

**Newburyport Harbor Commission**  
Harbormaster's Facility  
January 10, 2018  
Minutes

**1. Call to Order**

Chair Andrew Casson called a meeting of the Newburyport Harbor Commission to order at 6:30 p.m. In attendance were Andrew Casson, Adam Armstrong, Bob Dow, Jamie Knapp, Chris Kealey and Dan May. Jay Lesynski arrived at 7:00 p.m. Justin Dutcher was absent.

**2. Minutes**

Dan May moved to approve the minutes of the December 14, 2017, meeting as submitted. Bob Dow seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

**3. Open Discussion**

**House Float Ordinance**

The subcommittee members obtained various publications on house float ordinances. The ordinances from the towns of Barnstable, MA and Brookhaven, NY could serve as useful models for a draft ordinance. Issues addressed in these ordinances include the location of house floats, permanent sewer and electrical connections and the issuance and revocation of permits. In Barnstable the town manager enforces the ordinance with the assistance of the public works, harbormaster, building and health departments. The Brookhaven ordinance prohibits new house floats and requires that a special permit be obtained for existing ones.

Bob Dow, Andrew Casson and Jamie Knapp will continue to work on drafting a house float ordinance. The ordinance would include a definition of floating homes and would not pertain to any registered vessels. A house float has been tentatively defined as a floating structure that is immobile and out of navigation, functions primarily as a land structure and is used, designed or occupied as a dwelling unit or business office or by any private or social club. The ordinance would require that a watersheet permit be obtained for floating homes and an annual fee would be assessed. The City would be responsible for developing its own ordinance that would include a requirement for building, electrical, fire, safety and plumbing inspections. The watersheet application would be handled independently from any City permitting process and might include a consideration of the view corridor.

A houseboat is distinguishable from a house float in that the former is a vessel. The Commission members decided it would not be possible to limit the number of houseboats at a marina. However, if they were to be used for commercial purposes, the grant would prohibit the pump-out boat from servicing them.

The members agreed the City in all likelihood would not require the existing house floats be removed. The owners of existing house floats could be required to bring them into compliance with any newly adopted ordinance within a certain period of time. An ordinance could prohibit any additional floating homes from being placed on the river.

**Dredging**

No new information.

**Joppa Boat Ramp**

The ramp will be improved and its existing dimensions will not be changed.

**Group Mooring Permit**

No new information.

**4. Long-term Planning**

The priority long-term planning items continue to be the house float ordinance and dredging.

**5. Harbormaster's Report**

Paul Hogg reported:

- security cameras showing the river, Plum Island parking lot, boardwalk and Cashman Park are now operating. The system, which records information, was obtained through a \$2 million NSHA grant.
- during the January 4 storm the water was close to cresting the boardwalk. The boats in the embayment were secure.
- the waterways permits will be sent out on March 15. He is encouraging the use of the on-line process.
- he is beginning to develop the FY19 budget. The capital plan must be submitted to City Council by March 26 and the budget by May 14.
- he will provide the American Yacht Club with an extra “no wake” buoy and offered added enforcement for excessive wakes created in the area.
- a \$56,250 grant has been received that will cover 75% of the cost of a new pump out-boat.
- he is beginning to prepare the assistants for the upcoming season.

**6. General Business**

- Jamie Knapp obtained information on the cost to advertise in the *Daily News* for a candidate to fill the vacancy on the Commission. The ad will run for eight consecutive days.
- Unicode does not accurately reflect the rates that are a part of the ordinance. An order must be put before City Council to change Unicode. This could be done tangentially with the adoption of the house float ordinance.

**7. Public Comment**

None

**8. Adjournment**

Bob Dow moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:25 p.m. Dan May seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. The next meeting of the Newburyport Harbor Commission will take place on Thursday, February 8, 2018.