

OpEd on the Transfer of the Chappy Ferry License

May 18, 2026

We Fully Support Brian Scall as the New Operator of the Chappy Ferry.

Let us make one crucial point perfectly clear from the start: all of us on Chappaquiddick, including the board of the Chappaquiddick Island Association and its membership, are profoundly grateful to Peter Wells and Sally Snipes for the essential and excellent service the Chappy Ferry has provided during their tenure, and are in full support of Brian Scall as a fine candidate to take over as operator of the Chappy Ferry.

Neither of these two points is at issue for us. What is at issue is the governance and future of the ferry as a well-regulated enterprise that will continue to operate in the best interests of our residents who rely upon it.

We Support the Recommendations of the Chappy Ferry Steering Committee.

We are concerned that a group of unidentified investors, unconnected to our island, proposes to take over the Town license to operate the ferry “as is.” “As is,” the 40-plus year-old license provides woefully inadequate protection of both services and costs for the hundreds of Chappy homeowners who depend upon the ferry for everything from groceries to life-threatening emergencies.

The Chappy Ferry Steering Committee, appointed by the Edgartown Select Board to advise it, has made eleven recommendations for vetting the proposed new owners and strengthening the license terms to better protect the public. A supermajority (70%) of nearly 400 respondents surveyed by the CIA — both members and non-members alike — supports the Steering Committee recommendations. We as a board also support them.

We Support Ferry License Revision Now, Before New Owners Rely on License Terms.

We vigorously oppose the suggestion made by some that the Select Board transfer the license to the new investors “as is,” putting off any changes to the license until its next automatic renewal in 2028. A legal opinion letter solicited by the Town makes clear that the Town has the legal right to change the terms of the license upon transfer, the same as it would if a new license were being issued. At the point of automatic renewal, the legal authority of the Town to change the terms would be far less certain — and the arguments by the investors would be stronger that any change to the terms would be unfair to them, and perhaps unlawful.

The time is now for Peter and Sally to take their well-earned retirement; for Brian Scall to begin his tenure as the Chappy Ferry’s new operator; and for the Select Board to adopt the

recommendations of the Steering Committee to protect the public reliant on the ferry. All three of these goals can — and should — be met at the same time.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Chappaquiddick Island
Association Board,

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