

# Island Air Expands in New Direction

The latest chapter in the long trajectory of Island Air’s success is the construction of a 100’ x 110’ (yes, it is big!) hangar at the Friday Harbor Airport. The hangar will house a backup ambulance aircraft and create a new Island Air-operated aircraft maintenance business.

Since founder Jackie Sargeson started Island Air in 1991, as a one-woman, one-plane flight school and charter service, the business has grown in response to the needs of the Island community. In the mid-1990s, Island Air began to add pilots and provide air medical services. Today Island Air is, by far, the largest employer based out of Friday Harbor Regional Airport, employing almost 30 healthcare providers and pilots. Most recently, when two long-time aviation maintenance mechanics left the island, Island Air stepped into the void by creating their own maintenance business in their soon-to-be-completed hangar.



**Crew photo top left to right:** Pilot Eric Roberts, Flight RN Larry Wall, Flight RN Ethan Robins, Flight RN Austin May, Flight RN Zach Winter, Pilot Craig Bailey **Bottom row, left to right:** Operations Manager & Flight Medic Josh Jensen, EMT & Special Projects Dan Bacon, Flight Medic Margaret Longley, Flight RN CJ Davis, Flight RN Dani Null, Flight RN Joe Juntilla, President & Pilot Jackie Hamilton.



Aviation Icon Roy Franklin and Jackie in 2010

The new hangar is being built adjacent to Island Air’s existing hangar which houses a Cessna 208 turboprop aircraft. The Cessna has all-weather capability and is solely dedicated to air ambulance operations for the San Juan Islands. It averages more than one medivac flight per day and is staffed 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

Approximately 80% of their business is air ambulance and the remainder are charter flights. The Port and Island Air coordinate all airport construction projects to ensure port projects don’t interrupt this critical service.

Jackie tells us her greatest reward is, “flying patients with Island Air Ambulance.” She also relates, “I am proud of starting a business from the ground up that provides jobs and saves lives.” Given our community’s small size and remoteness, we are blessed to have this level of life-saving service. The Port is grateful to Island Air for its continued dedication to meeting both the Island’s emergency medical needs and aviation needs.

If you are interested in joining Island Air Ambulance Service: <https://islandairambulance.com>. Medevac services are \$39 for a one-year subscription.



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## All about Audits *Gib Black, Commissioner Dist. 1*



Greetings from the Commissioners table. I’d like to take a minute to let you know that each year the Port of Friday Harbor undergoes an audit, which is conducted by employees of the State Auditor’s Office. Each year a commissioner

meets with the audit team, at the beginning of the audit and at the end, to hear the audit results. In my initial meeting in 2023, we reviewed port operations, practices and systems.

The auditors take a deep look under the hood, or perhaps I should say under the cowlings, to look for everything from out-right fraud to accidental double payments, and meetings that do not adhere to state law. They also make sure port record and bookkeeping adhere to current state standards.

Phyllis Johnson, Port Auditor, is the liaison to the State Auditor’s Office. She works closely with the audit team to ensure that they have access to all records. Year after year the Port has clean audits, and 2023 was no exception. These zero-finding audits reflect the great job Phyllis does tracking finances and budgeting for the future and the high level of competence of the entire Port staff.

If you have any questions or concerns about what is happening at the Port, please come to our meetings or reach out to the commission, and also know that the State Auditor’s Office is there for you to ensure proper management and zero fraud in the handling of public funds. Find the Port audit reports here: [www.portfridayharbor.org/your-port/financial-information/](http://www.portfridayharbor.org/your-port/financial-information/)

**Please Note: The Commission has changed its meeting day and time and now meets the second and fourth Fridays of most months from 10 a.m. to noon.**

## Port Commission Election Results



**Rich Goodhart** was elected to the District 3 Commissioner position last November. Goodhart is a pilot and flight instructor and has extensive maritime experience. We look forward to benefiting from his knowledge and experience.

**Barbara Marrett** was re-elected to serve her fourth term in the District 2 Commissioner position. Some say



she is a glutton for punishment, but she says “I enjoy helping to shape the future of the Island.”

Commissioners and staff look forward to working together for a productive, fun New Year. We’d also like to thank **Steven Carleton** for serving as an interim commissioner in 2023.

## Doing Business with the Port

**How do I: Pay a bill?** Call the Marina Office: (360) 378-2688, pay online or through autopay, or [contactus@portfridayharbor.org](mailto:contactus@portfridayharbor.org)

**Get a vessel hauled out?** Call Jensen Shipyard: 360-378-4072

**Sign up for permanent boat moorage?** Call the Marina Office: (360) 378-2688, sign up online, or [contactus@portfridayharbor.org](mailto:contactus@portfridayharbor.org)

**Sign up for transient boat moorage?** Call the Marina Office: (360) 378-2688

**Become a business tenant?** Call Todd Nicholson: (360) 378-2688 [toddn@portfridayharbor.org](mailto:toddn@portfridayharbor.org)

**Attend a meeting in person?** Regular meetings are held the second and fourth Friday of most months from 10 a.m. to noon at the San Juan Island Yacht Club, 273 Front Street. Check the website for agendas and supporting materials. Each agenda includes links and information on how to attend live meetings via ZOOM. Meeting recordings are available by request.

**Comment on or participate in a discussion of the Port Commission remotely?** Email questions or comments 48 hours in advance of Port Commission meeting to Todd Nicholson: [toddn@portfridayharbor.org](mailto:toddn@portfridayharbor.org). You may listen but not comment in on ZOOM. ZOOM links are included with agendas posted on the Port website [www.portfridayharbor.org](http://www.portfridayharbor.org).



Flight Crew Prepares Island Air’s Cessna 208 Turboprop Air Ambulance for Takeoff at the Friday Harbor Airport

## PORT REPORT — Newsletter from the Port of Friday Harbor

Issue 4 | Winter/Spring 2024

In our continuing effort to inform and engage the public, we’re happy to share the latest port news. Inside, find out how the Port fulfills its mission of economic development. Learn about Island Air’s expansion. See our first tanker truck landing using the new, grant-funded barge landing. Meet our new commissioner Rich Goodhart and staff member Amanda O’Brien. Read news from commissioner Gib Black and port mascot Hugo.

## New Story Pole at Home on Jackson Beach

Last Summer the Port of Friday Harbor hosted the Lummi Nation, Se’ Si’ Le, and the House of Tears Carvers to celebrate the life of the orca whale Sk’ aliCh’ elh’ tenaut, Tokitae/Lolita. The Port welcomed the community to witness this ceremony of song and story to acknowledge the great loss of Tokitae, and unveil the new Story Pole that traveled across the country to raise attention to the captive whale’s plight.



Several local tribes, nearly 400 members of the community, and a thousand online guests from around the globe joined the celebration. The Lummi nation fed the masses, loaves and fishes style, with grilled salmon and seafood stew accompanied by an abundant community potluck.

The new Story Pole is a permanent addition to Jackson Beach and has become a beloved feature by both visitors and residents. If you haven’t had a chance to visit Jackson Beach for a while, it’s worth a trip to walk on the beach, check out the many upgrades, and touch Tokitae.



Kelly Balcomb Bartok staff photo & story excerpts courtesy Journal of the San Juans





**Staff  
Spotlight:  
Amanda  
O’Brien**

*Amanda with  
Popeye, the Official  
Port Seal*

The Port’s new Executive Assistant for Accounts Payable, Amanda

O’Brien, hit the

ground running this summer taking the reins from the capable hands of Amber Garcia. Amanda’s varied work background, which includes retail and the service and hospitality industries, makes her a good fit for a job where she must wear many hats.

Born in California, at a young age Amanda’s family moved to Spain where her mother was stationed in the military for seven years. The family then transferred to Washington state where Amanda spent the majority of her time between Tacoma and Auburn. Then fate stepped in. While on vacation she had a chance meeting with a San Juan Island couple resulting in an invitation to visit the island for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July.

Amanda tells us, “We took them up on their offer and had the time of our lives; fell in love with the island and knew this was the place we wanted to raise our pre-teen daughter. Everything fell into place—even housing magically—we were living here fulltime within three months. We hope to be able to purchase property one day so we can fulfill our dream of spending the rest of our lives here.”

**What made you want to work at the Port?**

The Port came highly recommended by the community as a wonderful place to work.

**What do you like best about working at the Port?**

The water view and the great staff. I also appreciate the fast-paced work environment.

**What do you like best about Island living?**

The sense of community. I have always lived in large cities and truly enjoy the tightknit community here.

**Like least?** Whenever I have to leave the Island.

**Any surprises since you got started?**

Seeing whales in the Harbor was magical!

**Hugo’s Secret Spots**

From time-to-time we will feature a column by Hugo, the Port’s mascot. We welcome Hugo’s advice on special places for our 4-legged friends to enjoy at the Port, you might enjoy them too!

**Hugo:** Friends, did you know there is a pocket gravel beach at Spring Street Landing? It’s small and tends to disappear at high tide but it’s easy to access, from a stairway off the north end of the lower plaza, near Cease and Desist ale house. Here, I like to wade into the water to cool off in summer. Here also, on occasion, one can smell Eau de Otter, one of my personal favorite scents. It’s not appreciated by port staff, however, but I think it gives me an earthy/fishy scent which pays homage to the fact that I am, after all, just a canine columnist. P.S. Please pickup after your pets.



**High tide has  
swallowed  
my beach!**



**From the Executive  
Director**

*Todd Nicholson*

**What’s going on  
at the Airport?**

Earlier this Fall many people were curious about construction lights at the airport late in the evening and the large pile of gravel near the South end of the runway. These are associated with a project to replace the drainage system that runs along the airport runway. The construction is scheduled at night allowing the airport to remain open during daylight hours. The large pile of gravel is drain rock for the project and will be gone once the project is completed Spring of 2024.

Design and environmental permitting continue for a new above-ground fuel system, relocation of the automated weather system, and construction of a taxiway to the aviation usable areas at the southwest portion of the airport.

**Energy Audit at Airport Will Inform  
Efficiency and Energy Reductions**

We recently completed a comprehensive energy audit for the entire airport. Early in 2024, the Port Commissioners will be using this information to develop strategic initiatives and projects to reduce and offset the Port’s energy footprint.

Ninety to 95% of the costs for these projects are funded by federal and state grants. Taxiway, runway, and weather system projects are funded with \$1M per year of FAA Airport Improvement Program grants. The hangar rebuilds, fuel system and energy efficiency projects are funded with a one-time \$5M Bipartisan Infrastructure Law grant.

*First Landing at Rebuilt Shipyard Cove  
Barge Landing*



**Jensen Marina: Final Phase Underway**

In January of 2024 the Port commenced work on the second and final phase of the complete rebuild of the Jensen Marina.

The work will include the remaining pile driving, reconfiguring new slips and walkways between the phase one construction and the breakwater, a new breakwater constructed and installed by Port staff, and the construction of environmentally sound translucent moorage covers.

The newly rebuilt marina’s second phase will be fully functional and occupied in the winter of 2024. The new breakwater and moorage covers are scheduled to be completed by the end of 2024.

Other happenings at the Jensen facility include the creation of more parking for workers, visitors, and marina tenants, the addition of a second parking lot exit to allow for safer one-way traffic, and the demolition and disposal of several derelict buildings. The building demolition is part of a larger effort to create more working waterfront space.

**Shipyard Cove Barge Landing Completed**

After several years of effort to acquire permits and funding, the Shipyard Cove barge landing has been completely rebuilt. Several state and county grants were combined to rebuild this critical infrastructure at no cost to the community. All gasoline, diesel, propane, and oxygen used on San Juan Island are trucked to our community via private barges using this barge landing. This landing is also the primary route for materials, fuels, and equipment headed for the outer islands.

MEM Enterprises was awarded the contract for the construction work. The finished product is top quality and they held to a very aggressive schedule. Barge traffic was rerouted to the Jackson Beach boat ramp using a State Recreation and Conservation Office waiver for just under a month while the construction was underway.

The Port would like to express its heartfelt gratitude to Congressman Rick Larsen, Washington State Senator Liz Lovelett, Representative Alex Ramel, San Juan County, Wayne Haefele & Associates engineering, and MEM Enterprises for helping secure this critical supply line for the next generation.

**Electric Vehicle and Vessel Charging**

**Vehicle Charging:** The Port already has a few electric car chargers in paid parking areas at the airport and marina. We have recently acquired a WSDOT grant to install three general public access chargers at the Pilot Welcome Center parking area adjacent to San Juan Bakery. The new chargers are scheduled to be in service in 2024.

**Vessel Charging:** With 70+ manufacturers worldwide creating electric marine vessels, it’s only a matter of time before they begin showing up in our marinas. We have already started to see a few seasonal transient requests for MEV (Marine Electric Vehicle) charging as well as some of our current customers converting their vessels over to electric propulsion.

The Port is planning to add dedicated MEV overnight slips capable of delivering the increased charging needs of this green technology in a scaled manner to meet the demand over time. Providing a reliable stop for boaters who have chosen to make the switch to MEV will help us become a prime destination for this growing demographic. Being proactive also places the Port of Friday Harbor as a leader in sustainability and stewardship here.

**Free Money Ain’t Easy (But it’s Worth It)**

Applying for state and federal grants, along with executing the work according to their conditions, is a significant administrative task. Despite the effort involved, grants play a major role in delivering important infrastructure to the community. In 2023 the Port acquired approximately **\$4M of external funds** to create and repair critical infrastructure. This level of funds is nearly equal to the revenue created from the Port’s combined assets and has a far lower cost to deliver. Diligently pursuing grant funding remains a top priority for Port staff.

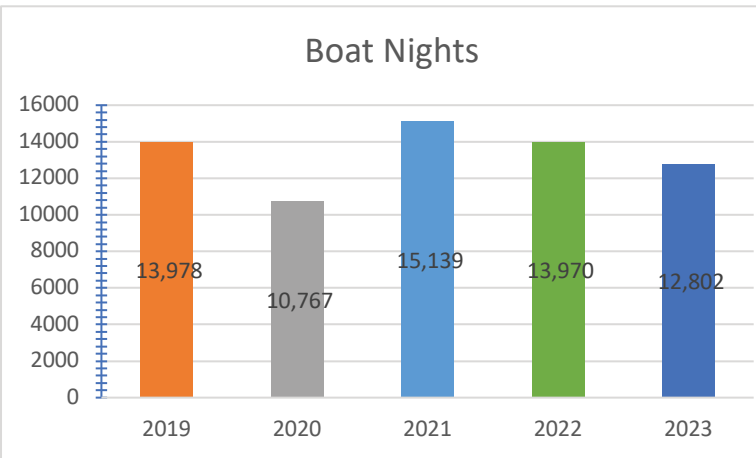


*Port-Built 45-foot Slips at Jensen Marina*

**Internal Manufacturing Stretches Port Dollars**

The Port continues to carve out record levels of capital reconstruction funds to systematically rebuild our marina infrastructure. The Port’s internal capabilities allow us to deliver far more manufacturing and reconstruction work per dollar spent than other public entities. Reconstruction work is ongoing at all three marinas and will continue well into the future.

**Marina Business Still Strong in 2023**



All three of the Port’s marinas are at 100% occupancy and our waitlists are at historically high levels. Visiting boat traffic is about 10% down from pre-COVID levels but our combined marina revenues remain consistent.

The Port has finished the design phase for adding additional slips at Shipyard Cove to take the pressure off our waiting lists.