

Draft Meeting Minutes
Portland Fish Pier Authority - Portland Fish Exchange Subcommittee
June 12, 2025
3:30 PM

Subcommittee Member Attendees: Chair Tracy Pearce, John Arnold, Mary Hudson, Meredith Mendelson, Rob Odlin.

Staff present: Kaela Gonzalez, Robert Vanmeter

Approximately two members of the public attended.

1. Committee Chair Comments: Chair Tracy Pearce opened the meeting at approximately 3:31 p.m. with a roll call.

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes:

Motion to approve Meeting Minutes from April 10, 2025.

Arnold, 2nd by Hudson

Approved 5-0

Note: The meeting minutes from May 8, 2025, were not voted on.

3. Old Business:

Vanmeter noted a fantastic turnout with 200-300 people, mostly locals, despite the rain earlier in the day. Mary Hudson also found that the turnout was great considering the weather.

Odlin suggested a campaign to promote the Portland Fish Exchange (PFE) brand and local seafood, including working with restaurants and exploring a higher social media presence. Hudson proposed a food truck event at the PFE with information on local seafood and where to buy it. Also, discussion around branding vs public relations to sell the PFE story. Mendelson expressed caution about a complex branding program due to tracking difficulties, suggesting lower-hanging fruit ideas like the food truck.

4. Portland Fish Exchange Manager's Report:

Vanmeter reports that May saw dismal landings (10,500 lbs vs. 50,000 budgeted) and a net income deficit of \$76,000. Current receivables are \$138,000, and the line of credit is at \$230,000 out of \$250,000.

The new ice machine is working well, producing 5 tons every 24 hours. A new revenue stream with Look Lobster is expected to generate \$30,000 annually by allowing them to unload, store, and ship lobsters through the PFE. Sea Fresh has also returned as a tenant.

Compressor issues are resolved after a \$15,000 investment. A new lobby door was installed. Security camera system repairs are ongoing, with \$10,000 more work needed for the Pier cameras. Cleaning is now done in-house to reduce costs. New label printers have been

integrated, resolving past issues. Gonzalez will inquire who is responsible for the security cameras outside the Exchange. Diane is working well with Jackie, and Robert Half is expected to be released next week. Vanmeter also noted that several fishing vessels are returning to the Exchange this year.

There was discussion about lowering the \$15,000 cash deposit/line of credit requirement for buyers to attract more business. Mendelson supported revisiting this limit, suggesting a tiered structure or lowering it to \$10,000 and requested a list of companies concerned about the current limit. Odlin and Hudson expressed support but would like to use caution that the limit is not lowered enough to attract retail buyers. Hudson advocated for some research into appropriate lower amounts and exploring non-groundfish buyers. The decision was made to discuss this further at a future subcommittee meeting before bringing it to the full board. Discussed utilizing staff effectively: co-employment with other shoreside businesses, while keeping in mind that staff need 30 hours to keep benefit-eligible status.

Mendelson noted a slight increase in herring quota for 2025-2026. Hudson mentioned Gulf of Maine haddock will get a boost once the new framework passes in early to mid-fall. The multi-subspecies of pollock stay of execution for a year means similar lease prices and availability to last year. USDA funding for observers was secured through September.

The Board discussed the hurdles involved with trying to gain approval for non-trap lobsters to be landed at the PFE, due to the historical opposition from the lobster industry. The Board will start an initial conversations to see if any gains can be made.

5. Discuss changes in existing buyers and sellers:

No changes to report.

9. Next Meeting: July 10, 2025

10. Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn

Mendelson, 2nd Arnold

Approved 5-0

The meeting adjourned at approximately 4:57 p.m.