

**BOARD FOR BRANCH PILOTS MEETING
MINUTES**

The Virginia Board for Branch Pilots met on June 11, 2026, at the Virginia Port Authority, 600 World Trade Center, Norfolk, Virginia, with the following members present:

Captain E. Waightstill Avery
I. Vincent Behm, Jr
Captain J.W. Whiting Chisman, III
Captain January N. Collins
Patrick B. McDermott
Christine N. Piersall
Captain Clarence M. Young

Board Members Aaron Anseeuw and President Captain Michael W. Coleman was not present at the meeting with regrets.

Staff present for all, or part of the meeting were:

Laura McClintock, Director
Steve Kirschner, LRPD Director
Kate Nosbisch, Executive Director
Davon Jones, Administrative Coordinator

James Flarhty, Senior Assistant Attorney General with the Office of the Attorney General, was present in the absence of Elizabeth Peay.

Gaby Rengifo, BPOR Liaison, was not present at the meeting with regrets.

Member of the Audience included:

Tony Mazzeo, Maritime Law Department, Representative from Wood Rogers Vandeventer Black PLC

Finding a quorum of the Board present, Captain Chisman, Vice President, called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m.

Call to Order

Ms. Nosbisch advised the Board of the emergency evacuation procedures.

**Emergency
Evacuation
Procedures**

Mr. McDermott moved to approve the agenda. Captain Young seconded the motion which was unanimously approved by Messrs., Mme. and Captains: Avery, Behm, Chisman, Collins, McDermott, Piersall and Young.

**Approval of
Agenda**

Ms. Piersall moved to approve the minutes from the March 12, 2026, Board meeting. Captain Avery seconded the motion which was approved by Messrs., Mme. and Captains: Avery, Behm, Chisman, Collins, McDermott, Piersall and Young.

**Approval of
Minutes**

There was no public comment.

**Public
Comment
Period**

The Board reviewed a letter from Captain Saunders, regarding an incident on April 1, 2026, involving the M/V NEPTUN FURY.

On Wednesday April 01, 2026, Captain Saunders was ordered at 2000 to sail the M/V Neptun Fury (IMO# 9705718) at 2200 from Lambert's Point Terminals (Fairwinds) Pier N in Norfolk to Sea. The vessel is an Anchor Assist Tug with a length overall of 90'04" and a breadth of 32'10". Captain Saunders arrived on board the vessel at approximately 2100 and was met by the Captain. They conducted a Master-Pilot exchange during which time the Captain informed Captain Saunders that all navigational and propulsion equipment was fully operational. The Captain explained that he was not in a hurry to get underway and the Chief Mate would get the vessel underway when he arrived on the bridge for his watch.

**Notification
Letter-
Captain
Saunders-
M/V NEPTUN
FURY**

The Chief Mate arrived on the bridge to relieve the Captain at approximately 2125. The Chief Mate stated that the maximum draft of the vessel was 10'10". The vessel was starboard side alongside the bulkhead between Pier N and Pier L, with the bow facing Pier N. The wind was from a Southerly direction at a speed of 10-12 knots and gusting to 15 knots. Maximum flood current at Lambert's Point was predicted to occur at 1934 with a maximum speed of 0.71 knots. Slack current at Lambert's Point was predicted to take place at 2226. Current inside the basin where the vessel was docked was negligible.

The Chief Mate stated that he was ready to get underway and acknowledged the wind direction and the fact that it was holding the tug to the dock while the lines were being cast off from the bollards. Captain Saunders' assessment of the situation indicated that the tug had sufficient power and space to safely get underway and maneuver toward the channel. The Chief Mate appeared fit for duty and comfortable getting the tug underway. Captain Saunders agreed that they could get underway, which they did at 2137.

The Chief Mate proceeded to maneuver the tug to port, away from the bulkhead at 2138. All motion indicated that the vessel was moving safely away from the bulkhead until the Chief Mate maneuvered the stern to starboard which brought the stern back toward the bulkhead. The starboard quarter briefly touched a group of piles which were used as fender pilings along the bulkhead. Each group consists of three pilings

bolted together and fastened to the bulkhead with a bracket. The contact resulted in one out of the three pilings breaking above the waterline. There was no debris noted in the water and no other damage visible. No injuries were reported on the vessel or onshore. Once away from the piling, the vessel maneuvered toward the channel and on to Cape Henry without further incident.

Notification
Letter-
Captain
Saunders M/V
NEPTUN
FURY (Cont.)

Captain Saunders had a drug and alcohol test conducted at Acorn Health Care.

The File Review Committee and DPOR staff made a recommendation that the letter be filed, and the Board take no action, as there appears to be no violation of the Board's regulations or statutes. Mr. McDermott moved to accept the recommendation, Mr. Behm seconded the motion which was approved by Messrs., Mme. and Captains: Avery, Behm, Chisman, Collins, McDermott, Piersall and Young.

Captain Avery provided the Board with a report of examinations conducted by the Exam Administrators Committee, noting the committee met in accordance with procedures and entered closed session for examinations on June 11, 2026. The following committee members were present, Captains: Avery, Chisman, Collins and Young.

Exam
Administrators'
Report

J. Alexander Hanna answered oral questions related to the raise in grade. The subjects included safe anchoring positions in Sewell's Point, Lynnhaven and Cape Charles Anchorage, bridge clearances, under keel clearance, vessel displacement and hydrodynamic influence meeting deep draft vessels, proper monitoring and usage of VHF radio channels, security broadcasts, small boat traffic, use of auxiliary channels, port security, hazards of marine construction and dredging operations, adverse weather, and safe vessel speed.

J. Alexander Hanna successfully completed the oral examination with the Board for Branch Pilots Examining committee. After considering the results of the examination, the Examining Committee recommends J. Alexander Hanna for a raise in grade from a Charlie license (38,000 gross tons and 34 feet maximum draft) to a Delta license (45,000 gross tons and 36 feet maximum draft).

J. Alexander Hanna successfully completed the oral examination with the Board for Branch Pilots Examining committee. After considering the results of the examination Captain Avery moved J. Alexander Hanna for a Charlie license (38,000 gross tons and 34 feet maximum draft) to a Delta license (45,000 gross tons and 36 feet maximum draft). Ms. Piersall seconded the motion which was unanimously approved by Messrs. and Captains: Avery, Behm, Chisman, Collins, McDermott, Piersall and Young.

Mark S. Anderson answered oral questions related to the raise in grade. The subjects included safe anchoring positions in Sewell's Point, Lynnhaven and Cape Charles Anchorage, bridge clearances, under keel clearance, vessel displacement and hydrodynamic influence meeting deep draft vessels, proper monitoring and usage of VHF radio channels, security broadcasts, small boat traffic, use of auxiliary channels, port security, hazards of marine construction and dredging operations, adverse weather, and safe vessel speed.

**Exam
Administrators'
Report (CONT.)**

Mark S. Anderson successfully completed the oral examination with the Board for Branch Pilots Examining committee. After considering the results of the examination, the Examining Committee recommends Mark S. Anderson for a raise in grade from a Charlie license (38,000 gross tons and 34 feet maximum draft) to a Delta license (45,000 gross tons and 36 feet maximum draft).

Mark S. Anderson successfully completed the oral examination with the Board for Branch Pilots Examining committee. After considering the results of the examination, Captain Avery moved Mark S. Anderson Charlie license (38,000 gross tons and 34 feet maximum draft) to a Delta license (45,000 gross tons and 36 feet maximum draft). Mr. McDermott seconded the motion which was unanimously approved by Messrs. and Captains: Avery, Behm, Chisman, Collins, McDermott, Piersall and Young.

Captain Chisman addressed the board regarding delays in the processing of federal maritime credentials caused by United States Coast Guard application backlogs following federal government shutdowns. These delays have the potential to postpone the advancement of limited branch pilots seeking full licensure in Virginia. The board discussed possible options, including conditional approvals and emergency regulatory actions, while emphasizing the importance of maintaining existing professional standards and credential requirements. Staff and legal counsel will continue evaluating available regulatory solutions should the issue persist.

**Request of
Expedite the
Processing of
Credentials**

Captain Chisman advised of the 2027 Board for Branch Pilots Upgrade Schedule:

**2027 Board
for Branch
Pilots Upgrade
Schedule**

2027 UPGRADE SCHEDULE

**DATES BELOW ARE WHEN APPRENTICES/LIMITED BRANCH PILOTS
BECOME ELIGIBLE FOR ORIGINAL OR LIMITED BRANCH LICENSE
UPGRADE**

March 11, 2027 (Thursday)	8:30 (EXAM)	Anderson Hanna Sinisi	Foxtrot Foxtrot Charlie
	2:00 (MEETING)		
June 15, 2027 (Tuesday)	8:30 (EXAM)	Sinisi	Delta
	10:30 (MEETING)		
Sept. 14, 2027 (Tuesday)	8:30 (EXAM)	Anderson Hanna Sinisi Evans Kahler	Golf Golf Echo Alpha Alpha
Sept. 15, 2027 (Wednesday)	10:30 (MEETING)		
Dec. 6, 2027 (Monday)	9:00-4:00	Renewals – Va. Pilot Assoc.	
Dec. 7, 2027 (Tuesday)	9:00-4:00	Renewals – Va. Pilot Assoc.	
Dec. 14, 2027 (Tuesday)	8:30 (EXAM)	Evans Kahler Masterson Trader	Bravo Bravo Alpha Alpha
	2:00 (MEETING)		

Mr. Kirschner provided the Board with an update on the House Bill 1305 Amendment and presented proposed regulatory amendments resulting from the recent legislation. The amendments would provide the Board with a new disciplinary option to take cases under advisement rather than immediately imposing disciplinary action. Under this authority, minor violations may be resolved through a conditional compliance period, after which cases may be dismissed without a disciplinary record if all conditions are successfully met.

**Regulatory
Update**

Mr. Behm moved to approve the amendment as presented and authorized staff to file the exempt regulatory action and make any necessary technical or stylistic corrections. Mr. McDermott seconded the motion which was unanimously approved by Messrs. and Captains: Avery, Behm, Chisman, Collins, McDermott, Piersall and Young.

**Regulatory Update
(Cont.)**

Mr. Kirschner presented an overview of the board's financial status and discussed the need for future fee adjustments to ensure long-term fiscal sustainability. The board currently operates with a negative cash balance and relies on temporary funding support from other boards within the agency.

Fee Update

Director McClintock explained that recent legislative changes will significantly streamline the fee adjustment process, reducing implementation timelines from several years to approximately six months. A comprehensive review of fee structures, operating costs, and comparisons with other states is underway, with a formal fee proposal expected at a future meeting. The board was advised that future fee adjustments will be reviewed more regularly to account for inflation and maintain financial stability.

Captain Chisman informed the Board that the Virginia Marine Association will host its International Trade Symposium in Norfolk, Virginia, from October 13–15, 2026. He encouraged Board members to be aware of the event and consider attending due to its significance to the maritime industry.

VMA26

Ms. Nosbisch informed the Board that the Virginia Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation will host its Board Member Training Conference on October 22–23, 2026, at the Conference Center located at 6690 Mayland Drive, Richmond, Virginia. Board members were advised that Save the Date notifications had been distributed via email and that additional information will be provided as it becomes available.

**Board
Member
Training
Conference**

Mr. McDermott and Captain Chisman updated the Board on the upcoming Sail250 celebration and related maritime activities. The event will include an international parade of sailing vessels, participation from numerous Virginia branch pilots, and coordinated operations involving the Port of Virginia, the United States Coast Guard, the United States Navy, and international partners. Board members were informed of the extensive planning efforts and anticipated operational impacts associated with the celebration.

**Other
Business**

Conflict of Interest forms and travel vouchers were completed by all members present.

**Conflict of
Interest Forms
and Travel
Vouchers**

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Adjourn

Michael W. Coleman, President

Laura V. McClintock, Secretary

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