

**TOWN OF FAIRFIELD
HARBOR MANAGEMENT COMMISSION
Lower Wharf Subcommittee
WEDNESDAY MAY 8, 2024 MEETING MINUTES
Fairfield Harbor Management Commission Lower Wharf Subcommittee Meeting
May 8, 2024
1 p.m.**

**Sullivan Independence Hall
725 Old Post Road, Fairfield
1st Floor Conference Room
via Conference Call Bridge at 669 275-1384**

Attendees: Don Hyman, George Harris, Belinda Shepard, consultant Geoffrey Steadman and John Turitzin, a member of the Southport Improvement Association.

O Don Hyman reviewed past discussion since the April subcommittee meeting regarding a warning sign at Lower Wharf. He reported that in response to earlier agreed upon review with neighbors of legal standing, neighbors had voiced objections to the original risk management/public safety signage plan. That plan called for a white sign with blue posts to be erected at Lower Wharf. However, an alternate plan was developed by the subcommittee and then reviewed by key town officials. The earlier plan was withdrawn from consideration by the Historic District Commission.

O The new signage plan, developed in response to neighbor concerns, was subsequently approved (in May email conversations on file) by Town Attorney Philip Peres, Town Risk Manager Peter Richey and Parks and Recreation Director Anthony Calebrese.

O The alternative new plan now involves two signs, not one sign at Lower Wharf. Neighbors have said 1) a sign would be a structure and thus not permitted on the land per the 1999 deed language and 2) four of the restrictions in the copy for the earlier proposed Lower Wharf situated sign actually are only required for the southerly waterside lot adjacent to Lower Wharf. This distinction is specified in the 2019 deed conveying that particular section of land to the town. That deed, by comparison, requires signage about restrictions. Those site-specific restrictions per the deed include this language:

The following activities are prohibited:

- *The use of wheeled vehicles except wheelchairs and baby carriages;*
- *The use of any alcohol, firearms or watercraft of any kind including, without limitation, jet skis, sail boards, paddle boards or kayaks;*
- *Littering, sunbathing, picnicking or fires;*
- *The use of any lawn chairs, beach chairs or umbrellas.*

O The revised plan would involve placing one sign off of Harbor Road near the kayak rack at Ye Yacht Yard so people would walk by it and see it while heading to Lower Wharf. The sign would be no larger than the existing "Welcome to Ye Yacht Yard" sign and would echo its simple natural wood framed style. The second sign would be smaller and placed in the southerly waterside lot. It would contain the 2019 deed language specific prohibitions for that land.

O John Turitzin, a Southport resident, submitted an alternate design for a sign at Ye Yacht Yard that would echo a small version of the cedar shingled oar shed, which some might say is an iconic piece of Southport architecture.

The design was sketched by architect John Franzen of Southport. Turitzin said it might be possible for the Sasquanaug Association and the Southport Improvement Association to cover costs that exceed the \$1,000 budget for the sign recently approved by the RTM within the HMC 2024-2025 budget. The full cost or required time frame for creating a sign resembling the sketch provided by Franzen and Turitzin is not known at this time. No decision was reached contingent on further discussion with the full HMC and others.

O The committee agreed that language content for each of the two signs now being considered will be submitted to the town attorney and the town risk manager for review and comment before proceeding with developing a full submission for final review by the full Harbor Management Commission. After that step, a new submission will be prepared for the Fairfield Historic District Commission's review.

O Following final approval action by the Historic District Commission, Harbor Road neighbors will be informed of all next steps.

O Consultant Geoffrey Steadman advised that he is working on the application to the Connecticut Port of Authority for funding (due July 1) to support the cost of repairing the Lower Wharf bulkhead and replacing the pier. He said the Fairfield Planning and Zoning Department will require an administrative site plan review and the Engineering Department will help with the application.

O Discussion on developing a written policy on memorial bench donations in the future at Lower Wharf was tabled until another meeting when more time was available.

O The meeting adjourned at approximately 1:55 pm. The next scheduled meeting of the HMC Lower Wharf Subcommittee is Wednesday June 12 at 1 pm in the Independence Hall First Floor conference room.

###