

TOWN OF FAIRFIELD
HARBOR MANAGEMENT COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES OF OCTOBER 18, 2022

A Meeting of the Harbor Management Commission (HMC) of the Town of Fairfield was held on Tuesday, October 18, 2022 at 4:30 p.m. in the First Floor Conference Room of Town Hall, 611 Old Post Road, Fairfield, CT, and via teleconference.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Kim Taylor, Chairwoman, Bill Perugini; Eric Sundman; Jeff Warren, Sam Cargill, Doug Metchick. **ALSO PRESENT:** Geoffrey Steadman, HMC Consultant; Jeff Engborg, Pequot Yacht Club (PYC) Manager, and Bryan LeClerc, Harbor Master. **Absent:** Jacob Herschler and Don Hyman

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m. by Chairwoman Taylor.

SALUTE TO THE FLAG

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: SEPTEMBER 20, 2022. Tabled to the November meeting.

CHAIRWOMAN'S REPORT: Chairwoman Taylor reported the following communications:

1. September 26, 2022 email from Mr. Engborg, Manager of PYC, the HMC mooring contractor, estimating that the replacement cost of all the Town-owned mooring tackle in the harbor at \$153,266.00.
2. September 29, 2022 meeting with Betty Gabriel, John Cottell Assistant Director of Public Works, Teri Brown, Grants Coordinator, Bill Hurley, Town Engineering Manager, and Mr. Steadman, to discuss the process for applying for a SHIPP grant from the CT Port Authority (CPA).
3. September 29, 2022 emailed the signature page of RACE proposal dated October 12, 2021 to Devin Santa to authorize RACE to proceed with the work necessary to obtain DEEP approval to repair the wall and piers at the Lower Wharf.

HARBOR MASTER REPORT: Bryan LeClerc: Harbor Master LeClerc reported that the PYC recently hosted the J109 National Regatta; this was a very successful event. Assistance was provided to an Ideal 18 vessel which became tangled with another moored vessel. Some vessels' mooring lines had to be tightened and secured prior to the recent storm. Harbor Master LeClerc recently took soundings during low tide checking the channel depths at various locations. Installation of directional signs may be considered in the future. The Harbor Master also attended the North American In-Water Sailboat Show; a "flare day" (concerning proper disposal of flares) with the Coast Guard is being considered for next May or June.

NEW APPLICATIONS: No new applications.

OLD BUSINESS:

LOWER WHARF PROJECT: Mr. Steadman: Mr. Steadman reported that he and Chairwoman Taylor recently meet with Engineering Manager Hurley, Grant Coordinator Teri Brown, Assistant Public Works Director John Cottell, Jr., and Betty Gabriel relative to the status of harbor management grant funds, re-purposing efforts, and future HMC goals and efforts for the Lower Wharf Project. The CPA SHIPP grant program now reimburses towns for completed project expenses; funds are no long awarded before work begins. The grants also require towns to provide a 20% cost share of the total grant for construction projects. HMC will likely request that the Town participate in the cost share for the Lower Wharf project, the total cost of which is estimated to be approximately \$800,000 at this time for repair of the wall and replacement of the piers. It was noted that although the HMC does have funds available in its mooring fees account for the 20% cost share, the primary users of the Lower Wharf are not the boaters who pay the mooring fees. Funds from that account are required to be used for the overall management and improvement of Southport Harbor for the public, including mooring tackle maintenance and replacement costs. There may also be as yet unidentified costs associated with the ACOE dredging project that may require funds to be provided by the HMC. Mr. Steadman indicated that it is his understanding that other Town projects are requiring additional funds due to recent cost increases. Commissioner Warren noted that based on his observations the Lower Wharf is not utilized by boat owners; the area is utilized by the public for non-boating purposes. Chairwoman Taylor agreed, noting that the primary uses appear to be that of open space - dog walkers, parade, fishing, etc. The HMC discussed this matter at length, and it was the consensus of the HMC that implementation of the ACOE dredging project should be the HMC's priority at this time.

SAND MANAGEMENT PROJECT: Mr. Steadman: Mr. Steadman reported that he anticipates that a teleconference meeting with the ACOE will be held within the next few weeks to discuss the federal dredging project. Chairwoman Taylor and the Harbor Master will also attend. This may ultimately be a two-part project as the ACOE hydraulic dredging equipment may not be suitable to conduct the dredging in the outer channel due to the presence of fine-grained sediment away from the sand spit. It may be necessary for the ACOE to put one portion of the project out to bid. Mr. Engborg noted that the ACOE latest survey shows that the area near the outer beacon is filling in. The HMC discussed the urgency of restoring the channel near the sand spit and agreed to support proceeding with this part of the project as now planned at this time and to pursue the outer channel dredging as a separate project.

MOORING COMMITTEE: Mr. Perugini: Commissioner Perugini reported that he recently chaired the Mooring Committee in Commissioner Herschler's absence. The Committee discussed the replacement costs for the mooring tackle. It was noted that this is a "helix year" for mooring inspection meaning that the helix anchors are to be checked this coming winter.

DEPUTY HARBOR MASTER SEARCH: Mr. Perugini: Commissioner Perugini reported that once the formal document announcing the Deputy Harbor Master search is finalized, Betty Gabriel will place it on the Town's website.

SURVEY OF LOWER WHARF REPAIR PROJECTS: Mr. Cargill & Mr. Sundman: Commissioner Sundman advised the HMC that a site visit was conducted and a list of projects and issues is being compiled. This will be reviewed with the Town's risk manager. Goals for the area will be reviewed and a risk assessment will be done. The HMC discussed the electrical service boxes that are present at this location; it was noted that this service used for the PA system at the Blessing of the Fleet. The Shellfish Commission may have needed the electrical boxes for its previous shellfish cultivation ("up-weller") project at this site. The current site conditions were discussed, including use of the Town-acquired beach area adjacent to and just north of the Lower Wharf by residents and dog walkers, as well as the unfulfilled requirement for the prior owner of that beach area to construct stairs from the Lower Wharf to the beach area.

NEW BUSINESS:

- 1. HMC 2023-2024 BUDGET REQUEST:** Chairwoman Taylor reported that the HMC will be required to submit a 2023-2024 budget request in a few months. The HMC discussed whether it should increase its budget requests to cover any fees associated with the Deputy Harbor Master position. It was the consensus that based upon the scope of functions that the Deputy would be required to perform, which would be limited to filling in for the Harbor Master if he is ever unavailable/incapacitated, that the position would be considered a voluntary and not a salaried position. The question was presented whether a Harbor Master from another Town might fill in if necessary; this will be reviewed.
- 2.** Mr. Steadman reported that a decision was issued by the Appellate Court in the case Susan Cohen vs. DEEP; the Appellate Court upheld the Superior Court decision which is seen as diminishing harbor management commission authorities. The Plan Update Committee will review this matter at its next meeting to consider how this could impact future HMC recommendations.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business to come before the Commission, Bill Perugini *moved*, and Sam Cargill *seconded* to adjourn at 6:10 p.m. *Motion passed unanimously.*

The audio recording can be found here: [Harbor Management Commission 10/18/22 - YouTube](#)

Respectfully submitted,
Betty Gabriel