

**Board of Pilot Commissioners for Harris County Ports  
Pilot Board Investigation and Recommendation Committee Hearing**

**May 20, 2015**

A hearing of the Pilot Board Investigation and Recommendation Committee (the "PBIRC") was convened on May 20, 2015, at the Port of Houston Authority Executive Offices, Fourth Floor Boardroom, at 111 East Loop North Houston, Texas 77029. The following members, U.S. Coast Guard ("USCG") advisory members, and staff were present:

Captain Marcus Woodring, Chairman  
Tom Marian  
Paul Caruselle  
Captain Michael Morris  
Captain Sean Arbogast  
Captain Michael Curtiss  
Captain David Foret  
Captain Richard Ford  
Lieutenant Pete Fransson, USCG Investigation Officer  
Lieutenant Colin Croft, USCG Investigation Officer  
Erik Eriksson, Pilot Board General Counsel  
Captain Mike Usher, Pilot Board Compliance Coordinator

Chairman Woodring called the hearing to order to hear the following matters:

M/T CELSIUS MAYFAIR loss of steering casualty December 2, 2014, Bayport Ship Channel;  
and

M/T GASCHEM HUNTE collision with FMT barge 3196 being pushed by the UTV KRISTY  
DUTSCH January 24, 2015, Houston Ship Channel.

1. **Summary of PBIRC Hearing**

- a. Statements by PBIRC members, staff, and USCG advisory members identifying themselves and describing their maritime expertise.
- b. Statement by Chairman Woodring as to the conduct of the hearing.
- c. Introduction as Exhibit "A" of Incident Materials gathered by Captain Usher regarding the above-referenced incident M/T CELSIUS MAYFAIR loss of steering casualty December 2, 2014, Bayport Ship Channel.
- d. Introduction as Exhibit "B" of submissions of Captain Jason Briones and Captain Kelly Creech.
- e. Testimony by, and questions put to Captain Briones and Captain Creech.
- f. Concluding statement by pilot counsel, Mr. Jim Brown.
- g. Executive Session.
- h. Announcement by Chairman Woodring of Proposed Findings and Recommendations and description of appeal rights.

2. **Proposed Findings** following its deliberations, by a vote of 8-0, the PBIRC proposed the following findings:

That Captain Briones was conning the M/T CELSIUS MAYFAIR, under the supervision of Captain Creech, when the vessel grounded causing damage to the rudder.

That Captain Creech was the senior/commissioned pilot, supervising Captain Briones on the M/T CELSIUS MAYFAIR, when the vessel grounded causing damage to the rudder.

That Captain Briones should have maneuvered the stern of the CELSIUS MAYFAIR deeper into the basin across from the Cruise Terminal berth to complete a starboard turn inbound.

3. **Proposed Recommendations** following its deliberations, by a vote of 8-0, the PBIRC proposed the following recommendations to the Board of Pilot Commissioners for Harris County Ports (“the Pilot Board”):

Issues a Letter of Caution to Captain Briones that will:

- Emphasize the need for careful and deliberate planning in each evolution you undertake including the evaluation of “safe escapes”
- Recognize the dynamic of operating under the supervision of a senior/commissioned pilot
- Direct you to share lessons learned from this incident with other Houston Pilots

Issues a Letter of Caution to Captain Creech that will:

- Emphasize the importance and role of the senior/commissioned pilot to step in before an accident occurs
- Recognize the difficult dynamic of supervising a Deputy Pilot, i.e. allowing as much latitude as possible to learn ship handling while also preventing accidents
- Work with Captain Briones in sharing the lessons learned from this incident

The PBIRC appreciated the candor and forthright answers provided by both Captain Briones and Captain Creech the Letter of Caution is not intended to be punitive in nature but rather a formal documentation of the incident with recommendations for improvement.

4. **Hearing lunch break**

5. **Hearing Reconvened**

- a. Introduction as Exhibit “A” of Incident Materials gathered by Captain Usher regarding the above-referenced incident M/T GASCHEM HUNTE collision with FMT barge 3196 being pushed by the UTV KRISTY DUTSCH January 24, 2015, Houston Ship Channel.
- b. Introduction as Exhibit “B” of submission of Captain Charles Schuessler.
- c. Testimony by, and questions put to Captain Schuessler.
- d. Concluding statement by pilot counsel, Mr. Jim Brown.
- e. Executive Session.

- f. Announcement by Chairman Woodring of Proposed Findings and Recommendations and description of appeal rights.
6. **Proposed Findings** following its deliberations, by a vote of 8-0, the PBIRC proposed the following findings:
- No negligence or actionable misconduct on the part of Captain Schuessler.
7. **Proposed Recommendations** following its deliberations, by a vote of 8-0, the PBIRC proposed the following recommendations to the Board of Pilot Commissioners for Harris County Ports (“the Pilot Board”):
- That it take no action (except as provided below) and close matter to file.
- The Houston Pilots develop a module for the blue/brown water course, based on this case, emphasizing the need for unrestricted communications between the assist tugs and pilots, with Captain Schuessler assisting in the effort; and
  - The PBIRC will review this case with the US Coast Guard Vessel Traffic Service.

Hearing Adjourned