

Newburyport Harbor Commission
City Council Chambers
April 10, 2014
Minutes

1. Call to Order

A meeting of the Newburyport Harbor Commission was called to order by Chair Brad Duffin at 7:00 p.m. In attendance were Brad Duffin, Bob Dow, Paul Rooney, Jamie Knapp, Steve Hines, Justin Dutcher and Andrew Casson. Also in attendance was Harbormaster Paul Hogg.

2. Minutes

Paul Rooney moved to approve the minutes of the March 20, 2014 meeting as submitted. Bob Dow seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

3. Transient Boaters' Facility Update

Geordie Vining spoke about the siting of the new facility. Site constraints include the fish pier and its associated parking, the Rail Trail and the Custom House view corridor. The boaters' facility would be at the terminus of the boardwalk and the memorial for the fishermen would be moved to be in line with the Custom House.

David Keery spoke about program elements and the design of the new building, which would include restrooms for the public, shower and laundry facilities for boaters and a first-floor reception area. The Harbormaster's office would be located on the second floor in order to provide a view of the water. The facility would be constructed four feet above grade to be elevated above flood level. A ramp would be located on the south side of the building, while on the west side wide steps would offer an opportunity for seating. The building would be comprised of two sections to provide the opportunity to close one side during the off-season and to open up views. Cedar shingles would be used for the building's exterior.

Brad Duffin opened the meeting to public comment. Members of the Harbormaster Department said the restrooms and changing area would be beneficial for the staff and the larger building would provide an increased visibility that is important in emergency situations. Many members of the boating public have made positive comments about the new facility when they have visited the office to receive their permits. Those with smaller boats that do not have on-board facilities would especially welcome the facility.

Questions from the public included the topics of circulation, energy efficiency and funding. The pattern of vehicular traffic to the fish pier would not be changed. The first floor of the structure would be at elevation 14 and its ridgeline would be 31 feet above grade. Solar panels are being considered for the roof. The existing structure is inefficiently heated with electricity. The enterprise system and the self-sufficiency of the Harbormaster's Department were explained in response to concerns about tax dollars being used to fund the facility and its staff. Any excess funds generated by increased boat traffic would remain in the enterprise system and would be saved for capital expenditures.

The docks currently service 3,000 to 4,000 boats annually. There are no plans at the current time to expand the docks. While not related to the topic of the new facility, a discussion took place on the length of time the docks should be operational. Kevin Bannigan said the large number of boats in the water at the time the docks were removed last fall created a safety hazard.

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Paul Hogg and the Commission members responded that the docks are removed at approximately the same time each year, which was on October 18 last year. The timing coincides with the removal of the Coast Guard docks. The marinas require the boats to be taken out by October 15. Marina owners are given a month's notice when the docks are to be removed. Mooring holders will be notified around September 1. The job of the Harbormaster is to protect boats and the docks.

The design development phase is the next step in the process. It is not yet known when the project will be put out to bid. The length of the permitting process would be a factor in determining this, as would the potential application for a US Department of Fish and Wildlife Boating Infrastructure Grant.

Brad Duffin thanked Bob Dow and Paul Dahn, along with the other members of the Commission, for their work on the project. Bob Dow commended Geordie Vining and the architects for their consideration of the needs of the community in the design of the facility. He said the facility would be an asset to the city and would benefit users of the Rail Trail.

4. Subcommittee Reports

Finance Committee

Andrew Casson said the Mayor has reviewed the draft budget and has indicated she is satisfied with it.

Regulations, Safety and Moorings Committee

No report

Coast Guard City Liaison and Community Outreach Committee

Paul Rooney said he would meet shortly with the Coast Guard to discuss the scheduling of a training session for members of the Newburyport Mothers Club. The club continues to support the station. The Commission will consider ways it might recognize the efforts of the club. Decisions must also be made soon about the Cashman Award and a celebration of the city's 250th anniversary. The event will take place around Yankee Homecoming and might include a visit from tall ships and a boat parade. An update will be provided at the next meeting.

5. Harbormaster's Report

Paul Hogg reported that:

- the commercial docks have been put in. It is expected the docks at Cashman Park and the central waterfront would be put in around April 18.
- the bulkhead repair work should be substantially completed by May 1.
- he has begun hiring and training lifeguards and preparing the staff for the upcoming season.
- office hours have begun for issuing Waterways permits.

6. Adjournment

Jamie Knapp moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:05 p.m. Bob Dow seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.