



**HOUSATONIC RIVER ESTUARY COMMISSION**  
**SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES**  
**Tuesday, September 29, 2009**  
**USCG AUX flotilla 24-2 base**  
**Birdseye boat ramp, Stratford, CT**

**1. CALL OF THE MEETING/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Chairman Gesullo called the meeting to order at 7:30 P.M.  
All in attendance pledged allegiance to the flag.

**ATTENDANCE**

Bob Gesullo, Chairman, Shelton  
Lori Romick, Vice-Chairman, Milford  
Bill Rohland, Commissioner, Derby  
Bill Rock, Commissioner, Stratford

Also in attendance:  
Marianne Chaya, Clerk, HREC

Chairman Gesullo stated that Commissioner Blake and Urban would be unable to attend the meeting.

**2. PUBLIC PORTION OR GUEST**

None

**3. APPROVAL OF THE June 23, 2009 MEETING MINUTES**

Commissioner Rohland MOVED to approve the June 23, 2009 meeting minutes.  
SECONDED by Vice-Chairman Romick. All were in favor, MOTION PASSED.

**4. FINANCE REPORT**

Chairman Gesullo stated that he talked with the City of Shelton and confirmed that Shelton made their deposit of \$1000. The balance as of today is \$3,226.73. Vice-Chairman Romick said that the money Shelton has received on their behalf was from last year. The money for this year has been approved.

**5. Establishment of a HREC website**

Marianne read the email from Commissioner Rohland sent on June 24<sup>th</sup> outlining the costs as follows:

Domain Name = Thehrec.org (hrec is not available)

Cost = \$3.50 per month (initially billed for the first 24 months)

Domain Privacy \$8.99 annually (This prevents name and phone number of the registrar from spammers)

Directory Listing = \$12.00 annually (This enhances Google searches and is optional)

Total cost to obtain the Domain name and hosting fees for the first 24 months is as follows:

Domain \$3.50 x 24 = \$84.00

Privacy \$8.99 x 2 = \$17.98

Total without enhanced Google search engine \$101.98

Total with enhanced Google search engine \$125.98 (\$12.00 x 2 added to the above cost)

The Commissioners discussed the site and the use of links to other organizations. They gave Commissioner Rohland suggestions of the initial web page.

Commissioner Rohland will be the registrar and the Webmaster. He will pay for the website from his credit card and then the Commission will reimburse him. Vice-Chairman Romick MOVED to establish the website at a cost of \$125.98 and any ancillary fees up to \$300. SECONDED by Commissioner Rock. All were in favor, MOTION CARRIES.

The Commissioners spent some time discussing more of the details of how they want the web page to look.

They also discussed the email option and Vice-Chairman Romick offered to monitor the website emails.

The link to the website is <http://thehrec.org/>

## **6. Commissioner's remarks, meeting and or outreach effort from each town**

Chairman Gesullo stated that he has nothing to report from Shelton.

Vice-Chairman Romick reported that she has been monitoring the situation of the tree cutting along the river. She stated that she does not believe her letter got forwarded to the Inland Wetlands Commission. The Inland Wetlands officer, Mary Rose Palumbo said she has been at the site 10 times. Ms. Palumbo said she has required that they put plantings along the slope. Behind every home they are required to put at least 10 bushes. They will mulch the top of the slope because the seeding did not take because it is dry and covered with leaf litter. She said it wouldn't be completed until next spring because some of the plantings done in the summer died. They won't know how stable everything will be until next spring.

Commissioner Rohland suggesting doing the grass hydro spraying like what the State highway dept. does. It always seems to take. Discussion ensued.

### **Tape 1 Side B**

Vice-Chairman Romick said she would continue to monitor it and if it deteriorates she is willing to go to an Inland Wetlands meeting on our behalf.

Commissioner Rohland said he would also keep an eye on the area when he is out on the river.

Vice-Chairman Romick also mentioned that she has tried to get a hold of the DEP regarding the issue with Chromium Process. They still have not finalized anything after the hearing. The Commissioners will continue to follow up with the DEP.

Commissioner Rock reported that he was asked to be a judge for the River Lights Parade. There was participation by six different yacht clubs all the way up the river to Shelton.

Commissioner Rock stated that he took Ed O'Donnell (Regional Director), Jack Kiraly (Project Director), Jeff Steadman (Consultant), and Mayor Miron on his boat about a month ago to take a ride up the river to look at specific sites. We had hydrographic surveys done by one of our Commissioners and found that there are only a couple of soft spots, or shallow (from 95 bridge down). One is right by what is known as Peppy's rock – between just south of buoy 21 and 23. This is where the river takes a bend sharp to the right of Pootatuck it is drastically filled in there. It is down to 4' in some places. The second place we found is between 5 and 6 and 4 and 5. That is where there is a breach in the breakwater. One of the worst spots is at the delta at 1. It is about 10' in low tide. The point of this was to be dramatic about it and get the mooring gauged. What came out of this was instead of going through the traditional process of what the Army Corps of Engineers does, is to get a hopper dredge from Maryland. It goes up to Maine but always bypasses Connecticut. What this is is a limited use vessel that only holds about 300 cu. yards at a time. If we could get that to come in and carve out those 3 spots and take the material and dump it to Long Beach West. This could be a major step forward in regards to dredging.

Commissioner Rock said that this past week the State Harbor Management Association presented an award for waterfront achievement to the Stratford Harbor Waterfront Management Commission. There was an article in the CT Post today discussing this award. There should also be an article this week in the Stratford Star.

Chairman Gesullo asked Commissioner Rock to explain the role of the DEP and the EPA and dredging.

Commissioner Rohland stated that we need to talk to Milford Commission about some of the boats that are moored on the Milford side of the river. None of them are in an approved mooring field. The mooring field has to be approved by the Secretary of the Navy and designated as such. None of them have anchor lights. At the river lights parade we were on duty at Cam 23 there were 6 boats that almost collided with the boats that are moored just north of cam 23. This poses a hazard to everybody on the river.

Chairman Gesullo asked who approves the moorings?

Commissioner Rohland answered that it is the Harbormaster in Milford. There are maybe 4 boats in that area. There are other boats that don't have anchor lights but they are in a well-known mooring field.

Vice-Chairman Romick said she would make the call to the Harbormaster. Commissioner Rohland also mentioned that there is a yellow catamaran anchored just north of buoy 12. He obstructs that buoy as well as the no-wake buoy.

Commissioner Rohland said that he is where he is now because his mooring broke when he was further up and they rescued his boat at buoy 12 and dropped his anchor. He has been there for about a year. He can't move his boat on his own power because his engines don't work. He clearly needs to move his boat. Commissioner Rock told of the history of that boat while it was in Stratford waters.

The Commissioners suggested that the least they could do is to ask the Harbormaster to have the boat lit.

Commissioner Rohland brought up the subject of kayakers. We need to have the State create a law requiring them to obtain a boating license and to wear a life jacket 12 months a year. We have no powers but we can make a recommendation to the Governor as a Commission that this is done. To date I believe the number of kayakers that have been lost this year is 6. 90% of them are not boaters.

Vice-Chairman Romick asked if they were lost under normal circumstances – such as during the day and not under the influence. Commissioner Rohland said that some were lost during the day and some at night and the one that was suspect to have been under the influence and his body was never found. The ones that need this regulation are the ones going and purchasing a plastic kayak and bringing it down to the river for exercise. It's not the kayaking clubs that we need concern ourselves with; it's the average kayaker. I recommended this proposal to Commissioner Rock for the Long Island Sound Commission. Commissioner Rock said that he agrees with Commissioner Rohland and introduced it to that Commission. At this time of year is when the sub-committees are formed in order to make specific recommendations in our annual report that goes to the legislators in Hartford. It is probably one of the most direct ways we can hopefully influence anything to do with law regarding the water. I was met with a great deal of resistance regarding the idea of requiring a boating license. However, I was greeted with a lot of agreement with the law enforcement sub-committee in regards to requiring they wear life jackets all year long. They currently only are required to wear the life jacket from October 1-May 31.

Commissioner Rohland stated he would like for this Commission to recommend to the Governor both life jacket issues and the boating license. His thought is they would need to go a class and learn about boating and would find out at that class about the need for the life jacket.

Chairman Gesullo said that he agrees and noted the increased popularity of the sport, which has gotten the attention of the Coast Guard. There is progress being made but we keep losing people in the water.

Commissioner Rock mentioned that requiring the life jacket all year long is only extending it a short time and related this to when the seat belt law went into effect. The ones who initially didn't want to wear it saw that as time has gone on

has realized the value of seat belts. The requirement of having a boating license would be a difficult thing to enforce.

Commissioner Rohland relayed a story of a woman that wanted to launch her kayak on the river and it was clear that she didn't understand the difference of what an incoming tide meant. This river runs very fast. You cannot paddle as fast as the current. On an incoming tide I would find you up by the 95 bridge if I have to go look for you and an outgoing tide you would be out on Long Island Sound somewhere.

Commissioner Rock suggested that this Commission should send something to the Governor in addition to the Long Island Sound Council doing it; it might open their eyes a little more.

Chairman Gesullo said he has no problem sending this but recognizing that this is a continuing issue.

Commissioner Rock said he would also be recommending this to the Stratford Waterfront Commission he serves on.

The Commissioners agreed to send a letter to the public safety committee and the DEP. Commissioner Rohland suggested recommending that they at least attend a boating class. Vice-Chairman Romick mentioned that the DEP budget for boating education is gone. Chairman Gesullo said the DEP is proposing to have an on-line class. This Commission will go on record as encouraging more education, encouraging more requirements and the sensitivity to lose of life. We are addressing it all through safety concerns.

The Commissioners talked about the efforts in the search for the kayaker that has never been found. Different agencies searched over 133 square miles plus the use of 2 helicopters. It was a very costly search. They said that this would not have been an issue if this person had worn a life jacket.

Vice-Chairman Romick agreed to draft a letter for review to be sent before the next meeting.

## **7. New Business**

Vice-Chairman Romick brought up the issue about the Long Island Sound license plate program where the State now said the money in that fund has to go to the General Fund. She feels that this change is illegal and wants to bring this out to try and fight this change. There has been a campaign started to fight this along with a lot of letter writing.

She showed the booklet from HVA, which is a great educational resource. It also lists resources within the State that offer kids education and information to the Housatonic. She will look for an updated book to share. The Commissioners talked about HVA and their grant program and Vice-Chairman Romick said that we could partner with a non-profit agency if we ever wanted to go after grant money for a project.

Vice-Chairman Romick and Commissioner Rock discussed the annual report from the Long Island Sound Council and the progress of some of their proposals. Commissioner Rock mentioned that at this council they discuss dredging frequently and feels that it requires being a bulldog – constantly talking about it.

Vice-Chairman Romick asked the Commissioners if they might want to consider something similar report to the legislators as they do from the Long Island Sound Council.

After discussion they found that some time in the future they would want their positions known.

Vice-Chairman Romick said that report is a very valuable document because the legislators can go through it and pick ones that they want to take to task.

Commissioner Rock mentioned that the Long Island Sound Council is comprised of a large and varied group of people who are appointed representatives of the municipalities who have very strong disciplines. Most of them work full-time in the industry. There are also people who are salaried from the state.

## **Tape 2, Side A**

Commissioner Rock reported that in regards to polluters on the river there is one from Milford. 12 out of the last 12 quarters they have had 61 violations. The culprit is the Milford WPCF – the sewage treatment plant. Vice-Chairman Romick reminded the Commissioners that when we sent the letter for stimulus money, this is where we wanted that money to go for the upgrades that they need.

## **8. Old Business**

Commissioner Rock mentioned that we need to keep on top of the issue of all the debris that comes down the river that ends up in Stratford and eventually into the Long Island Sound. This should be a cooperative effort done by all the organizations. It was brought up at the last meeting to get a college to do a study on this issue. With the information from the study we would be able to make recommendations. I think this is something we could be proactive on.

Chairman Gesullo agreed but said the first task is to get the website up and running.

Commissioner Rock talked about the Stratford Waterfront Commission and mentioned that one reason they are so successful is because of their paid consultant, Jeff Steadman.

The Commissioners agreed that this Commission can't pay a consultant but they should be able use college students to start a study. They agreed they need expertise from the outside to pursue any issues they would want to take on.

Chairman Gesullo said that we could use our web page to get our message out.

## **9. Next Meeting**

The Commissioner decided that the next meeting would be Tuesday November 24, 2009.

## **12. Adjournment**

Commissioner Rohland MOVED to adjourn. SECONDED by Vice-Chairman Romick. All were in favor, MEETING ADJOURNED at 9:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Marianne Chaya  
Clerk, HREC