

MINUTES

Milford Harbor Management Commission, November 16, 2023, 7:00 P.M., Lisman Landing

Board Members, Liaisons and Staff Present:

Robert Brennan, Chairman
Jim Beard
Joseph Gilbert
Raymond Kirmaier
Dora Kubek
Dylan Mark
John Nevin
James Donegan, Harbormaster
Lee Henschman, Deputy Harbormaster

Board Members, Liaisons & Staff Absent: Nancy Bennett, Richard Preneta, Raymond Vitali (Board of Aldermen)

Chairman Brennan called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

Consideration of the minutes of the meeting of 19 October 2023

A motion by Mr. Kirmaier and seconded by Mr. Nevin to accept, as corrected, the minutes of 19 October 2023 meeting passed unanimously.

The group agreed to hear a New Business proposal from Chuck Viens, owner of Charles Island Oyster Farm, ahead of its normal agenda spot. He provided a handout and described a plan to grow oysters in upwellers using an unused part of the marina for several months per year. He said he would build the operation at his own expense and described his growing and harvesting process. He said he thought it could provide educational and general interest to harbor visitors and offered a tie in with the Oyster Festival. He assured the commission that no heavy equipment or fumes would be involved, just pumping water into drums containing the oysters. He said that even if some oysters fell from the drums, they can't grow on the bottom. Mr. Brennan expressed concern about possible complaints about a commercial enterprise so close to transient marina customers and asked if permission was required from CT DEEP. Mr. Viens said the process is environmentally friendly and that he'd work with the state to secure any permits needed. Mr. Henschman asked for details about maintenance; Mr. Viens said it is done on a weekly basis but is not disruptive or time-consuming. Mr. Gilbert confirmed that the process spans 12-14 weeks, starting in August. Mr. Donegan also expressed concern about interaction between commercial and transient operations and said he would speak to the City Attorney's Office (CAO) regarding liability. Mr. Kirmaier asked about other oyster-farming locations run by Mr. Viens, mostly in Bridgeport. Mr. Viens offered to follow up with DEEP and the Army Corps, to draw up more detailed plans and return next month. Ms. Kubek asked on behalf of Ms. Bennett, who could not attend in person, if anything would interfere with the bubbler, who pays for electricity, and where the equipment would go off-season. Mr. Viens said he didn't know the answer to the first question, that he has an electric presence near the docks for electrical billing, and that if the equipment comes out of water (he had other sites where it did not), he'll find a storage location. Ms. Bennett said she isn't against the project at all, but as an enterprise zone, income must be protected. More discussion ensued about the design of the operation. Ms. Bennett asked for confirmation that the proposed area would never be used by the harbor. Mr. Viens said he would be open to a phased approach. Mr. Kirmaier asked when, if approved, the installation would begin. Mr. Viens said at the end of May, with oyster farming starting in July. He said he doesn't want to conflict with city events. He committed to presenting a site plan, contacting DEEP, and returning with an update.

Public Comments: None.

Chairman's Report: R. Brennan

Chairman Brennan shared concerns about people using recreational docks without permission, noting a recent incident that interrupted dredging. Discussion ensued about levying fines, recouping costs, and other potential solutions. Mr. Brennan noted that such an incident qualifies as theft of service. Mr. Donegan said signage is needed but also an enforcement agency to help. There was discussion of the recourse that can be used by the harbormaster, noting that

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there is a problem of relocating the offending vessel and liability for subsequent claims of damage to the offending boat.

Mr. Brennan also noted that mooring, commercial and transient fees will be adjusted. He reiterated the need to hire a consultant to update harbor mgmt. plan after the dredging project. He said he would try to have Mr. Steadman attend the meeting in January.

Permit Reviews: None.

Director's Report/ Harbormaster Report: J. Donegan

Mr. Donegan reported that the dredging was running ahead of schedule due to good weather and minimal interruptions. It may be done by the end of the year. He said moving boats had been well coordinated, mooring removal went well and ahead of schedule, He said he will inventory the helical anchors extracted and that all should be fit for reuse. He said the Hazlet elastic moorings will be delivered by the end of the year with mooring installation starting around 2/1, or possibly sooner. He noted that next season agreements will end on 10/31. He said he will send out contracts electronically Monday, 1/15; they are due 2/12. He said there is still a long waiting list for moorings and that moorings will be reassigned if payment is not received by the due date. He asked to review contract language concerning use of docks at the head of harbor due to abuses of the agreement. He reiterated that signage must be updated for all docks and asked to add language to the contract about charging for exceeding hours on the dock and for overnight stays. Discussion ensued about unannounced and unauthorized use of transient docks. Mr. Gilbert suggested language to obligate usage for fees and working with police on enforcement. Details such as uploading of insurance and registration documents via Dockwa when completing the lease agreement, prohibition of sub-leasing or loaning spaces to other people, and live-aboards were also discussed. Mr. Donegan said it is difficult to find a consensus on what constitutes a liveaboard despite reviewing other harbor's contracts and that he will see if there is state language.

He presented a schedule of 2024 meeting dates that are consistent with 2023.

Mr. Kirmaier moved to approve the schedule; Mr. Beard seconded; the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Donegan also announced that the booking date for the marina would change to the 2nd Monday in February at 8am.

Mr. Donegan circulated a proposed 2024 fee schedule with increases of approximately 10% for some fees, except for slightly higher commercial dockage. Mr. Kirmaier confirmed that the commission was authorized to change fees and no aldermanic action was needed.

Mr. Beard moved to approve the increase; Mr. Nevin seconded; the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Donegan reported that one boat was left on its mooring long after the end of agreement, and that the owner took it after some difficulties. The group agreed without exception not to renew the mooring agreement, as was made explicit in the mooring agreement.

He reported that previously voted funds were transferred and the first round of 2024 budget review was complete with minimal changes to cover expenses. He said the next step is budget review by the Finance Department and Mayor after the 1st of the year. He noted that the inauguration is this Monday, 11/20 at 7 in Parsons Auditorium.

Deputy Harbormaster Report: L. Henchman

Mr. Henchman said all inspections are complete with a breakdown provided of repair status. He said an email will go out to advise of repairs required, if any, to renew leases. Mr. Henchman also drew up a brochure for boaters visiting Milford. The group expressed strong approval of, as well as appreciation for the guide.

Report of Standing Committees

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Lisman Landing (Dylan Mark, John Nevin): **None**

Finance (Bob Brennan, Nancy Bennett):

Checking \$ 297,823.75

Savings \$ 271,768.61

Total \$ 569,615.44

Discussion ensued about interest-revenue opportunities. Mr. Donegan said he will ask about it.

Nominating Committee (James Beard, Nancy Bennett) **None**

Harbor & Mooring (Richard Preneta, Bob Brennan) **Discussed previously.**

Housatonic (Raymond Kirmaier, Dora Kubek) **Brief comments on upcoming bridge repairs were made.**

Amendments (James Beard, Joseph Gilbert) **None**

Shell Fishing (Robert Brennan, Joseph Gilbert, Ray Kirmaier) **None**

Correspondence: None.

Old Business

The group agreed to remove the first 2 items.

Ct. Port Authority – SHIPPS Grant: Nothing new.

Memorial Plaque—Nothing new.

New Business: Milford Arts Council has requested the use of the pavilion for an event on 12/10 coinciding with buoy tree lighting from 2:30-6:30. Beverages and food will be sold and served, including alcohol. They will need rest rooms and trash removal—DPW will bring garbage totes for the latter. Mr. Donegan said that opening the landing restrooms and clean-up afterward would require hiring staff. The group agreed about the need to cover expenses and that approval of the facility use form must be contingent on the permittee providing payment for those expenses. Mr. Donegan said facility use policy is evolving and shared a draft document. Going forward, policies should be discussed, including what kind of uses should be allowed.

Liaisons – None.

Adjournment was at 9:01 pm.

Attest: M.E. Greene, recording sec'y

Any individual with a disability who needs special assistance to participate in the meeting should contact the Operations Director, 874-1610, five days prior to the meeting if possible.