



## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Wow, spring feels like it is here albeit very early from what I remember! As soon as I say that it will get cold again I suppose. I do want a nice spring but I also want enough water from snow pack in the rivers for recreation and power generation this summer! Tradeoffs...lawns are being mowed regularly already and I notice little blossom petals on the roads during a run.

The Bridge Committee continues to meet often. We have had external engineers (at no cost) visit these meetings to validate and update information about bridge options and getting to next steps for figuring out strategies that consider a plethora of factors. It is a very difficult and time consuming task and my thanks to everyone serving on the Bridge Committee. In this Newsletter, you have updated Bridge information in the form of Questions and Answers Q & A's. Please review this article; any questions can be addressed to the Bridge Committee. We are contemplating a face to face meeting with the membership in a month or so to further educate the membership about the Bridge issues and provide updated information.

**Volunteers are needed** for serving next year on the Board as well as several committees. The survey gave you an opportunity to indicate where you would like to help and some of you responded and have been or will be contacted. We may need a new Treasurer who has experience with larger budgets and the full accounting life cycle. We currently have a CPA from the Island who has been our volunteer Treasurer for most of the last two years and she needs a break. Please consider helping in any way and if you want to serve on the Board, contact RJ Argenzio-West or Gabrielle Gibbert who are on the Nominating Committee this year. The new Board will be in place July 1

Regarding committees, we have Parks and Recreation, Budget Committee, Investment Committee, Nominating Committee (at the end of each Board year), Safety Committee and Bridge Committee. We are recruiting for two new committees based on feedback from the

survey. They are the Neighborhood Emergency Preparedness (NEP) and the Volunteer Recruitment Committee (VRC). To be part of the NEP or VRC, please contact Dawn Stanton at 222-2786.

Regarding dues collections from the membership, the Board has revised and is finalizing lien and collection information which will be posted on our web. The Board does not wish that anyone be in a situation of hardship because we are all neighbors and we understand things are difficult for some. If you are in arrears, ***please*** contact Cathy Driscoll and make payment arrangements. Updated lien and collection information will be part of the last Newsletter of this year in June 2010. If you want a copy of this information earlier than the next Newsletter, please contact our Island Manager, Cathy Driscoll.

Thanks to all who filled out and returned a recent survey sent out. As mentioned in the survey, the Board and bridge committee wanted to get feedback from all of you in order to make better decisions about budgeting and what is important to you. There are tabulated results and these will be posted on the website in a few weeks.

Take care and see you around the Island.

*Charlotte Crain - President*

## BRIDGE REPLACEMENT FUND

At the end of last quarter (December 31, 2009), the market value of the investments in this RIIA fund was \$838,276 or 73.0% of the planned June 30, 2010 target amount of \$1,148,732. The allocation percentage goals approved by the Board of Trustees remain 25% Bonds, 28% Large Capitalization Stocks, 22% Medium and Small Capitalization Stocks, 20% International Stocks, and 5% to Money Market. All funds are held by the Vanguard Group. The Investment Committee meets quarterly and provides recommendations to the Board of Trustees. The next special assessment for the fund will be \$384 and due July 1, 2010. *Mike Hirko-Chair*

## MEMBERSHIP SURVEY RESULTS

Last month, the results of an ISLAND MEMBERSHIP SURVEY were tallied. Our objective was to:

- identify your preferred means of communication
- identify what the membership considers “essential” Island services
- and use your opinions to create 2010’s Budget for you to vote on this May

Thank you for lending your voice to our volunteer board. Over 60% responded with valuable information that will guide our decisions over the next year. Below are the simplified summary results. A more detailed sheet will be available at the annual meeting in May.

<p>PREFERRED METHOD OF COMMUNICATION</p> <p>#1 -- Email                  #2 -- US Mail                  #3 -- Newsletter                  #4 -- Website                  #5 -- Door to Door Delivery                  #6 -- Island Meetings</p>
<p>ASSETS IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE</p> <p>#1 -- Bridge                  #2 -- Roads                  #3 -- South Beach                  #4 -- Dock                  #5 -- Boat Launch                  #6 -- Tennis                  #7 -- North Beach</p>
<p>BUDGET PLANNING - MOST ESSENTIAL SERVICE</p> <p>#1 -- Bridge                  #2 -- Road Maintenance                  #3 -- Pot Hole Repairs</p>
<p>BUDGET PLANNING - LEAST ESSENTIAL SERVICE</p> <p>#1 -- Speed Bump Painting                  #2 -- Fall Sweeping Service                  #3 -- Summer Brush Cutting</p>

Results confirmed the importance of our bridge and roads, and suggested that the membership would prefer broader communication methods. Be sure to attend May’s Annual meeting and learn if you’re the lucky winner of a **\$50 Gift Certificate** to the Tides Tavern. Names (board members excluded) will be drawn from the surveys that were submitted.

71% of those that responded are full time residents.

Approximately 30% expect to move within 7-10 years

81 respondents would use PayPal service  
29 would not

30 members signed-up for 1 or more Volunteer Committee

We will be contacting those that signed up for a Committee over the next few months. If you have any questions, please call the Island Manager at 265-8489.

*Dawn Stanton*

## RAFT ISLANDTREASURER

In December, after Holly resigned, the board appointed me as your interim treasurer. Costs to inspect and repair the bridge this year exceeded budgeted amounts by nearly \$18,000. Other costs are in line or below budgeted items. We spent over \$81,000 on the bridge so far this year. Assuming everyone pays, general assessment dues are only about \$85,000. I met with the Budget Committee this week and expected costs for the bridge maintenance are likely to be dramatically higher. **Our dues are not keeping pace with the bridge costs alone.** This means that our reserves are dwindling.

I’m going to propose that we vote at the annual meeting to waive the audit requirement by a CPA. In lieu of the CPA audit, I had two island members with accounting and financial backgrounds volunteer to conduct a review of the books and records. This will save the membership a tremendous amount of money yet ensure the membership that our funds are as stated.

*Anne Scea - Treasurer*

## RAFT ISLAND BRIDGE UPDATE

Rising maintenance costs, engineering expenses, insurance fees, and repairs needed to keep our bridge safe reveal that no matter which Bridge Management Option is chosen, **current RIIA Membership Dues are not keeping up** with actual and projected costs for continued maintenance of the existing bridge.

Additionally, construction costs are higher than 1996's projections, banks are not making 20/30-year loans for bridges, and state agencies are enforcing even stricter environmental regulations. Projected higher costs needed to maintain the bridge drove the decision to investigate other bridge alternatives and funding options. In October of this year, a re-activated Bridge Committee comprised of new and old volunteers have reviewed reports and information in the 2005, 2007, 2008 2009 Exeltech & Sargent Engineering Reports and the 2009 Hirko Report. The BC unanimously agreed with 3 options as the most viable bridge management solutions. They are:

1. **RID** - petition Pierce County to construct a new bridge as a Road Improvement District (RID)
2. **REPAIR** - continue maintaining the bridge
3. **RECONSTRUCT** - RIIA contracts with an engineering firm to build a new bridge or replace the bridge in phases

Each alternative is being researched and discussed for feasibility and cost. Over the next couple of months, a preliminary report will be developed to provide to the Board and the membership at our Annual Meeting on May 17, 2010. In the meantime, and because interim bridge repairs must continue, an updated Maintenance Plan by the engineer is underway.

### Bridge History

- 1958 -- MacDonald constructs 2-Lane 788-ft x 20-ft Timber Bridge with Concrete Decking
- 1977 -- RIIA purchases the Bridge and Access Road (off Kopachuck) for \$50,000
- 1995 -- Engineer's Inspection reveals on-going deterioration with remaining bridge life of approx 20 years (to 2016) \*\*
- 1996 -- Membership approves Annual Special Assessment called the Bridge Replacement Fund (BRF)

- 1996 -- Each lot assessed \$130 BRF with 8.04% added each year thereafter (BRF will be \$610 in 2016)
- 2005 -- Updated construction estimates reveal BRF falling behind projected bridge replacement construction costs. Board initiates full review of bridge conditions and options.
- 2007 -- Board approves contract to study Bridge Options -- Hirko Report
- 2009 -- Volunteer Bridge Committee formed to review Bridge Options

(\*\* per engineer's report in 1995, 2016 represents the year when major upgrades may be required)

The Q & A's that follow provide detailed information on the challenges we face regarding our bridge. Please take the time to read them so that you can be an informed participant during bridge discussions at our May meeting. If you have additional questions or would like to attend a BC meeting, please call the **Island Manager at 265-8489** for more information.

*Bridge Committee*

### Questions and Answers....

1. **How much are we spending on Bridge Repairs?** Over the last 8 years, RIIA spent a total of \$427,236 on bridge repairs only. That's an average of \$53,404 per year or \$267 annually per lot (based on 200 lots).
2. **How much of our Dues goes to MAINTAIN the bridge?** Originally, 23% of your monthly dues were earmarked for the Bridge Maintenance Fund (BMF). But in 2008, the membership voted to combine the BMF together with RIIA's other operating funds (roads, capital and general) -- Currently dues go into one fund with no special designation. Over the past five years the cost of bridge inspections, insurance, taxes and repairs have exceeded 50% of the total dues amount billed to the membership each year.
3. **Is there another fund for the Bridge?** Yes. In 1996, RIIA began collecting a special assessment for the bridge called the Bridge REPLACEMENT Fund (BRF). This was a special bylaw amendment establishing a fund specifically earmarked for bridge replacement. There is approximately \$800,000 in the BRF (it fluctuates with the market). Last year each lot paid \$355. Per the bylaws, this amount increases by 8.04 percent per year until 2016 when this payment schedule sunsets.

**4. What happens after 2016?** The annual BRF collection will expire. RIIA must initiate a bylaw amendment in order to continue collecting these funds. An increased amount may need to be considered. This would require approval by two-thirds of RIIA's eligible (current with dues) voting members.

**5. Why not use the Bridge REPLACEMENT funds (BRF) to maintain the bridge?** Using this fund for general bridge maintenance would require a bylaw amendment approved by two-thirds of RIIA's eligible voting members. Maintenance costs would eventually deplete the BRF entirely.

**6. Why can't we just keep paying current dues and leave the bridge issue alone?** Unfortunately, engineering studies have identified some very costly maintenance upgrades within the next five to ten years. Current RIIA Membership Dues are not keeping up with those costs for continued maintenance of the existing structure. No matter which option is chosen, a RIIA dues increase will be necessary in the future.

**7. Why can't we ask Pierce County to build a bridge?** Our bridge is privately owned by the membership and it is not built to current county standards. By law, the County is not obligated to fund a new bridge. The only way that the County would consider taking over our bridge is if a majority of properties petition to become a Road Improvement District (RID). Under this scenario, Raft Island owners would fund the new bridge costs through property taxes.

**8. Can we become a Road Improvement District (RID)?** Based on research over the last several years, we have learned the following: The first step requires a "Special Benefits Study" (SBS) by Pierce County to find out if the *special benefit* resulting from the construction of a new bridge would be equal to or greater than the cost to each owner. The governing law (RCW) states that "*...no parcel can be assessed for more than the special benefit received.*" If RIIA votes to move forward with a SBS, it will cost RIIA between \$20,000 to \$50,000 (approximately \$90 to \$222 per lot) and will take three to six months to complete. Once completed the SBS will provide an itemized list of property owners and each lot's proposed special assessment. If a majority (two thirds of RIIA's eligible voting members) approves of the "special assessment" and petitions Pierce County to become an RID, the County Council will make the decision whether to approve the application. If they approves, each lot owner will be obligated to pay the special assessment amount in

the form of an annual fee added to their property tax for 20 years.

**9. How much would my property be assessed?** Until the "Special Benefits Study" (SBS) is completed, it's impossible to know exactly how much each property owner would have to pay each year because the fee is determined parcel by parcel. Based on a estimated construction cost of \$7.8 million and 225 lots, the average lot owner could be assessed approximately \$35,000 or \$1,700 each year for 20 years.

**10. If Pierce County Council accepts our RID petition, what are the benefits?** A county-owned bridge means that the membership would no longer have to insure, inspect or fund future repairs of the bridge. The County, rather than RIIA, will be responsible for collecting related funds in the form of property taxes.

**11. What would it cost to replace our bridge if the County builds it?** Based on estimates from the County, \$7.8M using an average of \$275 per sq ft (bridge deck surface).

**12. Do we have enough land or "right-of-way" for Pierce County to construct a bridge?** Pierce County has road width regulations that may require additional land to construct a new bridge.

**13. What if we build our own bridge -- who would manage it and where would the money come from?** This work would be managed by a consultant (professional engineering firm) hired by RIIA. Funding strategies would require future investigation. The existing Bridge Replacement Fund (BRF) could be used to leverage funds (borrowing at prevailing rates and terms).

**14. What would it cost to replace our bridge if RIIA builds it?** Current estimates suggest between \$4M to \$6M for a 24-ft wide bridge if RIIA builds it. County construction standards require prevailing wage and documentation that typically costs more and often takes longer. County standards include standardized widths, sidewalk provisions and additional features that we may not require. (Note: RIIA would construct the structure to current truck weight standards for increased capacities.)

**15. What will happen to the value of my home if we choose to finance a new bridge?** All bridge options have the potential of impacting the value of island property. The Board, the Bridge Committee and the Bridge Replacement

Fund Committee are working to protect the value of everyone's homes no matter which option is ultimately selected by the membership.

16. **If the remaining life expectancy in 1995 was 20 yrs, does that mean our bridge will fail in 2016?** This projection was a 1995 estimate based on the judgment of a licensed engineer. The engineer gave his best guess at what year those repairs create a dollar for dollar diminishing return. However, our continued maintenance can extend the life of the bridge. And it is conceivable that we could continue maintaining the bridge indefinitely. **The negative:** The costs to stage each major repair, one fix at a time, makes the total cost of this approach very expensive. **The positive:** These fixes and costs could be spread over a longer period of time with the debt shared by current and future residents.

17. **What is the current condition of our bridge?** Annual engineering inspections continue to rate our bridge in Fair\*\* condition. The Federal Highway Systems has a standardized "condition rating".

GOOD = A range from no problems to some minor deterioration of structural elements.

\*\*FAIR = All primary structural elements are sound but may have deficiencies such as minor section loss, deterioration, cracking, spalling, or scour.

POOR = Advanced deficiencies such as section loss, deterioration, cracking, spalling, scour, or seriously affected primary structural components. Bridges rated in poor condition may be posted with truck weight restrictions.

18. **Can the bridge be maintained indefinitely? Yes. It was constructed using modular elements.** Bridges, new and old, are in a continuous state of decay.

19. **Is maintaining our bridge indefinitely, cost effective? The 2005 Sargent Engineering Report stated, "replacement of the bridge in the next ten years makes the most economic sense."**

20. **If we build a new bridge ourselves, won't we have to continue managing it? Yes.** Although the early years of a new bridge would require very few repairs, RIIA must maintain a bridge fund for bridge insurance, inspections, future repairs and (after 75 to 100 years) eventual replacement.

21. **How do we know what kind of bridge to build?** RIIA will solicit requests from licensed engineers to assist in designing the most cost effective and functional bridge to meet our needs. It is likely that a new bridge would use concrete instead of timber piling.

22. **Can we build a causeway across the tideflats?** The short answer is no; Fish and Wildlife will not permit this option. The Bridge Committee is looking at a conceptual design that uses a partial fill at both ends to shorten the structural length of the bridge and reduce costs but we have not met with any agencies for feedback. Once the membership chooses a preferred bridge option, specific construction details will be investigated by the engineers.

23. **Can our creosote pilings be replaced?** Wood piling treated with creosote are no longer allowed but other types of treated wood are permitted. Under "maintenance" allowances, we can continue to replace failing piling members with other types of treated wood (not creosote).

24. **What is the lifespan of concrete and steel?** About 75 (plus or minus) years.

25. **What is better -- concrete or steel piling?** Current estimates suggest that concrete is cheaper and easier to permit -- steel piling are easier to drive but may not last as long due to rust and corrosion.

26. **Will a new bridge allow bigger trucks to travel across our bridge?** The standard highway rating is H-22. Our bridge rating is lower (H15-44). If we reconstruct the bridge, we will build to current standards. If the County reconstructs our bridge (under the RID), it will be to current county standards.

27. **What about permitting for the in-water work?** State and federal agencies permit in-water work when juvenile and adult fish are not migrating through the area. These "fish windows" are determined by the agency and prescribed as part of our permit approval.

28. **Can a new bridge be permitted? Yes.** There is no reason to believe that permitting with all county, state and federal agencies will prohibit construction of a new bridge. The application process and fees will be part of the overall bridge construction project cost.

**29. Will the bridge be closed during construction?** No. Any construction plan will require that one lane will be open throughout reconstruction of the bridge.

**30. How long will permitting and bridge construction take?** The permit process begins when a set of plans is submitted. The SEPA checklist can take up to 45 days; Fish and Wildlife has 45 days after that and a Shoreline permit can take 120 days or more. The Army Corps of Engineers could be slow but that's where pressure from our state and county representatives can help. All applications can run concurrently. In short, a safe estimate is up to 1 ½ years once plans are submitted. In-water construction will be tied to an annual "fish window" cycle and is expected to take about a 12 to 18 months.

**31. Will we need a Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) review?** Our regional representative from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) determined that no State owned aquatic lands are within our project area footprint because the shallow passage between the island and mainland is privately owned.

**32. Will we need a Historic Preservation Act review?** A cultural resource survey to assess the risk of disturbing archeological artifacts is routine. As part of the SEPA permit process, the Department of Archeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP) and other agencies have an opportunity to comment on the likelihood of cultural resources buried within the subject site area. Since it's unlikely for there to be a gravesite or historic native village within the tidelands, our "risk" is very low and should not be an issue.

**33. If permitting takes over 1 year and construction within a fish window takes another year or so, what do we need to do now?** If there is a decision to reconstruct the bridge in phases, we would solicit engineers to develop design options for the project. Before proceeding we will have to identify the most equitable funding strategies. This work will take up to a year to complete and will be presented to the general membership. If there is a decision to take the next step with Pierce County for a RID, the membership must vote to fund the Special Benefits Study (SBS see #8 & #9). Either way and in the short term, a conservative bridge maintenance/repair plan will continue. Results from the updated Maintenance Plan is expected before the annual meeting in May. It will tell us whether a dues increase is necessary to keep up with repairs.

**34. Can we apply for grants to finance the bridge?** Funding for private construction projects is highly unlikely. Our best asset is the Bridge Replacement Fund because it could be leveraged to finance loans or other funding sources with the best available terms.

**35. What about the FEMA bridge program.... What's that about?** In September of 2009, the RIIA board agreed to apply for FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Act) status in order to be eligible for disaster funds from a catastrophic event (such as an earthquake). FEMA funds are only available to "pre-approved" plans. An Island FEMA Committee was formed to attend monthly meetings sponsored by Pierce County (PC) and in April of 2010, PC will submit our application to FEMA on RIIA's behalf. There are no fees or obligations associated with this program. In addition to federal funds to replace the bridge after a catastrophic event, a "Seismic Mitigation Plan" gives RIIA the ability to apply for additional federal grant funds in the future. This is not an answer to the bridge issue but does give the Island another layer of "insurance".

**36. Do we need to insure the bridge?** Liability and catastrophic insurance protection is in the best interest of the RIIA membership. Currently, the bridge is insured for \$3M. Annual inspections and repairs are required in order to keep the policy active. Approximately 31% percent of your annual dues go to insure the bridge (total: \$28,000 annually).

**37. WHEN WILL THE GENERAL MEMBERSHIP GET TO VOTE ON THE BRIDGE?** The Bridge Committee is finalizing a scope of work to solicit competitive input from engineers for more detailed information on the designs and costs for two of the options (REPAIR and RECONSTRUCTION). Results will be presented during a special meeting expected this fall. Since the RID is a funding mechanism, it will require a vote to fund the "Special Benefits Study" (SBS - see #8 and #9). Note: This approach assumes that the general membership will be in favor of funding a new bridge through a 20-year tax. Prior to funding the SBS or any of the options, a general membership vote by mailed ballot will be required. The decision will be determined by majority vote (two-thirds of RIIA's eligible voting members).

*Results from the recent RIIA Survey provided a list of volunteer Bridge Committee Members. A Bridge Committee Meeting will be posted and those that so graciously signed up, will be notified. Thank you!*

## Island Officers and Trustees

President	Charlotte Crain (# 8)	253-265-0980
Vice President	Jeff Davis (# 236)	253-265-3730
Treasurer	Ann Scea (# 192)	253-265-3791
Secretary	Trish Burnett (# 67)	253-265-3391
Trustee	Rich Swenson /Roads (# 219)	253-265-8090
Trustee	Tina Shoemaker (# 142)	253-265-0216
Trustee	Ann Webb (# 218)	253-265-3804
Trustee	Sarah Brown (# 6)	253-649-0175
Trustee	Jesse Stamper (# 104)	253-265-8242
Trustee	Margie Hinton (# 17)	253-265-0966
Trustee	Cathy Driscoll (# 4)	253-265-8489

## Bridge Replacement Fund Investment Committee

Mike Hirko / Chair (# 113)	253-686-5288
Monica Butler (# 101)	
Don Perry (# 65)	
Rich Swenson (# 219)	
Dave Paley (# 69A)	
Christine Stephan (# 25)	
Gabrielle Gibbert (# 74)	



**Photo taken 3/6/2010**

*By BJ Winter aboard s/v Destiny*

## Bridge Committee

Ted Smith (# 160)	253-265-8697
Dawn Stanton (# 111)	253-222-2786
Bob McCoy (#239)	253-265-1626
Tom Straub (# 98)	253-265-6952

## Parks and Recreation Committee

Gabrielle Gibbert (# 74)	253-265-8368
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## Security Committee

Mike Neil (# 2)	253-381-2112
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### ROADS

We have a few more potholes that have been created this winter and they will be filled as soon as the weather clears. The same for painting the speed bumps. Please call Rich Swenson at 253-593-4999 if you see any drainage or asphalt issues.

Cathy Driscoll ~ RIIA General Manager ~ E-mail [drisco@centurytel.net](mailto:drisco@centurytel.net)  
Newsletter Editor ~ BJ Winter (#113) ~ E-mail [bjwinter@windermere.com](mailto:bjwinter@windermere.com)

***Remove first & last page of Newsletter to have a Bridge Report to bring to the May Meeting***

Cathy Driscoll  
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