

TOWN OF FAIRFIELD  
HARBOR MANAGEMENT COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 20, 2024

A Meeting of the Harbor Management Commission (HMC) of the Town of Fairfield was held on Tuesday, February 20, 2024 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:** George Harris; Jeff Warren; Dave Henry; Christopher Smith; Doug Metchick; Bill Perugini and Belinda J. Shepard. **ABSENT:** Don Hyman and Michael Baisley, **ALSO PRESENT:** Geoff Steadman, HMC Consultant; Bryan LeClerc, Harbor Master; John Dean, Deputy Harbor Master, former HMC Chairwoman Kim Taylor, and former HMC member and Harbor Master Patrick Carroll (by phone).

**CALL TO ORDER:** The meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m. by Vice Chairman George Harris.

### **SALUTE TO THE FLAG**

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Meeting minutes of January 16, 2024: Christopher Smith *moved* and Dave Henry *seconded* to approve the draft meeting minutes of January 16, 2024. **In Favor:** George Harris; Jeff Warren; Dave Henry; Christopher Smith; and Doug Metchick. **Opposed:** None. **Abstention:** Bill Perugini *Motion passed unanimously.*

### **VICE CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:**

1. Jan 28. Chair Don Hyman sent a letter developed by Mr. Steadman to Sen. Hwang, First Selectman Bill Gerber and three State Reps. detailing the needed repairs at the Lower Wharf and including photos of the storm-caused damage. The letter thanked them for their interest and encouraged them to help find funding for the needed repairs.
2. Jan 21, On the advice of Eric Sunderman, Chair Don Hyman reached out to The Southport Conservancy letting them know about the needed signage at Lower Wharf. I have offered to attend their Feb 13<sup>th</sup> meeting to answer any questions.
3. Jan.19, We received notice that the ACOE has issued the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the planned dredging project ([https://www.nae.usace.army.mil/Portals/74/Southport\\_Public\\_Notice\\_JAN2024.pdf](https://www.nae.usace.army.mil/Portals/74/Southport_Public_Notice_JAN2024.pdf)). Comments are to be provided to ACOE project manager Coral Siligato. Mr. Steadman intends to review the project and assist with drafting the HMC response. Mr. Steadman can expand on this in Old Business.
4. Jan. 24, I received a response from the Historic District Commission (HDC) Chair that he had received the proposed sign design and would share it with the HDC and let us know of any feedback.
5. Chair Don Hyman composed and sent a letter by registered mail to the addresses of houses in the Lower Wharf area explaining why the sign is needed and where it will be placed. Feedback has been received from the concerned parties. *Commissioner Harris noted that he anticipates that a committee meeting will be scheduled once Don Hyman returns from vacation. Although some neighbors have expressed concern for the proposed sign, it was noted that the Sasquanaug Association was not opposed. Placement of the sign in the Town right-of-way is also an option.*
6. Per the Board of Finance, we are on the agenda for our budget to be voted on in March by the Board of Selectmen (BOS), but we do not need to appear.

**HARBOR MASTER REPORT:** Harbor Master Bryan LeClerc reported that information is needed from some of the mooring permit renewals, and one vessel owner has elected not to renew their mooring permit. Pequot Yacht Club (PYC) may also have an available mooring location. Mr. LeClerc further reported that he has been contacted by former Commissioner Mark Foster's wife who was requesting a transfer of the mooring permit to her name, due to the recent passing of her husband Mark. Mr. LeClerc noted that in accordance with the rules and regulations, in the event of a hardship, such a request can be approved by the HMC, and encouraged such approval by the HMC. William Perugini *moved* and Doug Metchick *seconded* to add the matter of transferring ownership of Mark Foster's mooring permit to Mrs. Foster, the surviving spouse to this evening's agenda. *Motion passed unanimously.* Following discussion, Christopher Smith *moved* and Bill Perugini *seconded* to approve the transfer Mark Foster's mooring permit to Mrs. Foster, surviving spouse, pursuant to paragraph 13 of the Town of Fairfield HMC Mooring Rules. **In Favor:** George Harris; Bill Perugini. Jeff Warren; Christopher Smith; and Doug Metchick. **Opposed:** None. **Abstention:** Dave Henry. Harbor Master Bryan LeClerc further reported that the mooring permit renewals are moving forward with the software; Engineering Manager Bill Hurley has been contacted regarding the Perry Green project which is anticipated to proceed in April – Mr. LeClerc noted his concern regarding the lack of available locations for placement of vessels while the project is underway. Mr. LeClerc will keep the HMC apprised on this matter. The Engineering Department will hold a pre-construction meeting involving the affected parties.

**NEW APPLICATIONS:** No new applications.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

- 1. Lower Wharf Repairs, Mr. Steadman:** Mr. Steadman reported that he has met with the Executive Director of the CT Port Authority (CPA) to discuss the Port Authority's SHIPP grant program; it now is anticipated that the CPA will announce another round of SHIPP Grants in March. The HMC may seek grant funds for the Lower Wharf project. Mr. Steadman further reported that TP&Z Commission coastal site plan approval may be required for this project.
- 2. Lower Wharf SHIPP Grant Refund: Mr. Steadman:** Discussions are on-going regarding this matter. Mr. Steadman reported he has discussed this matter with the CPA Executive Director who is aware of the Town's ongoing work in this regard.
- 3. Sand Management, Mr. Steadman:** Former HMC Chairwoman Kim Taylor reported that she had recently met with the First Selectman to discuss the ACOE dredging project; Geoff Steadman, Scott Leaman, William Hurley, and Bryan LeClerc were also present at the meeting. Mr. Steadman reported the task before the HMC at this time is to respond to the ACOE Environmental Assessment that has been issued. The next step is that the ACOE will now file an application with the DEEP for the state approvals needed to conduct the dredging project. The dredging of approximately 20,000 cy of sand now is anticipated to commence in December 2024 or January 2025 and will involve restoration of the full 100-ft. width and 9-ft. depth of the federal entrance channel near the harbor jetty. Also discussed was the required access for some construction equipment along the shore to the dredging site. The dredged material will be placed in a nearshore open water site identified by the CT Bureau of Aquaculture and studied by the ACOE for shellfish habitat enhancement; although the Fairfield Shellfish Commission had previously reviewed and expressed support for this, the Shellfish Commission is scheduled to review this again at their next meeting.

Following considerable discussion, Chris Smith *moved* and Bill Perugini *seconded* to have Mr. Steadman prepare a letter on behalf of the HMC in support of the findings of the ACOE Environmental Assessment and to prepare a pre-submission letter on behalf of the HMC to the DEEP advising that the HMC is in support of the application of the ACOE to the DEEP for state approval. *Motion passed unanimously*. It was noted that the Country Club of Fairfield, Pequot Yacht Club, and Harbor Master may also wish to submit letters in support of the findings of the ACOE Environmental Assessment and in support of the application to DEEP.

**4. Mooring Committee, Mr. Warren:** Nothing new to report at this time.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

- 1. Review And Comment on ACOE Environmental Assessment:** Discussed above under Sand Management
- 2. Southport Harbor Past, Present and Future:** Updated presentation to be placed upon the March agenda for further discussion.
- 3. How can we ensure inclusion of HMC comments and plans within the Plan of Conservation and Development Emerging from TPZ Commission:** This matter will be placed on a future agenda.
- 4. How can we support passage of new state legislation that clarifies the role of all HMCs in Connecticut in the wake of the Cohen & DEEP court decision:** This matter will be placed on a future agenda.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** Former HMC commissioner and Southport Harbor Master Patrick Carroll was present by phone and thanked the HMC for its efforts.

**ADJOURNMENT:** There being no further business to come before the Commission, Bill Perugini *moved* and Dave Henry *seconded* to adjourn at 5:59 p.m. *Motion passed unanimously*.

The audio recording can be found here: [02/20/24 Harbor Management Commission \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=02/20/24_Harbor_Management_Commission)

Respectfully submitted,  
Betty Gabriel