and arrivals, movement guidelines for New Panamax vessels, movement rules for ULCVs (Ultra Large Container Vessels), effects of current on deep draft vessels, vessel traffic management, effects of wind on large surface area vessels, weather and thunderstorms, calculating adequate tugboat power, under keel clearance, vessel squat, deep-water route, emergency ship handling, and safe vessel speed.

As required by the Virginia Pilot Association apprenticeship program, Austin C. Capps has acquired his Federal Inland Masters Credential with First Class Pilot Endorsement issued by the U.S. Coast Guard which includes radar observer endorsement and Austin C. Capps has successfully completed the Virginia Pilot Association Apprenticeship program.

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 Hotel classification (91,000 gross tons and 47 feet maximum draft) to a Branch Pilot. Mr. Behm seconded the motion which was unanimously approved by Messrs. and Captains: Anseeuw, Avery, Behm, Chisman, Coleman, Collins, McDermott, and Young.

**Exam
Administrators'
Report (cont.)**

Matthew C. Morse provided a chart sketch of the sea lanes and answered oral questions related to the raise in grade. The subjects included safe anchoring positions in Lynnhaven, Sewell's Point, and Cape Charles, anchoring deep loaded vessels, tidal sailings and arrivals, movement guidelines for New Panamax vessels, movement rules for ULCVs (Ultra Large Container Vessels), effects of current on deep draft vessels, vessel traffic management effects of wind on large surface area vessels, weather and thunderstorms, calculating adequate tugboat power, under keel clearance, vessel squat, deep-water route, emergency ship handling, and safe vessel speed.

As required by the Virginia Pilot Association apprenticeship program, Matthew C. Morse has acquired his Federal Unlimited Inland Masters Credential with First Class Pilot Endorsement issued by the U.S. Coast Guard which includes radar observer endorsement, and Matthew C. Morse has successfully completed the Virginia Pilot Association Apprenticeship program.

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 Hotel classification (91,000 gross tons and 47 feet maximum draft) to a Branch Pilot. Mr. Behm seconded the motion which was unanimously approved by Messrs. and Captains: Anseeuw, Avery, Behm, Chisman, Coleman, Collins, McDermott, and Young.

The Board recessed from 2:14 p.m. to 2:25 p.m. to view the examination charts and recognize and congratulate Captain Capps, Captain Morse, and Captain Sinisi on their achievements.

Recess

Captain Chisman provided an update on the Norfolk Harbor 55-foot deepening project. The Port of Virginia announced substantial completion of the project on June 18, 2026. Although some remaining areas require additional work before reaching full project depth, completion is anticipated in early 2027. Members recognized the project as a significant milestone for the Port of Virginia and discussed its long-term importance to commercial shipping and maritime operations.

55' Project Update

Captain Chisman advised the Board that the Virginia Pilot Association is in the late stages of planning and designing a new approximately 14,000-square-foot pilot station at Lynnhaven Inlet in Virginia Beach to replace the existing facility. To support the project, the Association filed an application with the State Corporation Commission on July 31, 2026, seeking an adjustment to pilotage rates in accordance with the Code of Virginia. The update was provided for informational purposes.

**Virginia Pilotage
Rates and Charges**

Mr. Kirschner reviewed the Board's financial position. He provided an update on DPOR's comprehensive review of its fee and expense allocation structure and advised that a proposed new model remains under review by the Cabinet Secretary. The Board should anticipate a notable increase in fees, with additional information to be provided once the model is approved.

Finance Update

Ms. Nosbisch provided a status update regarding the HB 1305 amendment previously approved by the Board on June 11, 2026. No additional Board action was required, and Ms. Nosbisch advised that the amendment is scheduled to become effective November 1, 2026.

Regulatory Update

Captain Chisman informed the Board that all branch pilots and limited branch pilots will participate in Bridge Resource Management for Pilots continuing education in 2027. The two-day training, provided by the Maritime Pilots Institute, will be conducted in Virginia Beach and focuses on areas including master-pilot exchanges and the professional duties of branch pilots. The training is generally conducted approximately every five years.

Other Business

Ms. Nosbisch also reminded members that the Board Member Training Conference is scheduled for October 22–23, 2026, in Richmond, Virginia.

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

**Conflict of Interest
Forms and Travel
Vouchers**

The meeting adjourned at 2:37 p.m.

Adjourn

Michael W. Coleman, President

Laura V. McClintock, Secretary