

MINUTES

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

Board Members, Liaisons and Staff Present:

Robert Brennan, Chairman
Jim Beard
Nancy Bennett (via phone)
Joseph Gilbert (via MS Teams)
Raymond Kirmaier
John Nevin
Richard Preneta
James Donegan, Harbormaster
Lee Henschman, Deputy Harbormaster

Board Members, Liaisons & Staff Absent: Dora Kubek, Dylan Mark, Raymond Vitali (Board of Aldermen)

Chairman Brennan called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM.

Consideration of the minutes of the meeting of 16 November 2023

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

Public Comments: None.

Chairman Brennan asked that the agenda be reordered as a courtesy to guest speakers.

New Business

Presenters: Robert Bogart, past president of Devon Rotary, 29 Ridge Street, Phil Ucci, incoming president, 207 Oronoque Road, and Dave Hulme, 4 Callaway Drive, past president.

Mr. Ucci stated that the annual lobster bake is in the planning stages, is the biggest Rotary fundraiser, and helps various local charities. The Rotary wishes to secure Lisman Landing again on 7/27 sat for event, plus the day before for setup, and the day after for cleanup. Harbormaster Donegan confirmed the same area size would be used as last year.

Chairman Brennan asked that transient boaters be made aware via the harbor calendar. Tickets would be limited to 1000 attendees. Mr. Ucci said more security would be added. Mr. Brennan suggested having people park across from the harbor in the lot behind the library.

Mr. Preneta moved to allow the event, Mr. Beard seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Old Business

Presenter: Chuck Viens, Charles Island Oyster Farm, LLC, BPT

As a follow-up to his previous upweller presentation, Mr. Viens shared a handout with photographs depicting how the operation would fit into the proposed dock location. He provided details on how he makes the upwellers. He said after measuring to prepare the drawing, he found that he could only fit 3 upwellers. Mr. Brennan expressed concerns about transient boaters' perceptions and the possibility of young people becoming injured trying to view the activity. He said he was not sure what benefit such a project would have for the marina. Mr. Viens said his rationale is that the area is unusable for other activity, and the oysters are innocuous but interesting in view of Milford's history. He said the upwellers will typically not be visible to boaters. He said the docks he'd like to use will be safer doing this activity than they are now because the current docks are narrow and flimsy. Ms. Bennett said she listened to last month's meeting; she asked several specific questions about the placement of the upwellers. Mr. Viens said Port Milford was not suitable because it would lose 3 boat slips. Ms. Bennett said Milford Boatworks had supported an oystering project, but it had been done using bags. She said the oysters cleaned the water, but she was also concerned about proximity to transient marina traffic. Discussion ensued about oystering technology and limitations. Mr. Viens said what he's proposing is meant to go where commercial gear is now and that most of the proposed area is commercial. Mr. Donegan also expressed concerned about transient boating reaction and noted that he wants to hear the opinion of City Risk Manager

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Toni Weeks. Mr. Nevin asked how it would be possible to keep curious people off the docks. Mr. Viens said the oystering only lasts 70 days per year and presents no noticeable visibility, smell, or residue. Mr. Preneta asked how many oysters will be produced and was told a million and a half. He said that as a businessman, he needs to know what's in it for the city economically. Mr. Viens said oystering is a fit with the oyster festival, cultivated oysters are increasingly popular with consumers, and the upwellers use very limited, clean technology. He quantified his costs and potential revenue. Ms. Bennett said she is sensitive to potential transient revenue impact but agreed that there is human interest in Milford's oystering history. She suggested that a trial run might be possible. Mr. Brennan was still very concerned about the risk of injury. Mr. Gilbert requested details on tending, removal, and washing, which Mr. Viens provided saying the operation only takes 2 hours. Mr. Preneta asked about dates when most visible activities occur and was told if the operation began in late July, a tumbler could be on the dock in September or October. Mr. Viens said the process could occur at any time of day required by Mr. Donegan. Mr. Henchmen noted that it could be difficult to gauge if the project was affecting the transients as multiple factors could also be involved. Mr. Brennan underscored the need to hear from Risk Manager Weeks and CT DEEP, noting that if no approval was forthcoming by February, there might not be enough time to start the project regardless. Mr. Kirmaier asked for additional information and further operational discussion ensued. Mr. Nevin asked when Mr. Viens needed an answer and was told no later than the February meeting.

Mr. Brennan said the open issues before the commission were risk assessment, compensation to the city, and liability insurance. He suggested the item be tabled until next month.

Mr. Beard motioned to table the item, which was seconded by Mr. Preneta. The motion passed unanimously.

DEEP permit for Spencers Marina

Rob Sonnichsen, PE, Waldo and Associates, Guilford, addressed the commission representing Spencers Marina regarding structures, dredging, and fill permit. He referred to submitted plans for repairing their bulkhead, and travel lift well, which normally can be done via a streamlined program if done in kind based on existing structures. He said parts of the bulkhead are losing material and described the required repair. He said that CT DEEP started its review of the project and found a 30' section of concrete block that was never permitted, as well as some jetski floats. He noted that the marina can't use a certificate of permission on something built without permits, so the project proposal had to be restarted with a full permit application. He said the original plan was to do work this winter, but now it may not happen until 2025. Mr. Brennan discussed details on the bulkhead replacement and how the scope of the current proposal could be affected and cause more delays. Mr. Donegan said the permit was the same that the HMC reviewed in June, with the addition of the 30' block wall to the north and jetski floats to the south. Discussion ensued on iterative proposals to get to the current scope of work and materials, noting urgency for ensuring the safety of the bulkhead.

Mr. Beard motioned to approve the permit, Mr. Preneta seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Chairman's Report: R. Brennan

Chairman Brennan said he wanted the commission to set up criteria for pavilion rentals, such as requests to use it as a wedding venue. He noted that the Hazlet material had arrived. He said the Harbor Management Plan update is a priority and that he is trying to get the consultant, Mr. Stedman to the January meeting.

Director's Report/ Harbormaster Report: J. Donegan

Mr. Donegan was pleased to report that dredging is complete, pending army corps review and confirmation. Mr. Beard asked if the 10" of rain that recently fell had impacted the operation. He was assured that everything remained stable. Mr. Donegan described some challenges with the moorings due to the Hazelett design but that are now correct. He said elastic moorings are on site and will be installed in February. He said he is updating the website, sending emails to renters, setting up Dockwa, and sending contracts. He noted that the landing has been awarded Dockwa's "elite fleet" rating for the 3rd year in a row based on customer feedback. There was discussion of replacing de-icing equipment because the current set up is inadequate. He reported that there is money for it in current budget. He noted debris from the river had been seen in past 2 weeks. He thanked the commission for their help and support in 2023.

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Deputy Harbormaster Report: L. Henchman

Mr. Henchman said he has waitlisted 4 or 5 people and can accommodate them if they want helix moorings. He said he was encouraged that Sterling Marine will be able to reuse helixes based on how well they came out of the harbor.

Permit Reviews: Spencer's Marina, 44 Rose Street (see above)

Report of Standing Committees

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

Finance (Bob Brennan, Nancy Bennett):

Checking **\$ to come next month, not received yet.**

Savings **\$**

Total **\$**

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

Ct. Port Authority – SHIPPS Grant: Nothing new.

Memorial Plaque—Nothing new.

Charles Island Oyster Farm Proposal—Chuck Viens (see above)

New Business: Milford Rotary Lobster Bake (see above)

Liaisons – None.

Adjournment was at 8:42 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.