

Exh. KW-01T

Witness: Captain Kaha'ikupuna Wodehouse

**BEFORE THE WASHINGTON
UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

**WASHINGTON UTILITIES AND
TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION,
Complainant,**

v.

**PUGET SOUND PILOTS,
Respondent.**

Docket TP-220513

**REBUTTAL TESTIMONY OF
CAPTAIN KAHA'IKUPUNA WODEHOUSE
ON BEHALF OF PUGET SOUND PILOTS**

MARCH 3, 2023

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3 **I. IDENTIFICATION OF WITNESS**

4 **Q: Please state your name, position and business address.**

5 A: My name is Captain Kaha'ikupuna Wodehouse and I have been licensed as a Columbia
6 River Bar Pilot since February 11, 2020. The business address of the Columbia River Bar Pilots
7 is 100 16th Street, Astoria, OR 97103.
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9 **Q: Please describe your educational background and work history.**

10 A: I am a native Hawaiian who was raised predominantly in Hawaii. I graduated from the
11 California Maritime Academy in 2001. I then moved back to Hawaii and pursued a sailing career
12 through the Masters, Mates and Pilots Union. From 2001 through a portion of 2009, I served first
13 as Third Mate and then as Second Mate on a wide variety of US flag vessels. In 2009, after
14 earning my Chief Mate's license, I was permanently assigned through the union to serve on
15 container vessels owned and operated by American President Lines. These vessels operated
16 within trade lanes between the West Coast and Asia and between the East Coast and Asia,
17 primarily providing military supplies to US military bases in the Middle East and Asia. I served
18 as Chief Mate beginning in 2009 through part of 2012. After earning my Unlimited Masters
19 license in 2012, I sailed for APL as Captain until February 2019, when I began training to
20 become a Grays Harbor pilot. In April 2019, I resigned from the Grays Harbor pilot trainee
21 program to accept the opportunity to become a Columbia River Bar Pilot trainee. Because that
22 training did not begin until September 2019 in order to make certain that I trained during winter
23 conditions, I returned to work for APL as a Captain from June through August 2019. My training
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1 for the Columbia River Bar pilotage ground began in September 2019 and proceeded into
2 February 2020. I was licensed on February 11, 2020.

3 **II. PURPOSE OF TESTIMONY**

4 **Q: What is the purpose of your testimony?**

5 A: My testimony addresses the importance of competitive pay and benefits and cost-of-
6 living considerations to the success of efforts to diversify a pilot group.

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8 **Q: During your work for American President Lines as Chief Mate and then Captain,**
9 **what was your typical work cycle?**

10 A: My seagoing career generally involved equal amounts of time on and time off. My work
11 cycles varied from 84 days on followed by 84 days off to 120 days on followed by 120 days off.

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14 **Q: When did you first develop an interest in pursuing a career as a marine pilot?**

15 A: From very early on in my seagoing career as Third Mate, I was aware that the pinnacle of
16 the maritime profession is becoming a pilot. I was also aware that the work life of a pilot was
17 more compatible with a family life. Both of these factors influenced my focus on pursuing the
18 skill set and licensing that would qualify me to become a pilot somewhere in the United States.

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21 **Q: Are you a member of any underrepresented ethnic group?**

22 A: Yes. As a native Hawaiian, I am considered to be part of an underrepresented ethnic
23 group just like the members of Indian tribes in the US. More broadly, I am considered to be part
24 of the Pacific Islander ethnic group.

1 **Q: How would you describe the significance of compensation and benefits to the**
2 **average mariner?**

3 A: From my own experience, compensation and benefits are extremely important and really
4 drive most mariners' decisions regarding where to work and who to work for. For the seafarer,
5 working for 84 days to 120 days aboard a ship is an extended period of time away from family
6 and friends. Although the mariner works eight to 12 hours on each of those days, the time you're
7 not working aboard a ship is far different from a lifestyle standpoint than being at home after a 9-
8 to-5 workday and on weekends like most land-based workers. I expected and received high pay
9 in the maritime industry before becoming a pilot in exchange for having to be aboard my ship on
10 a 24/7 basis during each on watch work cycle. In effect, I was trading the unique occupational
11 requirement of service as an officer aboard an oceangoing vessel that requires confinement on
12 that ship for extended periods for a significantly higher rate of pay than would typically be
13 earned in most other occupations with the typical 9-to-5 weekday work requirement with
14 weekends and holidays off.
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17 **Q: When did you first start looking into becoming a pilot?**

18 A: I started researching West Coast pilotage grounds after I became licensed as an Unlimited
19 Master in 2012. Given the skill set that I was developing throughout my seagoing career, I was
20 ultimately going to be qualified to become a pilot in Puget Sound, Grays Harbor, the Columbia
21 River Bar, Coos Bay, LA Harbor and San Francisco Bar. This research included visiting multiple
22 pilot groups and checking out the regulatory situation for each pilotage ground either online or
23 by attending pilot commission meetings.
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1 **Q: Once you earned the Unlimited Masters license and began serving as a container**
2 **ship captain, how would you describe the major factors that contributed to your ambition**
3 **to become a marine pilot?**

4 A: In ranked order, there were three factors driving my ambition to become a pilot. The first
5 is the level of compensation and benefits earned by state-licensed pilots, which is the highest in
6 the maritime industry. The second is the incredibly wide variety of ship handling opportunities in
7 all conditions, the part of my job as a captain that I most thoroughly enjoyed, because a pilot is
8 often aboard a new ship on almost every assignment during a given work cycle. And third, even
9 with a pilot's unpredictable combination of day and night assignments throughout each on watch
10 work cycle, the lifestyle of a pilot is far superior to that of the seafarer confined to his or her ship
11 during much longer work cycles. In my own case, it was not only important to me but very
12 important to my wife and our growing family (currently three small children) that I secure a
13 pilotage position with the opportunity to enjoy a more normal family life after going to sea for 18
14 years.
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17 **Q: Based on your research, what pilotage grounds did you ultimately concentrate on in**
18 **terms of becoming a pilot trainee?**
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20 A: I ultimately focused on Puget Sound, Grays Harbor and the Columbia River Bar. I took
21 the 2018 Puget Sound/Grays Harbor test and was ranked No. 2 on the list of passing trainee
22 candidates. I also took the test for the Columbia River Bar and was ranked No. 4 on that list. The
23 first opportunity to become a trainee was in Grays Harbor. Because of the difference in the cost-
24 of-living between Puget Sound and Grays Harbor, which I believed more than offset the modest
25 difference in net pay between those two groups, I accepted the trainee opportunity in Grays
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1 Harbor. One of my considerations in accepting the Grays Harbor opportunity was the fact that I
2 likely would not have an opportunity to train for the Columbia River Bar pilotage ground for a
3 year or more due to the lack of openings in that group for a projected one to two years.
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5 **Q: As you have testified, you resigned as a pilot trainee in Grays Harbor in April 2019**
6 **to accept a trainee position on the Columbia River Bar. Please explain why and how that**
7 **happened.**

8 A: Prior to taking both of the examinations for Puget Sound/Grays Harbor and the Columbia
9 River Bar, I had a preference for the Columbia River Bar because of the stability of its funding
10 situation and the fact that the cost-of-living in Oregon more than made up for the difference in
11 income earned by the Puget Sound Pilots who also had a substantially higher level of travel time
12 to and from assignments than other West Coast pilot groups. When the Grays Harbor opportunity
13 came up, I believed that the cost-of-living difference between that pilotage ground and the Puget
14 Sound pilotage ground made up for the difference in pay between the two grounds, and the travel
15 time component of the pilot's job in Grays Harbor was insignificant compared to Puget Sound.
16 However, while training in Grays Harbor, I did have concerns about the relatively modest and
17 sometimes fluctuating level of traffic into and out of Grays Harbor, which could impact annual
18 compensation, and the long-term viability of the port. As a result, when the opportunity to train
19 on the Columbia River Bar came up earlier than expected, I elected to resign as a Grays Harbor
20 trainee and pursue licensure as a Columbia River Bar Pilot.
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1 **Q: When you refer to the Columbia River Bar as having a stable funding situation,**
2 **what do you mean?**

3 A: I am referring to the fact that the tariff funding the pilotage system for the Columbia
4 River Bar is adjusted automatically on a quarterly basis to the assumed level of traffic necessary
5 to meet the revenue requirement. If traffic is above the assumed level, the tariff is adjusted
6 downward for the next quarter. If traffic is below that assumed level, the tariff is adjusted upward
7 for the next quarter. As a result, the Columbia River Bar Pilots were not affected by the decline
8 in traffic during the Covid pandemic. This is especially important for a pilot group that has the
9 highest percentage of its revenue requirement in the United States going to fund expenses that
10 include the only dedicated helicopter/fast pilot boat transportation system in the US. All total,
11 expenses on our pilotage ground account for just over 50% of the revenues generated by our
12 tariff. With the benefit of the quarterly automatic traffic adjuster, the Columbia River Bar Pilots
13 consistently earn the target net income approved by the Oregon Board of Maritime Pilots. In
14 2020, the most Covid-impacted year in terms of vessel traffic, we were the highest earning pilots
15 on the West Coast. In 2021 and 2022, it is my understanding that the Columbia River Bar Pilots
16 were either first or tied for first with the Columbia River Pilots in terms of net income for West
17 Coast pilot groups.
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21 **Q: Based on your background and experience, what is your opinion regarding the**
22 **importance of competitive compensation and benefits to the recruitment efforts of a pilot**
23 **group seeking to diversify its pilot corps?**

24 A: I know from personal experience that highly qualified women and minority pilot trainee
25 candidates are highly sought after by pilot groups and pilot commissions interested in
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1 diversifying what has largely been a white male pilotage profession in the United States. Given
2 the importance of competitive compensation and benefits generally in the maritime industry,
3 there is no question in my mind that a pilot group or pilotage system regulator interested in
4 diversification of a pilot corps will not succeed without a nationally competitive package of net
5 compensation and benefits that also addresses regional differences in the cost-of-living. For
6 years, the Puget Sound Pilots ranked second only to the San Francisco Bar Pilots on the West
7 Coast in terms of pilot compensation and benefits, which in my opinion only makes sense from
8 the standpoint of the significant difference in the cost-of-living between those regions and the
9 cost-of-living in Oregon or southwest Washington. The fact that this is no longer the case and
10 that PSP now ranks dead last in compensation and benefits on the West Coast is certainly not lost
11 on would be applicants.
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14 **Q: Do you have any other thoughts on how the training and recruitment process for**
15 **pilot trainees for the Puget Sound pilotage ground could be improved?**

16 A: Yes. One of the factors that I believe likely has a negative effect on the number of highly
17 qualified mariners applying in Puget Sound is the high cost of preparing for that exam and the
18 relatively low stipend paid during training process that can take 18 months to two years. Between
19 a pilot preparation course and the need to purchase simulator time at MITAGS WEST (formerly
20 Pacific Maritime Institute) in Seattle in order to be competitive on that component of the exam, a
21 prospective trainee must invest \$8,000 to \$10,000 at a minimum just preparing for the test. And
22 after becoming a trainee, the \$8,000 per month stipend paid to a Puget Sound trainee, which is
23 \$96,000 per year, represents a major pay cut that many trainee candidates from underrepresented
24 backgrounds are not in a position to consider. I believe the Washington Board of Pilotage
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Commissioners, as part of its effort to diversify the Puget Sound Pilots, should increase the
1 trainee stipend in order to attract more diverse trainee applicants. In 2022, the Coast Guard
2 increased the training stipend paid to Great Lakes Pilot trainees to two-thirds of the approved
3 level of pilot net income, which works out to a \$280,000 annual stipend.
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5 **III. CONCLUSION.**

6 **Q: Does this conclude your testimony?**

7 **A: Yes.**
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