

MINUTES

Milford Harbor Management Commission, 18 January 2024, 7:00 P.M., Lisman Landing

Board Members, Liaisons and Staff Present:

Robert Brennan, Chairman
Nancy Bennett, Secretary (via MS Teams)
Jim Beard
Joseph Gilbert (via MS Teams)
Raymond Kirmaier
Dora Kubek
Dylan Mark
John Nevin
Richard Preneta
James Donegan, Harbormaster
Lee Henschman, Deputy Harbormaster
Raymond Vitali, Board of Aldermen

Guest presenter: Jeff Steadman

Board Members, Liaisons & Staff Absent: Raymond Vitali, Board of Aldermen

Chairman Brennan called the meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

Consideration of the minutes of the meeting of 21 December 2023

A motion by Mr. Nevin/seconded by Ms. Kubek to accept the minutes of 21 December 2023 meeting passed unanimously with one correction.

Public Comments: None.

Chairman's Report : R. Brennan

Chairman Brennan reordered the agenda to allow Mr. Steadman to present.

Mr. Steadman introduced himself as a planning consultant specializing in coastal area management, harbor management, and similar projects. He asked Chairman Brennan for a renewal of support in legislation he and others are trying to re-introduce in the new state legislative session after the bill did not make it out of committee in the last session due to DEEP objections. He said the decision from a court case based in Greenwich affects all harbor commission management commissions in the state because it resulted in a loss of harbor management authority to review permits with DEEP involvement. This lack of authority also affects all harbor management plans because they all specify a review function. He said that previously, if a harbor management plan was approved by DEEP, recommendations of the harbor management commission operating under the plan would be binding on DEEP unless DEEP shows cause otherwise. He reviewed the specifics of the case and handed out documentation on the Greenwich judgment and the proposed legislation to restore the previous levels of authority to harbor management commissions. He noted that many coastal towns are currently in the process of updating plans.

Chairman Brennan said his support for the proposed legislation would continue and his concern was to update the Milford plan using Mr. Steadman's expertise, noting that multiple approvals at several levels are required. Mr. Steadman said he is working with the Stratford Harbor Commission and is familiar with issues along the Housatonic. He noted that he was involved in drafting the Milford mooring plan and is working with several towns to update their comprehensive plans. He noted that old plans can have outdated references, but still have valid policies and it is the relevance of policies that matters. He said plans cannot anticipate an answer for every problem, but they can have goals, objectives and policies. He offered to review goals and objectives as they compare with other towns for a fee to be determined. As a side note, he noted that 30-40 years ago, the state implemented coastal area management legislation due to industrial development whereas now the main issue is residential development. Discussion ensued about the history of Army Corps of Engineers' involvement in policing the encroachment of private docks into federal navigation areas. Mr.

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Donegan noted that the current Milford plan was also adopted before the harbor used helixes and floating docks, so the implications go beyond Milford plan's outdated references. Mr. Steadman suggested incremental review of sections after working with Mr. Donegan on higher level goals. Chairman Brennan noted that there have been major new harbor uses due to the implementation of Lisman Landing years ago. The group welcomed Mr. Steadman's help. Mr. Donegan said he and Chairman Brennan would also contact Milford's state legislators to try and enlist their support for Mr. Steadman's proposed legislation.

Chairman Brennan thanked Mr. Steadman and began his report.

He said that he and Mr. Donegan had discussed the Charles Island Oyster Farm proposal at length, having sent a list of concerns to City Risk Manager Toni Weeks. He noted that most concerns of the commission had been covered at the last meeting, but a major change required by Ms. Weeks would be that the oyster operation must be put it out to bid. Given that the commission's consensus already was that a commercial project was risky in a transient marina, he felt it was time to request a motion.

Motion: Mr. Preneta moved to reject the proposal, Mr. Nevin seconded, the vote to reject was unanimous.

Permit Reviews: None.

Director's Report/ Harbormaster Report: J. Donegan

Mr. Donegan reported that the dredging contractor was released on 12/26 by the Army Corps, making this phase complete. He said the Coast Guard had reinstalled navigation aids, and that preparation was being made to reinstall all moorings. He reported that on Tuesday, all 2024 contracts were sent, that there had been over 300, and that 41 had been completed and returned. He said Milford Harbor has approximately 40 on the waiting list, and that the list has been growing since 2022. He said the new de-icers were received and are being installed and that the work boat should be operational next week. He said that on 2/5 marina bookings began for transient spaces. He said he has updated calendars and rates on city website, provided event dates to Dockwa, and that yacht clubs and cruising groups are setting up their own events. Chairman Brennan reiterated a concern that with over 36 events, Mr. Donegan needs support to track and vet them all. He stressed a need to provide pavilion use guidelines. Discussion ensued on facility use form procedures that apply to all city venues with signoff by all relevant departments, noting that the harbormaster now gets an official signoff for the landing. Mr. Donegan said he holds the schedule because of coordination with cruising groups. He said events help bring people in, but this must be balanced with city uses and uses by the general public. Mr. Donegan listed some obvious risks such as not allowing fireworks or open flames. Discussion of food trucks, clean-up, and permissions ensued. He said that when a facility use application comes in for sign off, he gives additional rules but follow-up is not easily done.

Deputy Harbormaster Report: L. Henchman

Mr. Henchman shared a graphic that he sent with a letter stating that every-other-year boat inspection is required. He had color coding to denote the urgency of boat remediation or passed inspections. He remarked that there is now confidence in the helixes examined after the harbor dredging for refurbished future use.

Report of Standing Committees

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

Finance (Bob Brennan, Nancy Bennett):

Checking \$263,343.48

Savings \$271,837.12

Total \$535,180.60

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

Harbor & Mooring (Richard Preneta, Bob Brennan) **None**

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

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

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

Correspondence: None.

Old Business

Ct. Port Authority – SHIPPS Grant: Nothing new.

Memorial Plaque: Nothing new.

Charles Island Oyster Farm Proposal: rejected

New Business:

Liaisons –None present.

General discussion:

Mr. Henchman suggested further investigation of getting a higher return on harbor commission funds. Mr. Donegan said he would speak to the Finance Director about it.

Mr. Nevin expressed concern that the Simon Lake submarine may be rusting from the inside. He suggested constructing a shelter for it while Ms. Bennett suggested drilling a hole to drain water.

Mr. Donegan asked Ms. Bennett if the remote MS Teams technology had been acceptable; she was satisfied with it.

Adjournment was at 8:03 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.