



CONNECTICUT Port Authority

Connecticut Pilot Commission Public Meeting

Tuesday, September 30, 2025
10:00am

Location:
CT Port Authority Office
455 Boston Post Road, Suite 204
Old Saybrook, CT 06475

MINUTES

CPC Members in Attendance: Chair Bill Gash; Vice-Chair Mike Eisele; Kyle Butler; Chris Clark; Dave Pohorylo; Wynne Bohannon; Paul Liistro

CPC Members Absent: Joe Maco; Paul Whitescarver

CPA Staff: Executive Director Michael O'Connor; Jill Dowling-Moreno; Fayola Haynes; Melissa Root; Anthony Afriyie

Public: DJ Toby; Adam Richardson; Robert McCollom; Patrick Kennedy Sr.; James Gura; Chris Murray; Richard Astles

1. **Call to Order**

Chair Bill Gash called the meeting to order at 10:00am. He thanked the Pilot Commissioners for their flexibility in rescheduling the meeting from October to today so that Connecticut Port Authority Executive Director Michael O'Connor could be in attendance, noting that he was not able to attend on Oct. 4th as he will be attending the American Association of Port Authorities Convention next week.

2. **Approval of the September 9, 2025 meeting minutes**

Motion by Wynne Bohannon, seconded by Paul Liistro. So VOTED, with NO opposed and abstentions by Bill Gash, Mike Eisele, and Dave Pohorylo.

3. **Public Comment – Public participation related to Agenda topics (limit to 5 minutes per person/topic)**

None

4. **U.S. Coast Guard Update**

Bill Gash noted that a representative from the U.S. Coast Guard will be in attendance at the November meeting.

5. CPA Executive Director Report

Michael O'Connor provided an update on the stop work order that had been issued for the Revolution Wind project noting the preliminary injunction issued on September 22nd to proceed with the work. He noted it is anticipated that Sunrise Wind will commence after Revolution Wind is completed. He thanked Adam Richardson for taking him on the Trina for a ride along and noted that he looks forward to rides with other pilots, agents or tugboats.

Michael O'Connor and Bill Gash noted the letter received from Captain Patrick Kennedy requesting deferment to the apprentice pilot program. Bill Gash asked to hold this item for the November meeting noting the letter had not yet been distributed to the Pilot Commissioners. Bill Gash asked if the item could be taken up under new business as a general discussion of the deferment option in relation to the apprentice pilot solicitation. So VOTED, and General Deferment added to the agenda under New Business as Item 7c.

Michael O'Connor noted the expired terms of members of the Pilot Commission and noted that Chair Bill Gash was recently reappointed. He asked that members of the Pilot Commission let him know how they want to proceed and that he can help facilitate reappointment if desired. Mike Eisele and Dave Pohorylo noted that they will work on their own reappointments.

Michael O'Connor noted the importance of the Pilot Commission in supporting pilots and the mission. He noted that at Pilot Commission meetings, he expects to specifically hear about the following directly from a pilot or a pilot representative: Challenges to safety, near misses, lessons learned; Harbor or equipment issues; Activity in the previous calendar month – Connecticut Pilot support of marine traffic to/from which ports; Upcoming training status and needs. He requested that these topics be added to the agenda for future meetings and expects that discussion on these topics happen routinely.

6. Continuing Business

(a) CT Pilot Apprentice Progress Update (Association)

Kyle Butler noted that Matthew Butcka completed his pilot apprenticeship and was recommended for licensure at the last Pilot Commission meeting and recently received his CT State Pilot License.

It was noted that there is no current need for an apprentice pilot. Bill Gash asked Kyle Butler to look two years out for anticipated needs for a future apprentice pilot and asked him to discuss this at the upcoming November meeting of the Association of Connecticut State Pilots.

There was discussion regarding training needs and funding for pilot training. Michael O'Connor again requested that the pilots provide the specific information requested regarding pilot training needs, priorities and costs. DJ Toby noted potential upcoming trainings at United States Maritime Resource Center (USMRC) in November and December for Matthew Butcka, Robert McCollom and Sean Meade. Bill Gash noted the importance of knowing the expected costs for FY 2026 for pilot training and asked what the typical yearly cost for training is. There was discussion regarding where the funds for training come from and how that works as it relates to rotation administration. Richard Astles noted the NY rotation administrator matrix and that CT pilots are putting together something similar. He noted average costs can range from \$500-800/day for training per pilot depending on the training.

(b) Coastal Buoy Modernization Initiative Proposal Update

Michael O'Connor noted that there was a new public comment period for November 2025 and the effectiveness of the feedback submitted during the previous public comment period. The link to the new notice can be found here: <https://www.news.uscg.mil/Press-Releases/Article/4308856/coast-guard-seeks-public-input-on-proposed-aids-to-navigation-changes-in-the-no/>. Michael O'Connor requested feedback from the pilots and Commissioners to review the map and determine which buoys are needed or not needed and why.

(c) Proposed Revisions to Connecticut Port Authority Marine Pilot Procedures, Section III – Qualifications, Selection and Training for New Applicants for a License as a Connecticut State Marine Pilot

Mike Eisele noted that the working group will be moving forward to review the procedures.

7. New Business

(a) Funds for Pilot Training

Michael O'Connor noted that this item was discussed under Item #6a.

(b) Rotation Administrators' Letter

Bill Gash noted meetings and discussions that had taken place regarding a letter from Block Island Pilots regarding Tugboat Requirements in New Haven Harbor. He noted that the letter has been provided to the Pilot Commission. Michael O'Connor noted that he found out about the letter after the last Pilot Commission meeting on September 9, 2025 but that the topic was not discussed at the Pilot Commission meeting earlier that day. He noted that the letter could have provided guidance as opposed to mandating requirements. It was noted that a letter like this should be provided to the Pilot Commission before being issued to find reasonable answers regarding safety, efficiency and cost in order to make a recommendation to the Connecticut Port Authority for safe and efficient piloting. Dave Pohorylo asked why the tugboat request made is necessary after 50 years of not having this as a requirement.

There was discussion regarding New Haven, Gateway, McAllister, tugs available, tugs provided in the past, tractor tugs, length of tugs, when and where tugs are available in the harbors, circumstances under which a tractor tug is needed or preferred, weather conditions, cost, current and previous standards, requests and communication of needs for tractor tug, scheduling and availability, dispatch, typical process, berth availability, and terminal awareness. Bill Gash noted the issue with the letter is that it is a hard request on a fluid situation. Chris Murray noted that the letter went to agents and was on Block Island Pilots letterhead.

There was discussion regarding if there has been an increase in ship size, and the need for dredging in New Haven harbor and other harbors, as well as discussion regarding costs and delays. It was noted that safety is the number one concern and that each pilot has discretion in each situation. Kyle Butler noted that there is safe and safer. There was clarification provided that Block Island Pilots serves as the rotation administrator to all licensed pilots operating in Long Island Sound, including NY and CT licensed pilots. Chris Clark noted that an additional tractor tug could cost approximately \$15M. Mike Eisele referred to state regulations and having it be situational and not a blanket rule. Mike Eisele noted that State pilotage ends at the dock and read from the regulations <https://ctportauthority.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/CPA-Navigable-Waters-Marine-Pilots-Procedures-Amended-3.18.25.pdf> "IX. BOARDING, DEPARTING AND CONDUCT OF PILOTS (b). A pilot's services end and he is entitled to discharge by the master of a vessel when he has brought the vessel to a safe anchorage or to a position off the pier which the vessel is bound, unless the master shall have formally requested the pilot to assist in the docking of the vessel. Whenever formally requested by the master to do so, the pilot of a vessel may assist in either the docking or undocking of such vessel. A pilot shall not turn over the controls or leave a vessel under way unless he shall have first been properly relieved."

There was discussion regarding costs to run tugs and fuel surcharges, docking pilots and harbor pilots, what is done in other states, New London Harbor, costs for sound, harbor and docking, state licensing, and it was noted that ships are not required to use state pilots for docking but has been a universal practice. There was discussion regarding licensed pilots being insulated from commercial pressures, and getting ships in without damage. Chris Murray noted the issues that have been discussed regarding safety concerns, visibility, wind farm vessels and draft restrictions and frustrations with this. There was additional discussion regarding tractor tugs in New Haven Harbor and the tractor tug covering Long Island Sound (LIS). Mike Eisele noted confidence in pilots' judgement and looking for situational flexibility, and not to have a rule with agreement

from the Pilot Commission. Michael O'Connor noted that what is missing from the letter is what is needed in advance for safety and efficiency to bring in a ship in the safest way possible. He asked that the letter be rewritten to provide better understanding of the message, needs and concerns. Chris Clark noted that the tractor tug is not available less than 25% of the time. Bill Gash asked that Block Island Pilots pull back the letter and replace it to address the feedback shared at today's meeting but that it is up to them.

Richard Astles noted wanting help from McAllister regarding tractor tug availability, and noted not wanting to delay ships efficiency so that they arrive on time. Michael O'Connor noted that the number one priority is safety and noted his availability to meet with Richard Astles and Adman Richardson to discuss the right guidance regarding the letter.

(c) General Deferment

Bill Gash noted the letter received from Captain Patrick Kennedy regarding deferment to the apprentice pilot program. Michael O'Connor read from the pilot procedures <https://ctportauthority.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/CPA-Navigable-Waters-Marine-Pilots-Procedures-Amended-3.18.25.pdf> "XI. DEFERMENT OF ADMISSION TO PROGRAM The Authority, who is empowered to determine the number of pilots sufficient to meet the demands of commerce and the joint rotation system in the waters described in Section II(m) of these Procedures, shall place the names of those applicants having completed the Apprentice application process and receiving a Final Score by the CPC which he deems to be above the number of pilots sufficient to meet the demands of commerce and the joint rotation system on file for review and potential admission to the licensing Program for a period of twelve (12) months after the date of initial application." There was discussion and Mike Eisele noted that there is nothing further to do at this time. Michael O'Connor noted that he will follow-up with Captain Kennedy.

8. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn by Wynne Bohannon, seconded by Chris Clark. Meeting adjourned at 11:29am

Next Meeting: November 4, 2025