

Newburyport Harbor Commission
Online Meeting
December 4, 2020
Minutes

1. Call to Order

Chair Andrew Casson called an on-line meeting of the Newburyport Harbor Commission to order at 7:00 p.m. In attendance were Bob Dow, Justin Dutcher, Jamie Knapp, Chris Kealey, Adam Armstrong, Jay Lesynski and Ron Thurlow. George Sass was absent. Harbormaster Paul Hogg was also in attendance.

2. Minutes

Justin Dutcher moved to approve the minutes of the November 4, 2020, meeting as submitted. Chris Kealey seconded the motion. The motion was approved by an 8-0 vote (Ron Thurlow, yes; Andrew Casson, yes; Bob Dow, yes; Justin Dutcher, yes; Jamie Knapp, yes; Adam Armstrong, yes; Chris Kealey, yes; Jay Lesynski, yes).

3. Discussion on Dredging

Mark Cutter, Chief of the Navigation Branch for the New England District of the Army Corp of Engineers, attended the meeting to discuss the dredge of the mouth of the river. The Commission members were interested learning about the assignment of risk rankings, the ranking of Newburyport in comparison with other communities and the ways in which the Harbor Commission might impact the city's ranking. Mr. Cutter explained the process by which dredging projects are approved. A crew surveys the coast every five years. When it has been determined that dredging is needed in a particular area, the first step is the sampling of materials. The process of assembling a package that includes a cost estimate and work plan takes about a two years. The project is ranked first at the district level, and may move up through the levels of division and headquarters to the Congressional level. Funding for a project that has been added to the President's budget is guaranteed. A project that is not funded is reranked and evaluated for funding at the local level.

Mr. Cutter said the Army Corp is moving forward with the dredging of the mouth of the Merrimack. Two studies are currently underway to examine the beneficial use of the dredged material along Reservation Terrace. The mouth is dredged every eight to ten years, which he said is not a long interval. The Merrimack has been dredged more frequently than other locations. The presence within the harbor of a Coast Guard station with a search and rescue mission places the city high on the priority list.

The Commission members asked if the nourishment of the beach with dredged sand would reduce the city's risk ranking due to the additional cost and time involved with the larger scope of work. Mr. Cutter replied that it would not. He said that the Merrimack River Beach Alliance has played a large role in moving the currently dredging plans forward.

Dredging is scheduled for Hampton ahead of the mouth of the Merrimack. The Commission members asked if politics is involved in the ranking system. Mr. Cutter explained that the State of New Hampshire contributed a greater amount of funding to that project. He said many factors are taken into consideration during the ranking process and funds cannot be used repeatedly for the same ports. Many other communities along the coast

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are equally important. Some ports with lower rankings are selected because they have not been dredged in many years. The cost of dredging has rising dramatically in recent years. In addition, the repair of jetties is currently high on the priority list and there is not enough money for both that work and dredging.

The Commission members asked if Newburyport could be included in a program for maintenance dredging every few years in addition to the larger, federal project that would take place every ten years. Mr. Cutter said the work could be done though through a Memorandum of Agreement under a State grant that involves matching funds. He said he is less familiar with this approach and recommended the Commission research it further. It might be possible to institute a fee that would provide the matching funds. He explained that the Army Corp uses the *USS Currituck* for special purpose dredging. It does not have the capability of pumping sand onto the beach.

Mr. Cutter said the collection of data to support dredging begins at the municipal level. The Commission should work jointly with Salisbury and compile information on usage, economics and law enforcement. A log of large vessels would be especially important. The Commission will start collecting more data through Dockwa. The Commission will obtain information on the cost of a private dredge before considering the imposition of a fee to support it.

4. Ordinance and Fees

Letters about the proposed ordinance to regulate kayaking will be sent to Plum Island Kayak, New England Development and the American Yacht Club. The ordinance will be sent to City Council after public comment has been heard at the January meeting. The draft document should be revised to delete the reference to the ramp at Brown's Wharf, which is owed by New England Development. The eastern boundary of the restricted area will be changed from the ice breaker to the Coast Guard Station. The Waterfront Trust will be contacted about the installation of signage relating to the restriction.

Ron Thurlow has submitted the paperwork to conduct a kayak safety course through the Newburyport Adult Education program. The two-hour course will be held in April and again in May.

5. Committee Reports

A) Coast Guard City

Andrew Casson will contact the Senior Chief about the Cashman Award and the location of a library of books with a nautical theme at the Coast Guard Station. The Cashman award should be made by letter and the recipient should be recognized at the clambake, which should be scheduled for a date in August or September.

Bob Dow contacted MassDOT about a Coast Guard City highway sign. He was told the matter should be handled by the State legislature. Jamie Knapp will contact Representative Kelcourse.

B) Waterfront Trust

Steve Hines notified Andrew Casson that the Trust will be forwarding the bill for a new light pole that was ordered to replace the one that was knocked down by the crane.

C) Public Relations/Community Outreach/Marketing

The committee will meet in the upcoming weeks to work on revisions to the website.

6. Harbormaster's Report

Paul Hogg reported:

- He is working to update the database for the waterways permits.
- The excise tax bills have been sent out.
- He was worked to resolve outstanding citations and the number that must be handled in court has been reduced to 12.
- He was begun making repairs to any docks that were damaged during the season.
- He is beginning to plan for the next season.
- The boats have been winterized and will be shrink wrapped during the upcoming week.

7. Adjournment

Bow Dow moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:32 p.m. Justin Dutcher seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved. The next meeting of the Harbor Commission will be scheduled for January 6, 2021.