

South Texas Waterways Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

13:30, 22 December 2020

Meeting was held via Zoom

*Below is a list of attendees that announced their name/ presence via Zoom.

Xavier Valverde	Jason Weeks	Larry Perryman	Chris Boyce
John Pasch	Wes Turybury	Mike Winans	Kevin Campbell
Preston Bailey	Russell Cordo	Jose Franco	Robert Hawn
Kris Lamb	Cody Mulloy	BJ Schulze	Danielle Hale
Michael Richardson	Josh Johnson	Josh Macklin	John Walsh
Chad Chambers	Forrest Albrecht	Gewyn Olson	Joseph Harrington
Arip Ismail	Richard Ludwig	Jay Rivera	John Williams
Royce Clutter	Kurt Hallier	Bryan Ray	Margaret Brown

A. Call to order/opening remarks by chairman

At 1335 Chairman of STWAC, Xavier Valverde, called the meeting to order. Rig Production and Chemical Facilities are not represented, however a quorum is present.

The Special STWAC meeting is to discuss Cheniere’s request on: Consideration and action on recommendation to increase the combined beam restriction for Liquefied Natural Gas Carrier (LNGC) vessels from 265 feet to 320 feet between beacons 33 and 36 in Cut A and requiring tug assistance for both LNGC vessels during their meeting.

The next scheduled Pilot Board meeting is in January, so this meeting was called to discuss the matter prior to that meeting.

B. Presentations

At 1338, John Pasch of Cheniere and representing LNG Operations, began presenting the intentions of the meeting. Cheniere is planning for future expansion and would like to discuss the matter of LNGCs passing between beacons 33 and 36 in Cut A to align with safety while requesting support from STWAC members. John Pasch addressed six points regarding the request: 1.) Since its inception with Naval Base Ingleside, the Federal Channel in this vicinity has always been used as a planned area for vessel meeting. Previously, vessel meeting was done with no tug assists. 2.) Crude carriers have passed other vessels in the region for many years. 3. The requirement for escort tug would make the current practice even safer. 4. Other channels within the port already practice the passing arrangement (Chemical Basin, Inner Harbor). 5. Without these practices, the energy renaissance within the area would be stunted. 6. The practice of using wide channel area to pass is common in the Texas areas.

At 1344, John Williams, Presiding Officer of the Aransas-Corpus Christi (ACC) Pilots, began speaking about approximately 40 ship simulations that took place earlier this year with varying size LNGCs and varying tug configurations. John Williams said the Aransas- Corpus Christi Pilots wanted to see how much control they would have and that the vessels would not venture outside of the channel. The simulations confirmed safe passage with decent control with a minimum of two tugs with about 5 or 6 knots of speed.

Kurt Hallier of Conoco Phillips asked about the impact of passing vessels on the docks; John Williams said that they did not notice any impacts on the simulator.

Kevin Campbell of MODA asked if the simulator considers passing vessels (such as hydrodynamics and parting lines). John Williams said that it did, but that also the Pilots also consider from experience.

Arip Ismail, representing Vessel Operators, shared previous experience in Inner Harbor, in which passing vessels caused parting lines and damage to facility equipment. Although rare, he stated that this can happen with vessels moving 7 knots or less. John Williams said that the effects of passing ships vary.

Kurt Hallier requested information about different beam lengths away from moored vessels. John Williams said that each case will be considered and if there is a situation where the moored vessels will be a concern, then the passing arrangement will not happen. Kurt Hallier asked if tugs will be made fast to the passing vessels; John Williams replied that a minimum of two tugs will be made fast. John Williams said that the passing arrangement will be made at safe speed and if that is not possible due to moored vessels, then the passing will not happen. John Williams said that if a passing arrangement cannot be safely completed, it will not be done.

Forrest Albrecht, Vice Presiding Officer of the ACC Pilots, said that there will be a 3 tug minimum requirement, and the vessels will not go through the area at 7 knots.

Kevin Campbell stated that MODA is concerned with two passing LNGCs and inquired if it will lead to double Suez Tankers passing in the area. John Williams said that the ACC Pilots have not studied Suezmax vessels yet.

Kurt Hallier suggested that the rules state specific tasking for tugs, and the targeted speed. John Williams said that they can look at that but defining a certain speed can be problematic, and dictating how a master configures tugs could be problematic as well. Discussion is had about effective speed of tugs.

Xavier Valverde asked if a third tug was used, would the tugs be placed inside the LNGCs or outside the LNGCs. John Williams said they could be placed in either spot. Xavier Valverde asked if tugs would be placed in different areas and re-simulated; John Williams said that there are no plans for more simulations. John Williams said they have used tugs on the inside and outside of passing arrangements in the Inner Harbor.

Jose Franco of MODA suggested a separate meeting offline with all those impacted. Russell Cordo stated that it is the best interest of all to table the item to answer the questions. Jose Franco proposed tabling consideration until all are informed and have discussed because MODA was made aware of Cheniere's intentions on 08 Dec and has concerns about impacts to its waterfront facilities. Jose Franco recommends additional discussion before it is again presented to STWAC. John Pasch stated that he would like to codify and make the practice that is already happening safer. Wes Turybury of Flint Hills Resources expressed the same concerns as MODA. Jose Franco said that MODA wants to understand more before a decision is made.

Preston Bailey of Oxy asked John Williams if any other places were studied for passing; John Williams replied that the turning basin near Sherwin (where LNGCs are normally turned) was also considered.

John Williams stated that if there is a concern, discussion should be had because other ships are already meeting in that area. Jose Franco said that although ships are meeting there now, they are not the same size. John Williams said that although they are not the same size, the ships already meeting there now are at least the same displacement.

Kurt Hallier said that it will be a good discussion as the channel gets widened. Joseph Harrington said the vote should be tabled until more discussion is had.

Xavier Valverde said it is good to listen to everyone's concerns, and asked John Pasch about the intended next steps. John Pasch said that he respects the opinions of others and understands that people are realizing that this is already taking place with other categories of vessels, but he would like a conceptual approval pending Committee Members approval following discussion and codification of an already-existing practice. Arip Ismail approves of John Pasch's request, and agrees that it is reasonable. Kurt Hallier concurs with John Pasch's request.

Jay Rivera of Riben Marine said that if passing arrangements were proposed in the Reynolds Basin or San Patricio Turning Basin, Cheniere would not need STWAC approval. John Williams said that it similar to the Inner Harbor because those vessels are all under tug assist.

Kevin Campbell said that MODA is not trying to inhibit commerce, but they would like to see the language on the conditional approval.

John Pasch recommended voting on the following: Conceptual approval for LNGC vessels to meet at the San Patricio Turning Basin, at Sherwin Alumina, and using the waterway between beacons 33 and 36 pending STWAC review and codification. John Pasch made the first motion to pass, Arip Ismail made a second motion. Vote was passed 13-0.

G. Adjourn

At 1433 the meeting was adjourned by Xavier Valverde.