

From: [Anne Gardner](#)
To: [Statements](#)
Subject: Statement of Position Submitted by Anne Gardner
Date: Wednesday, November 2, 2022 6:40:19 PM

Statement of Position Submitted

Name

Anne Gardner

Email

annesgardner@gmail.com

Docket

Docket Number A-41 Sub 22.

Message

Commissioners, I have been a property owner on Bald Head for 25 years. Before my retirement I was an IBM Vice President responsible for design, manufacture and quality of personal computers and servers. I have extensive experience in customer service, quality control and quality metrics. The ferry is the lifeline to the Island. Basic metrics such as quality of service, reliability, well maintained and clean ferries, trams and terminals are essential. None of these metrics have been met in the past several years. Therefore, I oppose the transfer to SharpVue until these issues are resolved or there is a clear plan presented to the Utilities Commission to address all of these important issues. Since BHI Ltd decided to sell the system all such basic metrics have rapidly degraded. The ferries constantly breakdown and rarely run on schedule. A basic expectation is that when a passenger gets on the ferry it is expected that their luggage arrive at the same time. In the summer months passengers often have to wait for one or more subsequent ferries for their luggage to arrive. Even worse, employees get bumped in the early morning hours, This makes them late for work and prevents the opening and proper functioning of island businesses. At the end of their shifts many workers get bumped again for one and sometime two ferries. After a long day these employees deserve a reliable transportation to get them home to their families. Until recently Ltd had a strong incentive to maintain a quality transportation system. SharpVue has absolutely NO obligations to the Island homeowners or business owners. They are a private equity firm only. They have no experience running a ferry system. Their only responsibility is to their shareholders and board of directors. Before the NCUC even considers a transfer to SharpVue the minimum I would expect to see is: - Capital improvement plan to ferries, trams, terminals - Specific plans to improve all service metrics. Especially on time service and reliability for homeowners and employees. - Plans that describe in detail how and why they will look out for the Island residents and workers that use the system. - Plans that describe why they won't turn around and sell parts of the system in the future. Each subsequent owner will have less and less responsibility to the Island residents, employees and visitors. Thanks for your consideration
Anne Gardner 429 South Bald Head Wynd Bald Head Island, NC

From: [Crista Thomas](#)
To: [Statements](#)
Subject: Statement of Position Submitted by Crista Thomas
Date: Wednesday, November 2, 2022 3:30:54 PM

Statement of Position Submitted

Name

Crista Thomas

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Docket

A -41 Sub 22

Message

NC Utility Commission, I was unable to attend last night's meeting; however, I would like to weigh in on behalf of myself and my fellow workers on Bald Head Island. I live in Boiling Spring Lakes. My husband has been working on BHI since approximately 1998 as a contractor. He has worked with Woodchuck Construction - a flooring company - and has been a painter for DT Painting Inc since 2004, which is a family-owned business with his parents who have also been working on the island since the early 90's. I am the Broker in Charge & General Manager for Wendy Wilmot Properties LLC, and have been working with WWP since 2006. We manage approximately 50 rental homes, take care of approximately 15 private homes, operate a full-time brokerage division, and employ 20 year-round staff, an additional 25-30 summer-only staff, and 9 year-round real estate brokers. Workers are the critical backbone of the island itself - without them, there is no business viability on the island and without their ticket sales the ferry system would not itself be able to remain a viable entity. The focus of this letter is about the experience that workers have riding the ferry. When I first started working on BHI, the ferries were reliably on time and the ferry staff were enjoyable, cordial, and engaging with riders no matter who they were - worker, guest, or resident. They seemed proud of their impeccable services and greeted passengers with smiles, would engage guests in friendly, southern-hospitality conversation and took the performance of their fellow workers and the ferry at large quite seriously. In recent years, as the ferry performance and conditions continue to decline, it seems as though staff morale has also steeply declined. It appears to me that the current owner has put little to no considerations into making necessary and meaningful facility repairs or staff training/recruitment in order to continue the service that many of us experienced in our early years on Bald Head. Being a Broker in Charge of a major real estate company on this island, it seems to me that if you're selling an asset, you would fix/improve it and present it in his best light. What I've witnessed is the serious decline in maintenance of the boats the trams and the overall experience has been unreliable. Granted, the facilities at Indigo were indeed moved to Deep Point Marina where an elaborate new facility was constructed. However, I personally find waste and failures in an expensive facility

which is barely even half-used. Those failures and wasted money have already resulted in increased ticket prices. Funds would be better spent on bringing the ferry fleet up to snuff. It is an embarrassment to me as an island professional to have a client come to the island to potentially buy a multi-million dollar home - making serious investments in our beloved island - and have them ride a ferry that has ripped up seats, ceiling leaks, a/c water pouring onto whomever is unfortunate enough to sit under them, peeling wall paper, stained up carpeting, etc. Not to mention the inordinate number of times we all hear about one or two of the fleet having broken and needing repair. In our housekeeping department we have ladies that get up early to make a 7 o'clock boat to come work an 8 to 10-hour shift, depending on the time of year. They try to take a 4:30 or 5:30 boat off on the weekends, only to find themselves bumped to the next ferry due to capacity. They often find themselves standing in long lines with the strong potential of being bumped not once, but multiple times. This has happened to me, personally, more times that I could possibly recount. As a company, we have chosen to hire water taxi's to get our teams off the island when the lines are that bad. We absorb this incredible cost for our staff so that they will come back and we won't lose staff members due to the ferry situation. I have personally interviewed for new employees and been declined when they realized they would be riding the BHI ferry to and from work. It is a serious problem for all workers (not just our own) who absolutely need to get off on time to pick up small children from school/day care. Bald Head Limited recently banned the use of water taxis while the ferry is running. It is unknown to me whether this action was taken with the blessing of SharpVue. However, it appears to me and many others that this is a clear indication of the operator's overt desire for profit and exclusive control, which is a concern to me. It is an action demonstrating a philosophy of profit over service and functionality. I understand that profit is important, but it is also a byproduct of a healthy island - one in which people are willing to come work and keep the island's economy one of viable abundance. A healthier island equates a healthier profit margin. The use of water taxis was an acceptable band aid solution that was stripped from us. I cannot believe for one moment that Transportation suffered any significant losses due to water taxi transport... not enough to justify causing the continual clog of and bumping of already-frustrated passengers. Once we lose good vendors, good employees, long term guests, businesses and people willing to invest in the island due to the expenses and cumbersome transportation, it will be very difficult to turn that around and anyone owning the transportation system will see much smaller profit margins. In this case, I assert that quality, reliability, the experience, and profits all maintain a heavily symbiotic relationship. WWP spends in excess of \$65,000 a year in ferry tickets and another \$30,000 in parking. In 2020 and 2021, we also spent another approximate \$5,000 on water taxi transport to ensure staff retention to get people off the island in a timely fashion. In my daily work, I have heard of many of the vendors that we used in the past no longer will service our island because of the unreliability and cost of the ferries. This is truly unfortunate to lose skilled and reliable vendors, potentially to be replaced by less-scrupulous vendors, which we have already seen happening. At nearly \$100,000 annually in transportation overhead, not to mention the cost of employee turnover due to transportation-related complaints, just getting staff here is a cost-strain. Add that to the other increased costs of doing business on an island and I can see why many of our business owners struggle between having to raise prices again versus reducing services instead, or closing down altogether. I hope the utilities commission will consider keeping the parking, barge and ferries under their own regulation, so that prices don't spin out of control and make it a further difficulty to work on Bald Head Island. There seems to be a lot of discussion on who should own the ferry. Sharp view is based in Raleigh North Carolina and is not what I would consider "local". The Village Of Bald Head Island has already been responsible for water, sewer, electric, public safety, and general infrastructure - they should also be held accountable for transportation to the island. They seem the most likely candidate

that is truly local and aware of the needs of people on Bald Head Island. They are also likely to be held to a higher level of accountability by their own stakeholders. I have attended several meetings on this topic and it appears that they have not only thought through ownership of transportation, but have been able to account for long term implications and would be able to rise to the task without causing undo strain on the taxpayers. During hurricane Florence it was the Village of Bald Head Island that got the island back and running not the town of Southport or anyone in Raleigh. I understand the Mitchell family has the right to sell this utility to anyone they want; however, it appears that the Village has reached out to them and is willing to pay them a fair price. For whatever reason, political or otherwise, no considerations are being given towards such sale. I daresay that a sale to the Village would not only have wasted less time at this point, but also less monetary resources as well. For a group who claims to care deeply for the island, it feels like lip service only. Thank you for your time and consideration of this letter. Respectfully, Crista Thomas WWP General Manager, BIC
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