

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

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ADAM VOKAC
PRESIDENT



ROLAND "REX" REXHA
SECRETARY-TREASURER

October 20, 2021

Hon. Hank Guttman
Commissioner
New York City Department of Transportation
55 Water Street
New York, NY 10041

Re: Staten Island Ferry Labor Issues

Dear Commissioner,

I am writing on behalf of our union, the Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association (MEBA), AFL-CIO, whose proud members work as Captains, Assistant Captains, Engineers and Mates on the Staten Island Ferry. MEBA's members are also referred to as Licensed Officers, as their duties require Coast Guard licensing and specialized training to operate and maintain these passenger vessels in New York City's congested waterways.

We wanted to bring to your attention our deep concern that MEBA's hard-working members have not had a contract or pay increase in over ten years. I believe you would agree that our members are grossly underpaid for the significant obligations and responsibilities they have as maritime officers responsible for the lives and safety of the thousands of passengers each Staten Island Ferry boat can carry at a time. The current collective bargaining agreement expired on November 6, 2010, when Michael Bloomberg was mayor and bargaining with the de Blasio administration has been at impasse, with no reasonable offer ever being made by the City, for years.

Nothing says New York City is back and open for business more than the Staten Island Ferry gleaming and gliding in New York Harbor. Every year it is filled with millions of commuters and visitors, making it the busiest ferry route in the United States. It is our floating landmark and sails by the Statue of Liberty 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. Sadly, it has been very difficult to recruit and retain qualified, experienced crew, and the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the already demanding and exhausting burdens confronted by our already overworked and underpaid crew.

We believe it is in our shared best interest in the remaining days of the DeBlasio Administration to work toward a contract resolution. A new contract would provide fair treatment to Staten Island Ferry workers and promote efficient and safer service for commuters, citizens and visitors. A new contract would recognize the value of ferry workers and the duties they perform by providing them prevailing wages and benefits, and recognize the sacrifices they have made during difficult days and periods.

It is time to end this stalemate for our ferry officers and negotiate a fair and respectful contract that recognizes the dedicated Licensed Officers' enormous contributions to our City. Please contact me to arrange a meeting to discuss this important subject.

Thank you for your immediate attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Roland Rexha'.

Roland Rexha
M.E.B.A. Secretary-Treasurer

Cc: Margaret Forgione, Department of Transportation
Vincent Alvarez, New York City Central Labor Council
Thomas L. McMahon, TLM Associates