

The Daily Item

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LYNN DELEGATION LAUNCHES INTO BAKER

BY THOMAS GRILLO | June 7, 2016

BOSTON — Lynn lawmakers chastised the Baker administration at a Beacon Hill hearing Monday for stranding the city's ferry riders.

"One of the top priorities for the LEAD (**Lynn Economic Advancement and Development**) group was the ferry service for very short money," said State Rep. **Brendan Crighton** (D-Lynn), referring to Gov. Charlie Baker's high-

powered team that includes **U.S. Rep. Seth Moulton**, Secretary of Housing and Economic Development **Jay Ash**, Transportation Secretary **Stephanie Pollack**, **James Cowdell** of Lynn's Economic Development & Industrial Corp. and others who can cut through the bureaucracy.

"We have been working on it for more than a decade,

and this ferry extension for more than a year, only to find out now that the ferry is dead,” Crighton said. **Carolyn Kirk**, deputy secretary of the state’s **Executive Office of Housing & Economic Development**, who also serves on the **Seaport Economic Council**, delivered the bad news to lawmakers at the hearing before the **Metropolitan Beaches Commission**.

She said that the state denied Lynn’s request for about \$700,000 in operating expenses for the ferry to sail for a third summer. She said the application came too late, and the funds were exhausted for this fiscal year. The state originally had about \$14.5 million available.

Sen. Thomas McGee was visibly angry and scolded Kirk and **Astrid Glynn**, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation’s rail and transit administrator.

“We are missing the boat on an unlimited potential for access to this region,” the Lynn Democrat said. “I would argue that ferry service from Lynn is a critical piece of public transportation, it’s not fluff. It’s very frustrating that we are not running a ferry service this year because it is contingent on it being sustainable.

Communities are not paying for the Green Line to get service that’s being expanded. They are not paying for commuter rail service, so I don’t understand why public

transit, in terms of ferry operation, should be any different.”

Baker’s decision not to fund the ferry service comes on the heels of a \$4.5-million federal grant in April for a new 149-passenger ferry with help from Moulton. The vessel is under construction, but could be lost to another community if Lynn cannot raise the cash to operate the boat.

More than two years ago, the EDIC rebuilt the Blossom Street Extension pier, where ferry passengers board, with \$7.65 million in taxpayer funding. The bulk of the money, \$5 million, came from the Seaport Economic Council, and another \$2 million from the U.S. Department of Transportation. The EDIC invested \$650,000.

Proponents say the ferry was a success for the last two summers, attracting about 15,000 riders each season.

McGee said if the money isn’t available, then there should be a conversation about finding a way to make it happen. “Why aren’t we having a discussion about what services we should be providing in the region to grow our economy?” he asked.

Kirk and Glynn did not respond to McGee’s comments.

But, in an interview with The Item following the hearing, Kirk, the

former mayor of Gloucester, put the blame on Lynn.

“I think the administration has to get our arms around how this service can be sustainable and paid for ... without relying on the state subsidy every year,” she said.

The original premise of the ferry service, Kirk said, was that the first year would be a pilot and subject to the city of Lynn putting together a marketing, ridership and outreach plan. But that was never done, she added.

“Some responsibility belongs to the city of Lynn. They are a very important partner in this, and they didn’t offer up a business plan.”

But, the EDIC’s Cowdell said he received the request for a business plan in March, and said he was told it would take at least six months to complete.

“That’s just an excuse,” he said. “Our responsibility was to show ridership and we’ve done that. We had two successful years and asked the state to fund the operation. All of a sudden, the state is running for cover and has decided not to help out at all. There’s not a commuter ferry in the state that does not receive some form of financial assistance.”

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