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### Efforts progressing for ferry service in 2011

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*Ferry terminal in Yarmouth*

Town councillors were told on Tuesday, May 18 that there has been a flurry of activity concerning the ferry terminal in Yarmouth and the port manager says this area has a viable shot of seeing a ferry operation in place for 2011.

During a presentation to the town's committee of the whole meeting, Dave Whiting said seven proponents have expressed interest in a ferry operation. Four of them he described as very viable and two, he said, are existing operations.

"I'm optimistic at this point that if we can get over this quickly," Whiting said – "this" referring to gaining control of the terminal facility – "we will have a lot of interest. If it takes a little longer to get over the terminal issue, we will still have a viable shot at an operation for 2011 because there is already existing operations and you don't have to worry about sourcing investors, setting up operations . . . "

Whiting, who was receiving phone calls about the terminal facility as he sat at the town hall awaiting his opportunity to speak to councillors, said Transport Canada regional staff in Ottawa, MP Greg Kerr and other federal bureaucrats are all working towards the same goal: "A method so that we can control the terminal operation so that we can proceed for a request for proposals for a service."

Whiting mentioned, as he has in earlier conversations about the terminal, that there is no process already in place to follow.

But to be able to build a business plan to move forward with a ferry service, he said it's important to have control of the terminal. An operator has to know what the conditions of docking are going to be, what the cost is going to be. Without that information you can't put forward a business plan he said.

"Both the province and the feds have asked for a business plan for at least the next five years," said Whiting.

Another issue that will have to be addressed, said Whiting, is the fact that there hasn't been a proper engineering investigation of the facility for about 12 years. Asked to comment on rumours of air quality concerns, Whiting said to his knowledge there's been no testing of that either.

"We've proposed to Transport Canada that a proper engineering study be done," he said, telling councillors that if they had heard rumours about the facility being condemned, none of these rumours are true.

MacKenzie Security and its stevedores are maintaining and keeping the facility "up to pare" Whiting said, so that when a ferry operation is ready to go it can hit the ground running.

As for who controls the terminal facilities on the U.S. side, Whiting said the terminal in Bar Harbor is controlled by Marine Atlantic and the one in Portland is owned by the city.

Whiting doesn't foresee these arrangements causing any problems in Yarmouth, although he did note that with mayoralty elections happening in Portland it does delay the opportunity to talk to the city about potential ferry service.