

Minutes of Pilot Commission
Port Freeport
October 23, 2025

A Special Meeting of the Pilot Commission of Port Freeport was held October 23, 2025, beginning at 12:02 PM at the Port Freeport Administration Building, 1100 Cherry Street, Freeport, Texas.

Commissioners present in person:

Mr. Rob Giesecke, Chairman
Mr. Rudy Santos, Vice Chairman
Mr. Kim Kincannon, Secretary/Treasurer
Mr. Dan Croft, Commissioner
Ms. Barbara Fratila, Commissioner
Mr. Ravi Singhania, Commissioner

Staff Members Present:

Mr. Grady Randle, Randle Law Firm
Ms. Phyllis Saathoff, Executive Director/CEO
Mr. Rob Lowe, Director of Administration/CFO
Mr. Jason Hull, Director of Engineering
Mr. Jason Miura, Director of Business & Economic Development
Mr. Chris Hogan, Director of Protective Services
Mr. Jesse Hibbetts, Director of Operations
Mr. Brandon Robertson, Director of IT
Ms. Missy Bevers, Executive Assistant
Ms. Amy O'Brien, Controller
Ms. Amanda Veliz, Public Affairs Manager

Also, present:

Capt. Ross Coviello, Brazos Pilots Association
Mr. Roy Fiala, Phillips 66

1. CONVENE OPEN SESSION in accordance with Texas Government Code Section 551.001, et. seq., to review and consider the following:
2. Roll Call.

Commissioner Giesecke noted that all Commissioners were present in the Board Room.
3. Public Comment - There were no comments from the public.
4. Public Testimony - There was no testimony from the public.
5. Approval of minutes from the Special Meeting held May 29, 2025.

A motion was made by Commissioner Santos to approve the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Fratila with all Commissioners present voting in favor of the motion.

6. Election of Chairman, Vice Chairman and Secretary/Treasurer for the period, June 2025 – May 2027.

A motion was made by Commissioner Singhania to motion to appoint the chairman, vice chairman and secretary the same as the Harbor Board Commission with Commissioner Giesecke as chairman, Commissioner Santos as vice chairman and Commissioner Kincannon as the secretary. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Croft with all Commissioners present voting in favor of the motion.

7. Receive update from the Channel User Advisory Group.

Mr. Roy Fiala, chairman of the Channel User Advisory Board gave an update on the group reporting that the dispatch team is solid with personnel that is well-trained and performing at a high level of service. The comms fee has only experienced one marginal increase in its five year existence and in order to keep pace with further adjustments, he stated there will probably be something discussed and agreed upon by the channel users in the future. He also reported that the capital project funds for redundant tower and operating reserves are wanted by the users and will be discussed soon. This will be covered by a potential increase in the user fee. Mr. Fiala then shared a few slides noting the pilot dispatch currently has 254 registered users actively using the service. The next slide showed the comms fee has been at $\$75 + (0.18 \times \text{units})$ and gives an idea of the charges, lowest to highest, with the average being \$221.31. Additionally, he shared a breakdown that shows the income to be at \$319,000 while expenses are at \$302,000. He noted that they are still pretty far behind because the number showing doesn't reflect the pilots' monthly contribution of \$5,000 to help keep the group in balance, adding that the contribution has been going on for a full year and the group doesn't have any operating reserves.

8. Receive update from the Brazos Pilots Association.

Capt. Ross Coviello with the Brazos Pilots first addressed the update previously given by Mr. Fiala noting the pilot association is supplementing the comms fee to bring it into balance to make sure it doesn't fall into a negative financial situation. The marginal increase during the last rate request raised the fee to \$10 per movement, which equates to about \$24,000 annually. The pilots have been supplementing \$5,000 a month to keep everything in balance, which began about 12 months ago. The Channel User Group has asked to have about four months of reserves in the event of a channel closure or unforeseen circumstance. He stated there is also an appetite for tower communication redundancy in the event of another situation like Hurricane Beryl where the tower sustained damage (and was repaired timely). When the pilots bring the next rate request, they will address the comms and work with the board and industry to make sure it meets the needs of everybody that utilizes the service. Capt. Coviello commented on the 254 users noting that some of the users are also multiple users across a single e-mail account so the number of eyes on the account is actually much greater. He also noted that the Brazos Pilots recently supported a large milestone with the arrival of the two super post panamax gantry cranes adding that they were happy to work with Port Freeport on the historic event. While Ms. Saathoff boarded and embarked the vessel with the pilots to bring in the cranes, the pilots also hosted three other Commissioners to ride along on the pilot boat to see the operation in motion. Capt. Coviello then reported on the channel dredging stating that starting in November the mechanical dredge will be working the remaining intersection area which will take close coordination among the pilots and Great Lakes Dredging to ensure passing ship traffic and barge traffic isn't affected.

The two hopper dredges, Douglas Mackey and Liberty Island, are currently working offshore. Construction on the new pilot boat “Freeport Pilot” continues. Capt. Coviello shared pictures of the constructed pilot house and the hull of the ship which has been righted and noted the installation of the Hamilton jet suction plates on the stern is complete. Estimated delivery is still on target for July 2026. A formal christening will most likely take place in late 2026. Vessel calls per dock, Jan-Sept 2025, is showing Brazos Harbor representing the largest piece at 30% followed by Vopak at 22%, Phillips 66 at 21%, LNG at 18%, Seaway Enterprise 8% and BASF at 1%. A look at vessels calling the channel from 2024 to 2025 shows an increase across every terminal in the Freeport Harbor channel. While BASF had a marginal increase of 1 vessel, Brazos Harbor went from 255 to 290 vessels through September. LNG also had a large uptick going from 134 to 168 with Phillips 66, Seaway and Vopak all trending upwards. Capt. Coviello noted that if you the trend the numbers for 2025, when the year is out, it’ll be just under 1300 vessels while the previous year was just under 1250. Capt. Coviello reported that deputy pilots Captain Pfeiffer and Captain Willcox have been doing an outstanding job. Combined, they have completed over 1300 transits and 974 riding vessels in the student capacity. 197 second pilot is essentially a second set of eyes on board the vessels and the solos have been cleared using the pilots’ step program which goes by the size of the vessel, day or night and if the vessel is sailing or arriving. The pilots start them out with smaller vessels, daylight only, to head out some of the easier transits the pilots deem higher success probability to build up their confidence, competency and repertoire. Captain Coviello stated the deputies have completed 133 solos and are doing an outstanding job, adding that by February 2026, they will be cleared on all traffic that currently calls on the channel. Finally, the pilots have supported several community events including Brazosport Chamber State of the Community, the Economic Alliance Transportation and Infrastructure Summit and Freeport LNG's Marine Workshop.

9. Adjourn.

With no further business before the Commission, the meeting adjourned at 12:21 PM.