

MILFORD HARBOR MANAGEMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
January 21, 2010

The Milford Harbor Management Commission held its regular meeting on Thursday, January 21, 2010 in the conference room at Milford Landing. Chairman Montano called the meeting to order at 7:02 P.M.

Commission Members Present

J. Beard
R. Brennan
G. Montano
R. Post
A. Waterman
R. Winters

Not Present

N. Bodick
R. Miller
D. Newman
N. Veccharelli, Alderman Liaison

Also Present

R. Swift, Operations Director, Harbormaster
L. Bodick, Deputy Harbormaster
B. Bier, Alderman Liaison

Consideration of Minutes

The minutes of the regular meeting of November 19, 2009 were presented. There were no minutes for the meeting date of December 17, 2009 because there was no quorum. Mr. Post made a motion to accept the minutes of November 19, 2009. Mr. Waterman seconded. Motion carried unanimously with no changes.

Public Comments – None

Chairman's Report – None

Director's Report – January 1st there was the usual round of phone calls requesting reservations for Memorial Day, the Lobster Bake and the Oyster Festival.

The facility is in good shape. The patio is holding up. The bulkhead painting done in the fall is good and the bulkhead looks better. Mr. Waterman asked if there had been any damage from ice. Mr. Swift reported that only 2 mornings had ice all the way across the harbor and there was no damage.

Mr. Swift will meet with the Finance Board on February 10, 2010 at 6:30 PM to go over the proposed 2010 - 2011 budget. Mr. Winters wanted to know if any issues were anticipated. Mr. Swift said he did not anticipate any and hopefully they wouldn't knock it down any further than it is. Unfortunately the PILOT funds that the state eliminated last fall and then reinstated, were cut by a little more than half. \$74,335.74 was received in years past and this year \$38,087.12 was received. Mr. Swift reported that he had spoken to Grant Westerson, Old Saybrook, and he'd said that the state gave the towns what they could. \$2.6 million in funds was cut to \$1.6 million. A percentage across the board was figured and everyone was cut by approximately the same percentage. The state also took back \$7 million in construction funds earmarked for state ramp repairs.

Mr. Brennan seemed to think a call to the Attorney General and the legislators might come in handy. It creates a set of problems in each town and can the state legally take the money. Mr. Beard tried

to find out the answer to Mr. Brennan's question. He read from an email forwarded to him by Ms. Bodick. PILOT means "payment in lieu of taxes". In our case, it refers to vessels and registration fees. In most other cases, it refers to non-taxable real estate. Before 1981, boats were charged a personal property tax by town. Towns were losing money because people found a way around paying and were registering boats in other states. The property tax was done away with in 1981 and all vessel registration fees went into a Boating Fund. This fund was distributed to the towns using a formula based on the October 1, 1978 grand list. The formula and amount did not change over the years. The Boating Fund became a separate account within the Conservation Fund in 1994. In 2009, the state eliminated the Conservation Fund and temporarily eliminated the Boating Fund, sending all fees to the General Fund. Before the elimination took effect, the boating account was restored as a separate, non-lapsing account within the General Fund. Mr. Beard didn't know how long it'd be restored for and what formula was used but it would be good to know for budgeting purposes. Mr. Swift reported that Mr. Westerson seemed to think it would be restored to full by next year. The commission's consensus is that it shouldn't be counted on to be restored. Mr. Winters would like to put pressure on the legislature. Mr. Beard pointed out that boating doesn't affect people's lives as much as other items. Mr. Brennan said that it does because the marine industry would be impacted.

Mr. Swift suggested that we get through this year and see where we stand. The hope is for good weather and full mooring fields. The harbor commissions retained earnings can hold us temporarily. The 2010 - 2011 budget will have to be adjusted at the Board of Finance meeting because of the decrease in PILOT funds.

Discussion took place on suggestions for what to do in the future if PILOT funds aren't restored or if they are eliminated.

Mr. Waterman suggested re-energizing the dredge fund discussions. The harbor will silt in and close to boating if it isn't dredged. Mr. Bodick suggested an ordinance to collect fees. Mr. Montano asked Mr. Bier how to handle monies if boat owners were to contribute \$5 to \$7.50 per year. Hypothetically, if the money was collected by marinas and put in a separate dredging fund with an ordinance specifying that it was to be used for dredging the harbor. Mr. Bier seemed to think charging the marinas a flat fee based on vessel count and letting them handle getting customers to pay them back would be easier on the city for accounting purposes. Mr. Montano requested Mr. Waterman find his research into the subject and bring it back to the commission.

Harbormaster's Report – A permit application for bulkhead rehabilitation and dock repair at 73 Housatonic Drive was passed around for review. Several members of the commission noted that the requested dock was larger than regulations allow. The DEP should adjust the size in line with their regulations before approval.

The United States Coast Guard is dismantling LORAN C stations. The notice was passed around.

Report of Standing Committees

Milford Landing – no report

Finance – Fund balance as of 12/31/09 was \$264,785.16 in savings and \$82,939.06 in checking for a total of \$347,724.22.

Harbor and Mooring – no report

Housatonic – Lor Cubbison has his driver's license and insurance. He is off his mooring and is presently at the Dock Shopping Center marina docks. He has not submitted his mooring application as yet but a space is being held for him.

Mr. Beard wanted to know if there was an increase in ramp usage because of the state ramp closing. Mr. Swift said that fee receipts were down a bit this year. Mr. Swift said the ramp closed at the end of the year so the full effect wasn't felt. Mr. Beard suggested perhaps a shuttle bus with extra trailer parking off site for an anticipated pick up in usage. Mr. Swift stated that this was looked into before the state ramp actually closed. It sounded like a good idea but was too complex to put into effect due to where to put the launched boats while the owner took the car to the lot and rode back.

Amendments – no report

Correspondence – Mr. Swift has not heard from the owner of the “Jolly Rover” as yet. He was to get back to us with a proposed business plan.

Old Business – No updates on the Wepawaug River Pond dredging.

New Business – The schedule of meetings for 2010 was presented. Mr. Brennan made a motion to accept the schedule as presented. Mr. Winters seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Montano requested that Mr. Waterman and Mr. Post serve on the nominating committee. They accepted and will report back at the February commission meeting.

The State PILOT funds discussion took place under the Director's Report.

Liaisons

Stratford - no report

Aldermen – Mr. Bier wanted to know about the town dock at the end of High Street. Mr. Bodick and Mr. Montano filled him in on the work that needed to be done. Discussion ensued regarding the area and getting started on applying for permits needed, funding, etc.

P & Z - no report

Being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 8:04 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Tougas
Recording Secretary