

TOWN OF FAIRFIELD
HARBOR MANAGEMENT COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES OF MARCH 19, 2024

A Meeting of the Harbor Management Commission (HMC) of the Town of Fairfield was held on Tuesday, March 19, 2024 at 4:30 p.m. in the DPW Conference Room, Second Floor of Sullivan Independence Hall, 725 Old Post Road, Fairfield, CT, and via teleconference.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Don Hyman; George Harris; Jeff Warren; Dave Henry; Christopher Smith; Doug Metchick; Bill Perugini; Michael Baisley; and Belinda J. Shepard. **ALSO PRESENT:** Geoff Steadman, HMC Consultant; Bryan LeClerc, Harbor Master; John Dean, Deputy Harbor Master; Jeffrey Engborg, Manager, Pequot Yacht Club (PYC); former HMC Chairwoman Kim Taylor; Devin Santa of RACE Coastal Engineering; and former HMC member James Bradley.

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m. by Chairman Don Hyman.

SALUTE TO THE FLAG

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Meeting minutes of February 20, 2024: Christopher Smith *moved* and George Harris *seconded* to approve the draft meeting minutes of February 20, 2024. *Motion passed unanimously.*

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

1. March 1, 2024 received email invitation from Connecticut Port Authority (CPA) Executive Director Ulysses Hammond via First Selectman William Gerber's office inviting the HMC to apply for funds available through the CPA's Small Harbor Improvement Projects Program (SHIPP). Submission deadline is July 1, 2024 with funding recipient announcements planned for August 2024. HMC to review and vote on action in New Business section of March 19 meeting
2. March 1, 2024 received authorization notice from Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) for removal and replacement of damaged structures and renovation work at Lower Wharf.
3. March 4, 2024 received copy of letter from PYC Commodore David Rosow, Jr. to Coral Siligato, ACOE dredging Project Manager, expressing support for ACOE plan for maintenance dredging of Southport Harbor and concurrence with findings of ACOE Environmental Assessment (EA) of planned dredging project.
4. March 2, 2024 received invitation from Mary Hogue inviting HMC to participate in Fairfield's Earth Day event Saturday, April 20, 10- 1 at YMCA. Participation or non-participation to be determined after HMC discussion and vote at March 19 meeting.
5. February 29, 2024 received CT FOIA and Robert's Rules training meeting summary from Jennifer Carpenter, Deputy Chief of Staff in First Selectman's Office. All HMC commissioners are expected to comply with these rules which are being supplied to each commissioner under separate cover. In addition, all HMC subcommittee chairs are expected to post meeting dates for remaining 2024 planned meetings.
6. March 4, 2024 received email communication from State Rep. Jennifer Leeper advising she was sponsoring HB 5359, An Act Concerning the Composition and Expertise of the Connecticut Siting Council. The legislation would address issues involving the Siting Council and its decision-making process apparent during Siting Council review of the 2023 UI application to install a large number of monopoles for new power lines.

7. The HMC Lower Wharf Subcommittee met on March 8, 2024 and minutes of the meeting have been posted. An application for the Lower Wharf risk management warnings sign is being prepared for the Historic District Commission's review and neighborhood outreach and dialogue will continue.

HARBOR MASTER REPORT: Harbor Master Bryan LeClerc reported that it has been a busy month. Town mooring tackle has been pulled, inspected, and repaired as necessary. Mooring permit stickers are ready to distribute. There were three mooring vacancies this year; three vessels have been added; some vessels have been relocated to accommodate vessel size. The Southport Street Parade and Blessing of the Fleet is scheduled for June 8th this year; the same format as in past years will be followed. A meeting was convened by the Engineering Department on March 15th with DPW and Engineering Dept. representatives, the contractor, Harbor Master, Town Marina Manager, PYC Manager, and others to discuss the Perry Green bulkhead replacement project. The project is now completely funded and the contractor can order materials. The project is expected to start on May 1 and have a five-month duration; the parking area along Harbor Road will be used as a staging area and not be available for public parking during the project; the entire site will be a construction zone. A follow-up meeting will be held to discuss relocation of moored vessels normally attached to the bulkhead. The Harbor Master and Marina Manager will handle the necessary public notifications and will work with PYC to relocate the affected vessels.

NEW APPLICATIONS: No new applications.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. **Lower Wharf Repairs, Mr. Steadman:** Mr. Steadman reported that the Governor has introduced a bill that would eliminate the independent CPA by creating a new maritime agency that would be a subsidiary of the CT Airport Authority. The CPA Executive Director has provided assurances that this proposal will not affect the recently announced round of SHIPP grants. Mr. Steadman reported that he has discussed with Town Plan and Zoning Dept. staff the need for TP&Z approval of the proposed Lower Wharf project through the Coastal Site Plan Review (CSPR) process. He will provide information to the Dept. to help determine the need for a CSPR. Devin Santa noted there are two components to this project – repairs to the sea wall within the jurisdiction of the TP&Z Commission and the in-water work to restore the piers.
2. **Lower Wharf and A Memorial Tribute to Pat Carroll:** Mr. Steadman reported that the Carroll family has inquired about the possibility of establishing a lasting memorial tribute to Pat at the Town Boat Yard (aka Ye Yacht Yard). Mr. Steadman reported he has asked the First Selectman's Office about the process to be followed for establishing such a tribute/dedication. Doug Metchick suggested that naming the marina the "Patrick Carroll Marina" may be more appropriate than renaming the entire facility which is known as "Ye Yacht Yard," a name with much historical significance. Mr. Steadman noted that "Ye Yacht Yard" may not be the official Town facility name as that name refers to the Burr family's operation at this location, and that the official name for the facility may be the Town Boat Yard. He will clarify this and report back to the HMC on these matters, including the procedure for establishing a memorial for Pat Carroll.
3. **Lower Wharf SHIPP Grant Refund: Mr. Steadman:** Mr. Steadman reported that the calculations for grant fund reimbursement are not yet complete and that he has informed the CPA Executive Director about the status of this work. This will be necessary prior to submittal of a new SHIPP grant application.

4. Sand Management, Mr. Steadman: Mr. Steadman reported that he, along with former HMC Chairwoman Kim Taylor, James Bradley, Jeff Engborg, Town Engineering Manager William Hurley, and a representative of the Country Club of Fairfield met with two ACOE representatives, including Project Manager Siligato, earlier today to discuss how the ACOE dredging project will be conducted. An alternative, less costly approach to the project was discussed that would involve only the use of on-land excavating equipment and not include use of the ACOE hopper dredge. Current plans call for the use of excavating equipment to place sand in the hopper dredge for subsequent placement offshore. Use of only excavating equipment would require additional planning to determine where the excavated sand would be used for beach nourishment and other beneficial purposes onshore and it is not clear if this approach would be feasible. The ACOE will return in the summer months to conduct another channel condition survey and mark the navigation channel boundary on the top of the encroaching sand shoal. As previously reported, the dredging of approximately 20,000 cy of sand is planned to restore the channel near the harbor jetty. The cost to operate the hopper dredge is approximately \$54,000/day; should the hopper dredge be used, the ACOE would dredge as much as possible until the allocated funds are exhausted. Following the meeting, the ACOE conducted a site visit to the sand shoal to be dredged and the nearby shoreline and beach areas.

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

NEW BUSINESS:

- 1. Review and Comment on ACOE Environmental Assessment and HMC Pre-submission consultation form:** Mr. Steadman reported that the EA would be modified if the scope of the project changes per discussions with the ACOE. Mr. Steadman reported that he is optimistic that the project will move forward and is encouraged that the ACOE now is giving careful consideration to the most efficient and effective method to proceed. Access issues are continuing to be reviewed by the ACOE real estate division. The HMC pre-submission consultation form will be completed and provided to the ACOE with a letter of support. The Shellfish Commission is also reviewing the proposed project and is expected to submit its own pre-submission form following that commission's April meeting.
- 2. Earth Day and HMC April 20, 2024:** Don Hyman noted that he had been contacted by Mary Hogue to inquire whether the HMC would be interested participating in the Earth Day Event, as it may be an opportunity to educate the public on the role of the HMC. Mr. Steadman noted that a relevant topic for Earth Day is the importance of maintaining clean water in Southport Harbor, the Mill River watershed, and Long Island Sound and offered to volunteer his time at the event on behalf of the HMC. HMC Commissioners are unable to attend due to scheduling conflicts. Commissioner Metchick noted that public areas in Southport Harbor such as Perry's Green and the Lower Wharf could be highlighted. Commissioner Smith suggested that it may be educational to have display boards available at the event. It was agreed that the HMC would not be able to have an official presence at the event.

The HMC returned to Lower Wharf Repairs item under Old Business for the purpose of discussion on the SHIPP Grant Fund application:

OLD BUSINESS:

Lower Wharf Repairs, Mr. Steadman: Following discussion, George Harris *moved* and Christopher Smith *seconded* to approve that Geoffrey Steadman on behalf of the HMC proceed to prepare an application for SHIPP Grant Funds for Lower Wharf repairs. *Motion passed unanimously.*

NEW BUSINESS:

- 3. Southport Harbor Past, Present and Future:** Updated presentation to be placed upon a future agenda for further discussion. Mr. Steadman will have this available for the HMC website.
- 4. How can we ensure inclusion of HMC comments and plans within the Plan of Conservation and Development Emerging from TPZ Commission:** Mr. Steadman noted that this matter should be placed on the April agenda; it is appropriate that the Harbor Management Plan be referenced and supported in the PCOD. A 2-4 page statement will be drafted.
- 5. 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:** Mr. Steadman noted that to date this has not been a successful effort due to the lack of support by the DEEP; another year is likely to go by without any legislative changes.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Mr. Steadman spoke at length about the recent passing of former HMC Commissioner and Southport Harbor Master Patrick Carroll. Mr. Carroll, a life-long Fairfield resident, was a World War II Veteran, Police Captain, HMC commissioner, Harbor Master, and a most distinguished man with many significant achievements; he worked tirelessly on behalf of the community and the public interest, and he always conducted himself with the highest level of integrity and dedication to public service – he was a man who never approached a matter with the mindset of personal gain – he always did what was right for the community. His lifetime of public service to the Nation, State of CT, Town of Fairfield, and Southport Harbor will never be surpassed. Mr. Steadman also spoke of former HMC member and Harbor Master Louis Schueler, another man of great integrity who is currently struggling with the recent passing of his wife. Mr. Steadman noted that we can all learn much from people with the strength of character of Patrick Carroll and Louis Schueler.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business to come before the Commission, George Harris *moved* and Bill Perugini *seconded* to adjourn at 5:58 p.m. *Motion passed unanimously.*

The audio recording can be found here: [03/19/24 Harbor Management Commission \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=03/19/24_Harbor_Management_Commission)

Respectfully submitted,
Betty Gabriel