

PORT WELFARE COMMITTEE

**Minutes of the Port Welfare Committee Meeting
held on 19 March 2025 at 2:30 p.m.
in Conference Room A, 24th Floor,
Harbour Building, 38 Pier Road, Central, Hong Kong**

Present

Mr CHAO Sih-hing, Francois	Chairman	Hong Kong Shipowners Association
Captain Firoze Minoo MIRZA	Member	Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce
Mr TO Wing-hong, Kelvin <i>(on behalf of Captain LAU Mang-tak)</i>	Member	Merchant Navy Officers' Guild – Hong Kong
Captain CHOW Tak- chor, William	Member	Hong Kong Seamen's Union
Ms NG Soo-wah, Louise	Member	Labour Department (ex-officio)
Dr LAU Ming-ho <i>(on behalf of Dr LO Chiu-sing, Patrick)</i>	Member	Department of Health (ex-officio)
Mr NG Ngai-wing, Jammy	Member	Marine Department (ex-officio)
Ms Lisa CHIU	Secretary	Marine Department (ex-officio)

In attendance

Miss Alletta LAM	Marine Department
Mr LAI Ka-wai Jericho	Marine Department

Absent with apology

Mr CHAN Kam-foo	Member	Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce
-----------------	--------	---------------------------------------

OPENING REMARKS

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting, in particular the following members –

- (a) Mr TO Wing Hong, Kelvin, who attended the meeting on behalf of Captain LAU Mang-tak as the representative of Merchant Navy Officers' Guild – Hong Kong; and
- (b) Dr LAU Ming-ho, Port Health Officer (Harbour), who attended the meeting on behalf of Dr Patrick LO as the representative of the Department of Health.

AGENDA ITEMS

I. Confirmation of the Minutes of the Last Meeting held on 30 September 2024

2. The Chairman informed Members that the minutes of the last meeting were circulated to Members for comments in January 2025 and no amendment was received. As no comment was raised at the meeting, the minutes of the last meeting were confirmed by the Committee.

II. Matters Arising from the Last Meeting held on 30 September 2024

(a) Wi-Fi service to visiting seafarers

3. The Secretary informed Members that in response to Captain CHOW Tak-chor's enquiry on providing free Wi-Fi service to visiting seafarers in the last meeting held in September 2024, the General Manager / Seafarers and Examination of MD had in January 2025 sent email to the

Sailors Home & Mission to Seafarers (referred as “The Mission” thereafter) enquiring about whether they could provide free Wi-Fi service to the seafarers. In response, the Mission informed that its Mariners’ Club had already provided free Wi-Fi service to seafarers and guests during the opening hours from 9 am to 9 pm daily (except the Christmas, New Year and CNY holidays). The Secretariat relayed the relevant details to Captain CHOW by email on 12 February 2025.

(b) Proposed relief fund to visiting seafarers in case of emergency

4. Regarding the Chairman’s initial idea of setting aside some donations as a relief fund to assist visiting seafarers in case of emergency raised in the last meeting, the Secretary reported that the Secretariat had in February 2025 invited members to share ideas/views of the proposal, such as the scope for relief, framework for processing and vetting applications, any potential partnership(s) with maritime organisations to maximise resources, etc. but no reply was received before the meeting.

5. Mr Jammy NG considered that it might not be necessary to set aside a relief fund because there were various sources of assistance currently available to visiting seafarers in case of emergency, e.g. the insurance scheme provided by the ship owners in accordance with the Maritime Labour Convention which covered health protection, medical care, welfare and social security protection of seafarers as well as assistance from the International Transport Workers’ Federation. In view that the issue of mental health of seafarers had begun to attract more attention of the shipping industry since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and that the resources for mental health services at sea were generally limited, he suggested that the Committee might consider requesting the two seafarers’ agencies to strengthen their counselling service in this respect for the seafarers with the grants to be allocated by PWC in 2024-25.

6. Both Captain CHOW Tak-chor and Mr Kelvin TO shared Mr NG’s views and supported his proposal of tapping on the expertise and networking of the two seafarers’ agencies for enhanced service on mental health of their existing counselling programmes for the visiting seafarers. Mr Kelvin TO further advised that the Merchant Navy Officers’ Guild – Hong Kong also put in place a weekly one-on-one counselling service free of charge for the seafarers (totaling 4 sessions on every Wednesday morning).

7. The Chairman also concurred with Mr NG's proposal and saw the rising awareness in world-wide shipping industry to improve crew welfare. He advised that counselling service should be provided in different languages to suit the needs of the recipients as far as possible.

8. After deliberation, Members unanimously agreed that the donation received in 2024-25 should be deployed to focus on enhancement of the mental health of seamen. In this respect, the Secretary advised and the meeting agreed that the two seafarers' agencies would be requested to provide their draft action plan in this regard for the Committee's reference before the grants were allocated. They would also be advised to explore collaboration with the Merchant Navy Officers' Guild – Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Seamen's Union to maximise the available resources on the subject service area to attain synergy. The two agencies would report their enhanced counselling service in the next Annual Report.

(Post-meeting note: The Secretariat sent out emails to the two seafarers agencies on 1 April 2025 conveying the Committee's above deliberation and requests.)

III. Financial Position of the Committee as at 5 March 2025

9. The Chairman briefed Members on the financial position of the Committee as at 5 March 2025 as follows - –

Balance brought forward from 2023-24	\$ 27,974
Donations received in 2024-25	<u>\$ 55,000</u>
Balance as at 5 March 2025:	<u>\$ 82,974</u>

10. Members endorsed the Committee's account unanimously and further endorsed the re-appointment of the Marine Department's Treasury Accountant / Internal Auditor as the Honorary Auditor for the Committee's account in 2025-26.

IV. Donations Received by the Committee as at 5 March 2025

11. The Secretary reported that in response to the Committee's appeal for donations for 2024-25, a total amount of \$55,000 had been received from 10 donors as at 5 March 2025.

V. Allocation of Grants to Agencies in 2024-25

12. Based on the donations received in 2024-25, the Chairman proposed and Members endorsed the following grant of subsidies to the two agencies –

The Sailors Home & Mission to Seafarers	\$ 50,000
Danish Seamen's Church, Hong Kong	\$ 5,000
Total:	<u>\$ 55,000</u>

VI. Any Other Business

13. Members had no other issues to raise at the meeting.

VII. Date of Next Meeting

14. The Chairman said that the next meeting would be held in six months' time, i.e. around September 2025. Members would be informed of the date and details in due course.

15. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 2:55 p.m.

No signature on website copy
(Mr CHAO Sih-hing, Francois)
Chairman

No signature on website copy
(Ms Lisa CHIU)
Secretary