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Struggling to Stay Afloat, WICO Board Cuts Work Week in Half; No Stipends for Board Members Until Further Notice

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WICO Dock By. ERNICE GILBERT FOR VI CONSORTIUM

The WICO Board of Directors has taken drastic action to curtail expenses as the Covid-19 pandemic continues to wreak havoc on its revenues. The board has instituted what it says is a temporary 24-hour work week for all its employees, effective Nov. 2.

"After several cost-saving austerity measures taken by the company to manage the current financial shortfall, the WICO Board of Directors made the difficult decision to institute a temporary 24-hour work week for all employees across the board. Staggered work schedules will allow for the company to remain open and operating during regular working hours, Monday to

Friday," WICO said.

Board members also suspended their \$1,500 per meeting stipend until the port returns to normalcy.

WICO Interim President and CEO, Anthony Ottley, recently told the Consortium that during the high season, which occurs November through March, WICO receives approximately 8 to 9 ship visits weekly, which averages to roughly 22,000 passengers. "At the rate of approximately \$165.00 per passenger in spending, that amounts to approximately \$3.6 million in revenue to the territory per week," Mr. Ottley said.

WICO isn't expected to reopen its dock until January, and even then ship visits are expected to fall short of historic levels. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued a no-sail order back in March, which was only [lifted last week](#).

WICO said the decision to furlough employees "was necessary to help ease the financial constraints that WICO has been experiencing while cruise lines have been under a No-Sail Order by the Center for Disease Control (CDC). With the lifting of the No-Sail Order on Friday, October 30th, WICO anticipates ship visits to return in January with a reduced passenger count to accommodate social distancing protocols and quarantine capability in the event of COVID-19 cases."

Even so, WICO said it anticipates the cruise ship industry will rebound to full strength in 2021, and the company committed to begin increasing employee hours, as necessary, once the ships return to its dock.

During a board meeting in October, Mr. Ottley said that in preparation to welcome ships back into the territory, WICO's marine staff has been conducting maintenance on the overall marine infrastructure, anticorrosion chipping, and the painting of steel components on hardware.

WICO has provided the Dept. of Health with preliminary protocols which were presented by Norwegian and Royal Caribbean as a starting point to have discussions on the expectations of the cruise lines when they do come to the port. Mr. Ottley said those protocols had not been finalized as official.