

TOWN OF FAIRFIELD  
HARBOR MANAGEMENT COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES OF DECEMBER 19, 2023

A Meeting of the Harbor Management Commission (HMC) of the Town of Fairfield was held on Tuesday, December 19, 2023 at 4:30 p.m. in the First Floor Conference Room of Sullivan Independence Hall, 725 Old Post Road, Fairfield, CT, and via teleconference.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Kim Taylor, Chairwoman; Doug Metchick; Bill Perugini; Don Hyman; George Harris; Jeff Warren; Dave Henry; Christopher Smith; Michael Baisley, and Belinda J. Shepard. **ALSO PRESENT:** Geoff Steadman, HMC Consultant; Bryan LeClerc, Harbor Master; John Dean, Deputy Harbor Master, former Commissioner Jac Herschler; and Jeff Engborg, Pequot Yacht Club (PYC) Manager.

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

**SALUTE TO THE FLAG**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** November 21, 2023 Meeting Minutes: Doug Metchick *moved* and George Harris *seconded* to approve the draft November 21, 2023 meeting minutes as presented. *Motion passed unanimously.*

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

1. November 29, 2023 forward to Jennifer Carpenter and First Selectman Bill Gerber of the HMC's November 16, 2023 letter to the CT Siting Council and others concerning the United Illuminating (UI) proposal.
2. December 4, 2023 meeting with Coral Siligato, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) project manager, Chairwoman Taylor, Jeff Warren, Geoff Steadman, Harbor Master Bryan LeClerc, and Town Engineering Manager Bill Hurley to discuss ACOE Southport Harbor dredging project. *Chairwoman Taylor noted that although project planning is moving forward, work will not commence prior to the next Winter dredging season.*
3. December 8, 2023 e-mail to Captain Hector Irizzary Fairfield Police Department, in response to his request for a memorial bench at the Lower Wharf in honor of Meghan Raveis, explaining that the HMC does not have a procedure for providing memorial benches at the Lower Wharf.
4. December 12, 2023 email letter to James Wendt, Fairfield Planning Director; TPZ Commission; Shellfish Commission; Tim Bishop, Conservation Director; Bryan LeClerc, Fairfield Harbor Master; Kristen O'Neill, CT DEEP; Philip Pires, Town Attorney; and Jonathan Dilly, President of Mill River Wetland Committee with HMC comments concerning the POCD Update, including a recommendation that the Update should reference and support the Harbor Management Plan.
5. Chairwoman Taylor reported that the HMC letter to the Siting Council concerning the UI proposal was forwarded to Fairfield's state legislators.

**HARBOR MASTER REPORT:** Harbor Master Bryan LeClerc reported that all boats are out of the water; a channel depth sounding was conducted revealing no significant changes to previous soundings documenting the reduced channel depths. Mooring permit renewals are set to go out in January. Mooring inspections have been conducted; the dinghy docks at Ye Yacht Yard will be replaced for additional security. PYC staff conducts the inspections; coordinates replacements/maintenance as necessary; and maintains detailed records. The Online Mooring software now has an additional feature allowing the Harbor Master to quickly identify vessel owners utilizing the vessel registration number.

Chairwoman Taylor noted that Commissioner Jac Herschler was largely responsible for establishing the current mooring management program utilizing the Online Mooring software, a most labor-intensive task requiring much thought and effort over several years. Chairwoman Taylor thanked Commissioner Herschler for his significant efforts during his term on the Commission. Commissioners applauded Commissioner Herschler for his good work.

**NEW APPLICATIONS:** No new applications

Newly appointed Commissioners were recognized; three new HMC members and the Staff each introduced themselves.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

- 1. Nominating Committee, Doug Metchick and Don Hyman:** Doug Metchick welcomed the newly appointed Commissioners, noting that Commissioner Dave Henry will be sworn in by the Town Clerk's Office prior to the January meeting. Commissioner Smith inquired whether the election of Officers could be tabled or an interim group elected until such time as all the Commissioners could obtain additional information. Chairwoman Taylor noted that the election must be conducted by January 31<sup>st</sup>. In response to questions concerning the role of and procedures followed by the Nominating Committee, Mr. Steadman reported on his experience with other towns; noted that unlike some other towns the HMC does not have by-laws to specify exactly how its committees operate, and suggested that the HMC may wish to consider establishing the same. Commissioner Smith noted the importance that officers have experience and knowledge. Commissioner Perugini suggested that with the full HMC present perhaps the nomination and election of officers should be more inclusive; that the subject be opened for further discussion; and further expressed his interest in moving to the Vice Chair position. Chairwoman Taylor welcomed nominations from the floor: George Harris *moved* and Chris Smith *seconded* to nominate Don Hyman as Chair; hearing no further nominations from the floor, *Motion passed unanimously*. Chairwoman Taylor then accepted nominations from the floor for Vice Chair: Doug Metchick *moved* and Don Hyman *seconded* to nominate George Harris as Vice Chair. Bill Perugini moved and Jeff Warren *seconded* to nominate Bill Perugini as Vice Chair. Hearing no further nominations from the floor, Chairwoman Taylor called for a vote on the motion to nominate George Harris as Vice Chair: **In favor:** Doug Metchick; Don Hyman; George Harris; and Christopher Smith. *Motion passed 4-2*. Chairwoman Taylor called for a vote on the motion to nominate Bill Perugini as Vice Chair: **In Favor:** Bill Perugini, Jeff Warren. *Motion fails 2-4*. Chairwoman Taylor then accepted nominations from the floor for Secretary: Doug Metchick *moved* and Don Hyman *seconded* to nominate Bill Perugini as Secretary. *Motion passed unanimously*.

The 2024 Officers of the Fairfield Harbor Management Commission: Don Hyman, Chair; George Harris, Vice Chair; and Bill Perugini, Secretary.

2. **Lower Wharf Repairs, Mr. Steadman:** Mr. Steadman noted that communications with RACE are on-going regarding the appropriate DEEP approval needed to restore the northern pier. It had been the consensus that this approval be obtained; RACE is communicating with DEEP to determine the type of approval required (either a full permit or COP), and will provide the HMC with a cost estimate for preparing the application once that information is confirmed. The HMC discussed the timing of the applications and work.
3. **Lower Wharf SHIPP Grant Refund: Mr. Steadman:** Mr. Steadman reported he is continuing to consult with Acting Executive Director Hammond of the CT Port Authority on this matter. Mr. Steadman also provided a brief description of this previous SHIPP Grant awarded for dredging at the Town Boat Yard and the reasons beyond the control of the HMC why this project was not conducted.
4. **Lower Wharf Risk Assessment and Rules, Mr. Hyman:** A brief description of the initiative was provided, including the signage required for placement on the most recently acquired parcel adjoining the Lower Wharf as specified in the deed of acquisition for this parcel. Public safety is the principal consideration for pursuit of this matter. The HMC will continue to consult with the Town Risk Manager and Town Attorney. The Historic District Commission and Sasquanaug Association also will be contacted to confirm compliance with historic district requirements and the deed. It was understood that the deed for the Lower Wharf specifies that the property is to be known as the Lower Wharf.
5. **Sand Management, Mr. Steadman:** Mr. Steadman provided the HMC with a brief review of the ongoing work with the ACOE to advance the dredging project; the HMC discussed the project, including some of its history.
6. **Mooring Committee, Mr. Warren:** Commissioner Warren reported that the Mooring Committee has not met since the last meeting, and that the Committee anticipates resuming meetings in January 2024. Commissioner Warren acknowledged the significant efforts of Commissioner Jac Herschler, and thanked him for all of his hard work on behalf of the HMC.
7. **HMC Response to the Draft Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) Update:** The Town Planning and Zoning Commission did not discuss the POCD Update at their recent meeting due to a lengthy agenda. This will be placed on a future TP&Z Commission agenda for discussion.
8. **UI Plans to relocate and rebuild an electric transmission line through Fairfield: Mr. Steadman:** Mr. Steadman reported no new developments at this time and said Fairfield's state legislators have expressed appreciation in receiving a copy of the HMC's letter to the Siting Council. The HMC will review the necessary permit applications to be submitted by UI to DEEP and any other agencies as those applications affect Sasco Brook, the Mill River, the former Exide property, and the Southport Historic District. DEEP also will review the UI proposal for consistency with the CT Coastal Management Act.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**2024 Meeting Schedule:** George Harris *moved* and Chris Smith seconded to approve the proposed 2024 meeting dates of the HMC. *Motion passed unanimously.*

The HMC thanked Kim Taylor and Jac Herschler for their significant efforts. Commissioner Hyman thanked Commissioners Taylor and Herschler and noted that he will work to the best of his ability to fulfill his role as Chair over the next year and encouraged the Commissioners to review the Harbor Management Plan and other harbor-related materials now posted on the HMC's website.

Mr. Steadman noted that as some of the Commissioners were intending to meet at the Horseshoe Tavern for a social event, he was reminded of former HMC Chair Harris Russell's contributions, and mentioned the Russell family's blacksmith business at this location many years ago. Mr. Steadman read some of Mr. Russell's thoughtful remarks upon approval of the Harbor Management Plan by the State of CT in 1995.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** Former HMC member and Harbor Master Patrick Carroll expressed his thanks to Chairwoman Taylor for a job well done and noted that for 90 of his 100 years he has been involved with matters concerning Southport Harbor.

**ADJOURNMENT:** There being no further business to come before the Commission, Chris Smith *moved* and Doug Metchick *seconded* to adjourn at 6:56 p.m. *Motion passed unanimously.*

The audio recording can be found here: [12/19/23 Harbor Management Commission \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=12/19/23_Harbor_Management_Commission)

Respectfully submitted,  
Betty Gabriel