

Draft Meeting Minutes
Portland Fish Pier Authority - Portland Fish Exchange Subcommittee
March 12, 2026
3:30 PM

Subcommittee Member Attendees: John Arnold, Mike Foster, Mary Hudson, Meredith Mendelson, Matt Moretti, Tracy Pearce, and Rob Odlin.

Staff present: Kaela Gonzalez, Heather Moretti, Avery Novak, Robert Vanmeter

Approximately two (2) members of the public attended.

1. Committee Chair Comments: Committee Chair Pearce opened the meeting.

2. Approval of January 8, 2026 Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve Meeting Minutes for January 8, 2026.

Arnold, 2nd M. Moretti

Approved by consensus (Odlin not present at time of vote)

3. Portland Fish Exchange Manager's Report

Robert Vanmeter presented the manager's report verbally. Highlights are as follows:

- 8 Auctions in February
- 205K landed (budgeted 175,000)
- No contract unloads (budgeted 0)
- 650K in pumping YTD (budgeted 1.2M)
- Current receivables are \$153,000
- Checkbooks are at \$89,000
- Checkbook average \$55,00 (Low of \$41,00, High \$105,00)
- Currently using \$70,000 from LOC
- \$50k from cash reserve currently in use.

The FY 2027 budget was submitted to the City. The audit has been completed by the City and will be presented to the Board when available. Of the 204,480 pounds landed, 110,800 pounds were sold during normal bidding, 70,000 pounds were sold as after-auction sales, and 23,656 pounds were refused by the seller and sold off-site. The new control system installation for the condenser and compressor is underway. One part-time employee left, and there is another who has started and is in their 30-day trial period. The 22,000 sq. ft. cooler has space available for cross-docking or storage.

Vanmeter confirmed that PFEX employees must be clocked in while lumping on a vessel for insurance purposes. The boat is charged for lumping, and the money is paid to the employee.

4. Review of multi-tiered fee system with possible vote to recommend to the Portland Fish Pier Authority.

A conceptual plan to offer discounted fees or rebates (e.g., a 2-cent rebate for a 200,000-pound threshold) for high-volume landings was briefly discussed. The goal is to incentivize boats to land more frequently and increase revenue. The group decided to table but will conduct scenario planning with landing numbers to assess the financial impact and address concerns about disadvantaging the current small-boat fleet.

5. Discussion on funding opportunity for Portland Fish Exchange through SEA Maine funding.

Heather Moretti proposed applying for this \$75,000–\$300,000 grant, with solar energy being the main focus to reduce the \$15,000 monthly power bill. Vanmeter noted past concerns that the existing roof might not support the weight of solar panels. Heather will reach out to a solar company for a free assessment and will research energy efficiency audits (like through CMP) as another grant option.

Two applications (one for each service pier) were submitted before the deadline, requesting about \$1.6 million each. Total available funding for the program has increased to \$17 million.

6. Old Business

Vanmeter expects to find out by the end of March/beginning of April if the PFEX was granted a student intern to help with marketing and social media exposure. The city will host Walk the Working Waterfront on Saturday, June 13th. Heather Moretti asks the subcommittee to brainstorm ideas, including setting up a marine debris art demo in the net yard and hiring a food truck to sell haddock sandwiches.

7. Other items not on the agenda.

Efforts are underway to fill the two open ground fish buyer seats, with potential interest from the new GM at Cozy Harbor, Mike Alfiero (Harbor Fish), and George Bronco (Nova Seafood).

To address dangerous icing on pathways to slips on Pier 1, Vanmeter is getting quotes for a gutter system and a handrail for the winch doghouse. Staff anticipate fishermen leaving in April for the scallop season/slow months and have several projects lined up for the crew to tackle during that time. The committee debated offering a scallop meat count service to boat captains as an industry standard to build relationships and potentially attract more state water fishery boats. Vanmeter noted the exchange is not currently set up for this, and it would require investment in smaller scales and handling supplies. It was decided to wait for Heather Moretti to gauge interest from the fleet before moving forward with action items.

8. Next Meeting: April 9, 2026

9. Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn

Mendelson, 2nd Arnold
Approved by consensus

The meeting adjourned at approximately 5:05 p.m.