

MINUTES

Milford Harbor Management Commission, July 19, 2023, 7:00 P.M., Lisman Landing

Board Members, Liaisons and Staff Present:

Robert Brennan, Chairman

Nancy Bennett, Secretary

Jim Beard

Joseph Gilbert

Raymond Kirmaier

Dylan Mark

James Donegan, Harbormaster

Board Members, Liaisons & Staff Absent: Jim Beard, Lee Henchman, Dora Kubek, John Nevin, Richard Preneta, Raymond Vitali

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

Consideration of the minutes of the meeting of June 21, 2023

Ms. Bennett asked that an error on page 1, Permit Reviews, paragraph 2 of the minutes be corrected to read, "Ms. Bennett asked if dock would interfere with boating...". With that correction, a motion was made by Ms. Bennett and seconded by Mr. Gilbert to accept the minutes of the 21 June 2023 meeting; it passed unanimously.

Public Comments: none

Chairman's Report : R. Brennan

Chairman Brennan said they were sailing last weekend out of the Boat Works and ran aground in the shallow channel. As soon as dredging is complete, we need to move forward on the rest of the dredging work required. Mr. Donegan said shallow water is an issue in the boat yard as well. Mr. Donegan reviewed the fiscal year end numbers with the Board. The marina - the biggest source of revenue - had another very good year, up 5.7% from the previous year. In last three years, marina revenue has grown by 94%. Mooring revenue experienced a 5.5% growth this year, and almost 16% growth over the past three years. Concession revenue, though down 9.5% from the previous year, remains steady, with an increase of over 30% for the past three years. Agreements with Scoopy Doos, Goodies, and Boat Works accelerate year over year which help keep revenue steady. Boat ramp revenue is down 19.5% over last year, and over 24% for over the past three years. Discussion regarding potential causes. Mr. Brennan commented the state boat ramp on Housatonic is back open, and that is pulling boaters away. Ms. Bennett noted smaller boats are renting slips rather than trailering. Mr. Donegan said larger boats cannot be trailered as easily and thus do not use the boat ramp. Dinghy Rack revenue is up 22.5% this year, and up almost 130% over the past three years, including Walnut Beach. Those new racks are full, with a waiting list. Total revenue and expenses are up 3% for the fiscal year, and 46.4% over the past three years. Expenses are rising, but revenue is keeping pace and maintaining a profit margin. Numbers are trending in the right direction. Total marina revenue, from season start through Fiscal Year end, is up almost 30% from the previous year. Reservations are up from 336 nights last year to 399 this year. Cancelled and waitlisted nights remain steady. He said that even with less-than-optimal weekend weather, many larger boats are coming in and it has been busy. He shared 2023 marina customer reviews. He explained the reviews come from Dockwa. After a customer makes a reservation, a confirmation is sent. Three days before their reservation, they receive marina, VHF, check in and check out times, and other information for their stay. Three days after departure, renters are offered an opportunity to review their stay or contact the Harbormaster. The marina received more reviews than ever this year and all were 5 stars. Themes throughout the reviews were concentrated on good dock hands and clean bath facilities. Mr. Gilbert asked if there were

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any reviews that were not 5 stars. Mr. Donegan said he recently had a 4-star rating, with the concern being homeless persons at the marina, but everything else was rated highly. Staff has been advised to keep doing what they are doing. Mr. Brennan shared that American Great Loop Cruising Association has been saying good things about the marina as well. Board members complimented Mr. Donegan on his team's success.

Director's Report/ Harbormaster Report: J. Donegan

Mr. Donegan reported he went to the Founders Walk Stage 2 Harbormaster meeting. The engineering firm spoke on re-routing Shipyard Lane. What is currently Shipyard Lane will become a pedestrian walkway and greenspace. The new Shipyard Lane will be placed between the ballfields. Not all permits are in place, but they are hoping by next spring to be starting work. The boat ramps are to remain open during construction. Oysterfest will not be displaced, but other events may be. Mr. Gilbert asked if there will be additional parking for boat users. Mr. Donegan said no, the parking will be equivalent to current availability. Mr. Gilbert asked if the parking lot being full is posing a problem. Mr. Donegan pointed out sometimes there are basketball and other event attendees taking up boat ramp parking. He said that on nice Saturdays or event days they used to be able to move the trailers, but it depends on available space. Ms. Bennett said the Board can probably tie our ramp revenue increase from 2017-2019 to the state Housatonic ramp being closed. Mr. Donegan said weather and wind direction can be factors. Construction at Founders Walk could take a year.

Events: Mr. Donegan announced the Milford Rotary Lobster Bake will be held in the far parking lot, as it was last year. Mr. Brennan said the event setup will occur Friday. They are working to get Boy Scouts to assist with cleanup on Sunday morning. Department of Public Works will have fencing up and barricades dropped off Thursday or Friday.

Dredging: Mr. Donegan reported the Army Corps of Engineers posted the almost 300-page bid package online. The bid breaks out the areas of dredging between outer channel, inner channel and the -10 and -8 mooring areas. Focus is on ensuring the moorings are out before awards of work are made. There is a 30-day bid window; bid opening for dredging will be August 14, and will announce the apparent low bidder.

Mooring field: No location drawing available to show where moorings are currently and no specs on what is out there. There is no information on what the loads are, and what can be supported. RACE Coastal Engineering will propose reinstallation locations. Boundary field dimensions are already known, so RACE will provide layout and coordinates for placement within that field. Looking for them to advise on vessel loads to determine proper mooring system; once determined, the mooring company can spec what is needed. Ms. Bennett questioned whether our docks and hardware are the weak point. She stated previous failures have been either wood or hardware. Mr. Donegan said the current budgeted proposal must be limited in scope. Once there is a signed proposal, it will be presented to the Board within two to three weeks. Mr. Donegan can then put a package together and put that package out to bid for two weeks. He is hopeful to be in line with the Army Corps of Engineers. Work must begin by October 15, if not earlier. Mr. Brennan stated the tops of the helixes must be cleaned off, which takes time. Mr. Donegan said the timeline is tight but doable. Mr. Gilbert asked if any original documents had turned up. Mr. Donegan responded they found some later purchases of helixes and learned that Sterling Marine said when they put the helixes in, they anchored them off a straight line, but no documentation was found.

Deputy Harbormaster Report: Mr. Donegan

Mr. Donegan reported a July 31 deadline for all mooring holders in Housatonic to return their mooring inspections. He has started getting questions. He said one concern over the past week is that both visibility

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and currents have been poor, so some people may need an extension. Mr. Gilbert asked if this might become an ongoing issue.

Permit Reviews:

Bulkhead replacement at Spencer's Marina. Application shows what appears to be a replacement of the same amount of bulkhead, overshooting per state guidelines, raising the bulkhead by 18" with no fill behind the bulkhead. Drawings show the first floor of building adjacent to bulkhead as elevation 6.51, and the bulkhead is lower than that. Applicant may be asked for additional information by the DEEP. Ms. Bennett remembered the Board said no to raising the bulkhead on a Rogers Avenue residential property, so it is necessary to be cognizant of consistency. Mr. Kirmaier stated one is commercial, and the other residential. He also said there is no fill being proposed in the current application, and so they are different. Ms. Bennett asked if anyone present was familiar with the engineer. Mr. Donegan said the engineer refers to it as a **COP**, but the form is a full permit. Discussion regarding approving only to current height. DEEP is the ultimate authority. Mr. Donegan indicated there are some discrepancies; for example, page 7 of the application has a checkbox indicating seawall height increase is less than 12" and justified in part 4 of Section 3. He stated DEEP may approve a lesser increase in height. Mr. Gilbert stated replacement in kind would mean the new bulkhead would be timber construction. He said Coastal Marine has a vibratory machine for driving timber bulkheads. Discussion regarding strength of steel vs. timber. Ms. Bennett asked if the approval can be made contingent upon no backfill being used. Mr. Donegan said backfilling would be a City permit, so it cannot be made a contingency. He pointed out that no additional bulkhead is being proposed. The engineer may need to provide details on the cap. Mr. Gilbert stated backfilling would be difficult because the building is at ground level. Motion to approve by Ms. Bennett and seconded by Mr. Gilbert. Motion passed unanimously.

Report of Standing Committees

Lisman Landing (Dylan Mark): **None**

Finance (Jim Donegan):

Checking \$ 309,483.51

Savings \$ 271,700.12

Total \$ 581,183.63

Nominating Committee (Nancy Bennett): **None**

Harbor & Mooring (Bob Brennan): He stated there are Issues with shallow channel depth. He asked Mr. Donegan what portion of the budget can be allocated toward dredging the upper channel once bid is approved. Mr. Donegan said there will be financial variables even after the bid is accepted and those needed to be taken into consideration before additional work can be approved.

Housatonic (Raymond Kirmaier): **None**

Amendments (Joseph Gilbert): **None**

Shell Fishing (Robert Brennan, Joseph Gilbert, Ray Kirmaier): Mr. Gilbert reported a group from Briarpatch Enterprises has added shell to areas of Indian River, with permits from the Bureau of Aquaculture on Rogers Avenue. He said Charles Island Oyster Farm also adds shell. They are taking proactive steps to enhance the resource.

Correspondence: none

Old Business

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

Channel & Anchorage Dredging – covered.

Ct. Port Authority – SHIPPS Grant: nothing new

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Memorial Plaque—Mr. Donegan said placing new stone around the flagpole will require a lot of funds, because the existing bluestone is set on concrete with a concrete border. The concrete would need to be chipped out and reset. He said there is bluestone available in storage; perhaps that could be used to add a walkway into the garden instead. Ms. Bennett asked for clarification on who is being memorialized. Mr. Donegan said previous chairmen and harbormasters. He indicated action is needed to verify names prior to moving forward.

New Business: Mr. Gilbert asked about music proposed for Charles Island. Mr. Donegan advised the group who proposed to hold the event have cancelled. He said the Coast Guard was moving forward with issuing a permit. However, the Fire Department said organizers had not presented a full plan. Cost for police and fire emergency services, as well as sanitation, was a big issue. The organizers were able to obtain insurance for the barge. The organizers inquired on the availability of a 10'x10' float that was in the water there years ago. Mr. Donegan said that float was not permitted and was removed. Ms. Bennett stated that it was possible to have multiple anchorage in the same area the event was to be held.

Liaisons – Stratford— Mr. Bennett said no new liaison has been assigned for the Democrats yet.

Adjournment: Mr. Mark made a motion to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 7:51pm.

Attest: S.R. LaFond, recording sec'y