

MINUTES

Milford Harbor Management Commission, June 21, 2023, 7:00 P.M., Lisman Landing

Board Members, Liaisons and Staff Present:

Robert Brennan, Chairman
Nancy Bennett, Secretary
Jim Beard
Dylan Mark
Richard Preneta
James Donegan, Harbormaster
Lee Henschman, Deputy Harbormaster
Raymond Vitali, Board of Aldermen

Board Members, Liaisons & Staff Absent: Joseph Gilbert, Raymond Kirmaier, Dora Kubek, John Nevin

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

Consideration of the minutes of the meeting of 18 May 2023

A motion by Mr. Beard/seconded by Ms. Bennett to accept the minutes of 18 May 2023 meeting passed unanimously.

Public Comments: Sam Utzler, 26 Sand Street, said she approves of the dock that the Wiles want to construct at 182 Milford Point Road. She said she often observes kayakers lost among the phragmites in the Wheeler Wildlife marsh and that private docks provide points of reference and possibly safe ports during tidal changes. Separately, she also said that jet skiers are using the marsh as a slalom. She said she had called the Milford PD and CT DEEP. She noted that logs and other debris can cause dangerous situations. She said that “no wake” signs were lacking.

Chairman’s Report : R. Brennan

Chairman Brennan said he and Mr. Donegan are likely to receive money to remove the helixes from the city.

He suggested that considering the public comment, the permit review agenda item be heard next. The group agreed.

Permit Reviews: A permit application was presented by George Wiles for 182 Milford Point Road. He said he had received support from CT DEEP during the application process. He said the dock would be used to launch kayaks and paddleboards. He noted that consideration should be made to allow access to Milford Point Road when the road is raised 2 feet to accommodate sea level rise in the Sound. He said drainage will go to a retention pond on First Avenue and that he will remove sediments and divert pollutants that currently go into the marsh. He described a dock that will be nearly 90’ long as measured from Mean High Water to the first tide channel. He described the 1.5-year-long application process. He said his research concluded that the height and width of dock will have on a positive impact on the marsh. He said his original request was for a 4’ wide dock, but then he wanted to incorporate an 8’x8’ pier head and was offering to reduce the width of the pier to 3’ walk to reduce the total square footage of structure.

Mr. Brennan asked if the project used NAVD88 standards, Mr. Wiles said yes. Discussion ensued about Mean Low Water elevations and a NAVD88 discrepancy. There was further discussion about how access to the water and a confirmation that a ladder will be attached to the fixed timber dock with no floating dock. Ms. Bennet asked for more information on existing docks in the marsh and was told by Mr. Wiles that he had approached all neighbors with a view of the marsh, and that they had signed a letter of support. He noted that he had to mail project information to all abutters in a 500’ radius. Discussion of water depth and how the bottom will remain undisturbed with various crafts ensued with Mr. Wiles asserting that at high tide, the channel is 8’ deep, and at low tide, it is 5’ deep. He said his contractor has built docks upstream on Housatonic and will only drive a couple piles at one time; he identified the contractor as Coastal Marine Construction based in Branford. Ms. Bennett asked if dock would interfere with racing and was assured it would not. Mr. Henschman disputed the statement that no wake signs are in that area. Mr. Brennan asked whether some of dock would be underwater, Mr. Wiles said it’s planned to be more than a foot above grass. Ms. Bennett clarified that DEEP is reviewing the application now and expressed doubt that permission would be given for the pier head. Mr. Brennan asked if the dock could be 10’ high rather than 7’; Mr. Wiles said he will go that high if DEEP supports it. Mr.

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Donegan said there will be instances where the pier goes underwater with wave action. Mr. Wiles thought he could mitigate this problem with more height. Mr. Wiles said that while Commission approval won't guarantee DEEP approval, he needs it to proceed with his DEEP application. Ms. Bennet said she thinks a decision by the Commission is premature and that the head and height will be vetoed by DEEP. Mr. Wiles asked for a conditional approval because DEEP won't act without it. Discussion ensued about construction details and techniques and mitigating disturbance during construction.

Ms. Bennett offered a motion that she later rescinded after group discussion. She proposed a second motion thus:

Ms. Bennett moved to approve the application of George Wiles to install a fixed pier at 182 Milford Point Road with the following conditions:

The fixed pier will be 4' wide and 89' long.

The fixed pier will not have a pier head.

The fixed pier will not impede boat traffic on the Housatonic River.

Mr. Preneta seconded.

The motion passed unanimously.

Director's Report/ Harbormaster Report: J. Donegan

Mr. Donegan reported that the harbor is becoming increasingly active with boating traffic. He said the building improvements are nearly complete with new door locks installed. He listed special events such as the Kickoff to Summer Fireworks next weekend. He said the plan for dredging helix removal is proceeding but that he has been unable to locate records of specifications on what type of helix or seaflex apparatus was originally installed or where they are set. He said this makes it difficult to bid the job. In discussions with Mr. Brennan, they agreed on a need to hire someone to map out the mooring system and determine what size boat can be supported, saying it would ultimately speed the bid process along. The result would be a drawing with coordinates of mooring field. They asked Coastal Engineering to provide an estimate for such a plan. He said he wanted to make people aware of the project and that it is proceeding quickly because time is of the essence. He said there had been no feedback from the Army Corps since the last meeting.

Deputy Harbormaster Report: L. Henchman

Mr. Henchman said the Housatonic mooring field received additional requests that may result in a helix being installed. He noted that the harbor has 35 on the waiting list and a similar number on the kayaks and dinghy rack list.

Report of Standing Committees

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

Finance (Bob Brennan, Nancy Bennett):

Checking \$ 280,989.42

Savings \$ 271,677.79

Total \$ 552,667.21

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

Harbor & Mooring (Richard Preneta, Bob Brennan)

Housatonic (Raymond Kirmaier, Dora Kubek) **None**

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

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

Correspondence: Mr. Donegan noted a thank you from Alice Oliver, called the memorial to Ray a beautiful ceremony.

Old Business

20 Rogers Avenue – P&Z Updates: Nothing new.

Channel & Anchorage Dredging – Covered.

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Ct. Port Authority – SHIPPS Grant: Nothing new.

Memorial Plaque—Nothing new.

Bands on the Barge—Mr. Donegan got email from Michael DiNapoli saying the project was no longer moving forward.

New Business: None

Liaisons – Mr. Vitelli said the United Way Duck Race fundraiser was very successful. He expressed thanks for Mr. Donegan’s expertise and advice.

The group also noted that boats constructed by students in the Board of Education’s Enrichment Program were raced and the event was deemed a success. A canoe made by West Shore Middle School students won the competition.

Adjournment was at 8:17pm.

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.