

Minutes of Pilot Commission
Port Freeport
July 23, 2026

A Special Meeting of the Pilot Commission of Port Freeport was held July 23, 2026, beginning at 12:17 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. Chris Hogan, Director of Protective Services
Mr. Jason Miura, Director of Business & Economic Development
Mr. Jesse Hibbetts, Director of Operations
Ms. Missy Bevers, Executive Assistant
Ms. Amy O'Brien, Controller
Mr. Rico Arbolante, IT Help Desk Technician
Ms. Amanda Veliz, Public Affairs Manager (virtual)

Also, present:

Capt. Matthew Krohn, Brazos Pilots Association
Capt. Billy Burns, Brazos Pilots Association
Capt. Noah Niday, Brazos Pilots Association
Ms. Colleen Kallestad, Freeport LNG
Mr. Chad Janosky, Bay-Houston Towing
Mr. James Nash, WGMA

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 January 7, 2026.

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

6. Review and consider approval of the reappointment of Captain Matthew Krohn as Branch Pilot for the Ports of Brazoria County.

Ms. Saathoff presented the application for reappointment of Captain Matthew Krohn as branch pilot for the Ports of Brazoria County. She stated that the process is outlined in Texas Transportation Code 68 with Subchapter C addressing pilot licenses and certificates. She went on to explain that certain qualifications for a license are laid out in 68.038 with the process and requirements for application for a license under 68.035 and 68.041 outlining the license renewal. She further noted that the process and chapter is specific to Brazoria County pilots. Ms. Saathoff stated that Matthew Krohn first came to the Port in 2018 as a deputy pilot, completed his two years of training and has been licensed as a branch pilot for four years with his commission expiring October 20 of this year. Furthermore, his filing is in compliance, and he has met all the qualifications for holding the license. It is staff's recommendation that the Commission approve the application for renewal and make a recommendation to the Governor.

A motion was made by Commissioner Singhanian to approve the reappointment. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Kincannon with all Commissioners present voting in favor of the motion.

7. Receive update from the Channel User Advisory Group.

Captain Niday stated the pilots gave their last presentation to the channel user advisory group three weeks ago and it is his understanding that all the users are very pleased with the current services. He gave the group an update on what the pilots are trying to do with the radio tower and the new basic operating procedures which was well received. He stated that pilot dispatch now has 254 registered users. They continue to add and update users regularly as terminals have new employees come online or want to take people off. He noted that Phillips 66 is still the largest user of the program with almost 60 active users. With regard to income, Captain Niday shared a graph that shows they continue to run a slight deficit for the dispatch services comparing March to June 2026 to March to June of 2025. He noted that it's a little skewed with some increased traffic they had from crude oil adding that they were pretty close to net zero when the crude oil was going strong, but has trended back to the new normal, which is about a \$5,000/month deficit that the pilots have been supplementing. They are actively working trying to address the deficit, along with the communications tower. He explained that the pilots have identified a weak spot in their operation with communications adding that the radio tower on Quintana Island is 100 feet tall and currently reaches out to the pilot boarding area; however, with the deepened channel boarding area, the sea buoy will be moving out about four miles so pilots will be boarding 9-10 miles out. They will not have the capability to communicate with ships 2 hours in advance of boarding to give them information on pilot order time or pilot arrangement for boarding. The pilots have been working diligently to solve the issue. He explained that the factor is the height of the tower. The pilots use VHF (very high frequency) which can only be amplified so much before you have to get higher for a signal, so the pilots are in search of a higher tower. He stated that they discussed building a new tower and looked into grants they might be eligible for but realized they were only eligible for a fraction of the full cost of what it would be to build a tower which would not be the most cost effective way to go about it, so they have shifted focus to a rental space. They first identified a tower in Oyster Creek but once they got into the process with

Crown Castle, they realized it wasn't the right tower. They've now identified a 425 foot tower in Angleton which is managed by a different large tower rental company. They are still waiting on a price but anticipates the rental cost to be about \$4,000/month with automatic escalators but it is something they are actively pursuing. He stated that they did identify that 400-500 feet will be a good height to be, giving the pilots the ability to reach out about 60 miles offshore under normal conditions, which will be enough to communicate with the faster ships, like Dole, 2 hours before they arrive to relay information like, they'll have pilot on arrival or slow down, the pilot's not until this time or what's needed for boarding arrangements. Another benefit of renting space is they'll be up and running much quicker, ideally, by the time the channel is charted by NOAA, and the new channel is put into use, they'll have a tower ready to go. He stated that Captain Burns is working with Jason Hull to set up a meeting with the Coast Guard to get moving on the charts. He explained there has been a changeover in personnel in Galveston since the government shutdown, so the meeting will be a refresher to ensure everyone is on the same page and to have the buoys placed as soon as possible. With NOAA, Captain Niday's hope is that the charts can be done by January 2027, since they are just adding data to what's currently there; however, there's no certain timeline on when it will be done. The pilots will continue working with Mr. Hull to get this completed. Captain Niday also reported that the pilots are also working with dispatch on a request by shipping companies and terminals to have notification system for vessels put in place which will benefit their operation allowing them time to prepare for the arrival and initial meeting once the vessel arrives. He does believe it's something the pilots can provide and are working with the programming company to accomplish. He explained that the notifications would give tenant and shipping companies the ability to subscribe to notifications for a vessel so when the pilot's on board, if they selected to be notified, they would get a text message or an e-mail that the pilot's on board the vessel. Captain Niday doesn't believe it will be a huge cost but because of the programming involved, there will be an additional cost that will fall under the communications fee. Referring back to the channel, Captain Niday stated the next step is setting the buoys and shared a graph that depicts where the current buoys are located, where the two additional buoys will be located, which will have a larger offset between them. He also stated that the new FP buoy (current sea buoy) will be moved 4 miles further offshore to be in naturally occurring deepwater explaining that because of the dredging that deepened the channel to 56 feet, the buoys needed to be moved further offshore to ensure pilots could board vessels in safe water before proceeding into the channel. Captain Niday shared a photo of the new pilot boat currently under construction. He stated that the engines are currently going in and once that is complete and all the external fittings and through holes are finished, they will put it in the water and start the wiring and electronics. The pilots anticipate delivery in October or early November. He also noted that because the boat is a little bit longer and wider, it will give the pilots the ability to serve larger seas and be able to board in slightly more inclement weather. Additionally, the new boat will have jets versus the traditional propellers that prior boats have which will be much safer and allow a faster transit. He also stated that there's a very high likelihood that the pilots will have to start operating 2 pilot boats, first beginning intermittently and eventually moving to full time. With the channel expansion and the port getting busier, ships are coming in on a steadier basis and the logistics of getting pilots offshore and onto ships, off ships and back inshore will continue to be more challenging. He added that there are benefits that will come with the operation but also additional costs. Vessel traffic still shows Port Freeport berths with the most vessel calls followed by LNG averaging between 18 and 21 ships per month. Phillips continues to be consistent with their traffic as they continue to export propane to the Far East while Seaway experienced a big increase when the Iran conflict happened and has since gone back to the normal 10 ships/month. He stated that VOPAC is steady and recently completed maintenance dredging on their docks and is back at full draft capabilities. BASF continues to see about one ship per month. Vessel count by dock from January to June 2025 vs.

January to June 2026 shows the increase that's occurred at Brazos Harbor from 186 vessels in 2025 to 200 this year. Captain Niday commented that the pilots are excited for what the port has accomplished with the car carriers and container ship lines and continue to look forward to providing services while ensuring their logistic capabilities is what's needed to provide services for the vessels. Freeport LNG is very steady, and Phillips has a slight increase along with Seaway while VOPAC continues its decades long trend of slowly going down. Lastly, he reported that the two deputy pilots have completed 18 months of training. He stated that they are clear to do all movements and have been operating as second pilots on the ships that require 2 pilots (car carriers and LNG vessels) and have also completed a lot of solos on ships that only require one pilot. Overall, the pilots are very pleased with their progress. When asked if there were any issues or major problems the Commission needed to be aware of, Captain Niday there were none, adding that main item on their radar is the channel expansion project winding down and coming online. He stated there are a few logistical challenges the pilots are working through to ensure they are equipped for like the second pilot boat as previously mentioned. While it's not needed right away, when the second pilot boat comes online and moves to a full-time operation, additional employees will be needed. He also stated that moving to eight pilots was the right decision however in the next five years, they will most likely explore additional pilots as the port continues to grow, ship traffic increases and the demands of the pilots become substantially larger. He stated that Port Freeport isn't designed to accommodate two-way traffic; however, there are things the pilots can continue to do, like caravan ships and speed up, to keep operations as efficient as possible. He commented that it's all good things the pilots are faced with, they are just trying their best to make sure they are equipped to meet the needs and demands of the customers.

Ms. Colleen Kallestad, chairperson for the Channel User Advisory Group stated the group is onboard with everything the pilots are proposing for the rate adjustments adding that in 2025, the pilots contributed \$60,000 of their funds to cover the costs of the dispatch so no one has any issues with the rate increase noting that the increase is really minimal for the service that dispatch provides. She stated they have no issues with communication, but when they move the pilot boarding station out, the tower is going to be critical, speaking for LNG and the port users as a whole. Everyone is very satisfied and looks forward to the new boat and busier operations.

8. Receive update from the Brazos Pilots Association.

Captain Niday covered this update under the previous agenda item.

8. Adjourn.

With no further business before the Commission, the meeting adjourned at 12:49 PM.