

TOWN OF FAIRFIELD
HARBOR MANAGEMENT COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES OF MARCH 21, 2023

MEMBERS PRESENT: Kim Taylor, Chair; Jac Herschler, Vice Chair; Bill Perugini, Secretary; Don Hyman, Sam Cargill, Eric Sundman, Dave Henry, **ALSO PRESENT:** Consultant Geoff Steadman, Jeff Engborg, Manager Pequot Yacht Club; Tim Bishop, Director Fairfield Conservation Department; Gail Robinson and Rick Landau of the Ash Creek Conservation Association. **ABSENT:** Jeff Warren and Doug Metchick.

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

SALUTE TO THE FLAG

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Jac Herschler *moved* and Bill Perugini *seconded* a motion to accept the draft of the February minutes as presented. *The motion passed unanimously.*

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

1. February 23, 2023 copied on a letter from Charles Murphy, Commodore PYC, to former Harbor Master Pat Carroll congratulating him on his upcoming 100th birthday and announcing that the Yacht Club was naming their new launch the Patrick L. Carroll in his honor;
2. February 24, 2023 email from Fairfield Flood Erosion Control Board asking that the HMC consider using sand from the ACOE dredging for beach nourishment;
3. February 26, 2023 email from John Pinto, President of Connecticut Harbor Management Association, transmitting a briefing package of supporting materials related to CT HB 5614 for amending the CT Harbor Management Act;
4. Email exchange on March 20, 2023 with John Pinto, President of CT Harbor Management Association, agreeing that the Fairfield Harbor Management Commission will support HB 5614.

HARBOR MASTER'S REPORT: Mr. LeClerc: All but 3 mooring permit renewals are complete. There may be up to 4 new mooring spots available. About 30 people came to Saturday's Coffee With the Harbor Master event at Ye Yacht Yard. Other events will be scheduled, as will a "flare day" with the Coast Guard concerning safe use of flares by mariners. The organizational meeting for the Blessing of the Fleet event will be later in the month. A no swimming sign was put up by DPW at the Lower Wharf but subsequently taken down. The Harbor Master will investigate.

A proposal was received by the Town for installation of a security camera at YYY. The cost is about \$16,000.00 which does not include a camera for public access, including views of wind and weather conditions. That would require an additional allocation. Since the proposal was received shortly before the meeting, the HMC will discuss this matter at the April meeting.

The HMC received a copy of the Town's COP application to DEEP for the Perry Green bulkhead replacement project less than 24 hours before the meeting. Since DEEP will not be acting on it before the April meeting, the HMC will discuss the application at its April meeting.

LOWER WHARF: Mr. Steadman: The HMC will write to DEEP to clarify that the COP application for the planned Lower Wharf improvements seeks permission to repair/replace both the southern and northern piers as well as the well. The HMC will seek project funding and then a decision to restore the northern pier will be based on the availability of funds and community input. Don Hyman agreed to draft a statement for public distribution explaining the improvement plans and the status of work to repair and reopen the damaged pier for fishing.

SAND MANAGEMENT: Mr. Steadman: It's been determined by the ACOE that the offshore site planned for placement of the sand dredged by the ACOE may not be suitable for enhancement of shellfish beds because the deposited sand on which shellfish were to be planted may be moved off site by the nearshore currents. The ACOE and Bureau of Aquaculture are evaluating options now; the ACOE and Bureau of Aquaculture believe that nearshore disposal of the dredged material using the ACOE hydraulic dredge is environmentally beneficial and sound and the most effective and efficient method of dredging for this project.

MOORING COMMITTEE: Mr. Herschler: The Mooring Committee met on March 14. The Committee discussed the items that the Harbor Master has reported and discussed the idea of transferring responsibility for management of certain Perry Green mooring locations from the Parks and Recreation Department to the HMC. The committee was updated by Mr. Perugini regarding the status of Deputy Harbor Master candidate interviews.

LOWER WHARF RISK ASSESSMENT: Mr. Cargill and Mr. Sundman: The Town has received the report and is planning a meeting to discuss it and its implications.

DEPUTY HARBOR MASTER SEARCH: Mr. Perugini: All those sending resumes have been notified that interviews will be held later this month and three candidates will be identified by the end of April. The HMC then will provide a list of three names for consideration by the Governor for appointment as Deputy Harbor Master. Three candidates have withdrawn their applications.

COHEN V. DEEP UPDATE: Mr. Steadman: Mr. Steadman reported on the status of HB 5614 to amend the CT Harbor Management Act to clarify and uphold municipal harbor management authorities. The CT Harbor Management Association has prepared and distributed a statement of support for HB 5614 for endorsement by all CT harbor management commissions and submittal to the Environment Committee.

REQUEST TO EXPAND HMC JURISDICTION TO INCLUDE ASH CREEK: There was much discussion about recent requests by a member of the RTM and others that consideration be given to expanding the HMC's area of jurisdiction to include Ash Creek, an action that would require amendment of the Town's existing harbor management ordinance. The HMC reviewed the reasons why the HMC's jurisdiction was established to focus on Southport Harbor and to include the area from Sasco Creek to Kenzie's Point. Also discussed was the initial purpose of the HMC and Harbor Management Plan to address issues concerning equal access to the harbor's federal navigation project. Gail Robinson, President of the Ash Creek Conservation Association described the unique and endangered environment of the Ash Creek

estuary and concerns by her organization and others that the natural environment is being degraded by a number of activities. Since Ash Creek borders Bridgeport and Fairfield, it seemed to many that a joint commission/committee with management responsibilities specific to Ash Creek and with representatives of both towns might be appropriate to pursue. The CT Harbor Management Act enables municipalities that share jurisdiction over a waterway to form a joint harbor management commission for that waterway. Everyone seemed to agree that such an approach should be considered for managing and protecting Ash Creek. There also was discussion about the desirability of expanding the HMC's jurisdiction to include Pine Creek.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Mr. Bishop, the Conservation Director for the Town of Fairfield, agreed that a joint Fairfield/Bridgeport commission to manage Ash Creek and its unique issues should be considered as an alternative to expanding the HMC's jurisdiction.

ADJOURNMENT: Jac Herschler *moved* and Bill Perugini *seconded* the motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:15 p.m. *Motion passed unanimously.*