

Newburyport Harbor Commission
Online Meeting
April 1, 2020
Minutes

1. Call to Order

Chair Andrew Casson called a meeting of the Newburyport Harbor Commission to order at 7:00 p.m. In attendance were Adam Armstrong, Andrew Casson, Bob Dow, Justin Dutcher, Jamie Knapp, Ron Thurlow, George Sass and Jay Lesynski (arrived at 7:25). Chris Kealey was absent. Harbormaster Paul Hogg was also in attendance.

2. Minutes

Jamie Knapp moved to approve the minutes of the March 2, 2020, meeting as amended. Justin Dutcher seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

3. Ordinances and Fees

Andrew Casson contacted City Councilor Charles Tontar about the draft houseboat ordinance. While City Council activity has slowed due to COVID-19, the adoption of the ordinance remains a priority for the Harbor Commission.

4. Subcommittees

A discussion took place on the role of subcommittees and action committees. The focus more recently has been on action committees, which were developed to accomplish short-term goals. There continues to be a need for certain subcommittees. The committee assignments are as follows.

Action Committees:

Dredging - Jay Lesynski (chair), Adam Armstrong, Ron Thurlow
Coast Guard - Jamie Knapp (chair), Ron Thurlow, Chris Kealey
Waterfront Trust - Bob Dow (chair), Justin Dutcher
Marketing - Chris Kealey (chair), Justin Dutcher, George Sass

Sub Committees:

Finance - Justin Dutcher (chair), Ron Thurlow
Long-term Planning Committee of the Whole – Bob Dow (chair)

5. Action Committee Reports

A) Dredging

Adam Armstrong attended a meeting of the Merrimac River Beach Alliance on March 6. Dredging will not be in the budget for this calendar year, but it might be possible that it would be added to the budget for next year. Ron Thurlow said there might be a need for shovel-ready projects to help people get back to work. In order for dredging to take place more quickly, it should not be linked to beach nourishment.

B) Public Relations/Community Outreach/Marketing

Low fuel prices and high unemployment could each have their own impact on the upcoming boating season. Weather will also play a role. Dockwa could be set up to inform boaters about the installation date for the docks. Bob Dow suggested Sasaki Associates be contacted about a comprehensive plan for the waterfront and asked if the dredging of the embayment should be a priority. Paul Hogg said he is concerned about the condition of the embayment, which is rotting from the bottom.

C) Coast Guard City

Ron Thurlow said he would like the Commission to be involved with one more activity related to the Coast Guard City designation. Paul Hogg has supplied him with the dates of training sessions for the log book. The assistance and welcome program and Cashman Award are established and a clambake is to be held on a date that has not yet been determined. The committee will look into the placement of signs both northbound and southbound on Interstate 95 that announce Newburyport's designation as a Coast Guard City.

D) Waterfront Trust

Andrew Casson said he has spoken with Steve Hines about a lease through which the Harbor Commission would pay the Waterfront Trust \$5,000 annually to tie the docks to the bulkhead. Grace Connolly made revisions to the document Geordie Vining drafted. Mr. Hines thought the new document was written too much from the Waterfront Trust perspective. He asked Attorney Connelly to rework it to take the City and Harbor Commission more into account. Language should also be prepared that gives a historical account of the actions that led to the institution of the lease. If this is not included in the lease itself, then a memorandum of agreement should be signed by both parties.

6. Harbormaster's Report

Paul Hogg reported:

- He has been working in the office, but is not open to the public and the restrooms will remain closed. The Coast Guard is fully operational.
- The waterways and moorings permits have been sent out online and through the mail.
- He submitted a grant to the Seaport Advisory Council for a thermal camera that would be mounted on the tower at Plum Island. This would allow him to view the number of boats going in and out of the mouth and would be operational at night.
- The Plum Island parking lot is closed, although the beach remains open.
- The City now has a hiring freeze in place due to Mayor Holaday's concern about a reduction in fourth quarter revenue. This impacts the ability to hire lifeguards.
- He received approval to put the purchase of two engines out to bid. The estimated cost would be between \$38,000 and \$42,000. Jay Lesynski said Yamaha and Suzuki engines would be good choices and recommended looking at the service intervals.
- He would like to install the docks by April 15 in order to put the safety boats in the water.
- The Touch-a-Boat event has been cancelled and the Maritime Society plans to cancel the visit of a tall ship.

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- He was asked by boaters about putting docks in front of Cashman Park, such as was done at the North End Boat Club. In his opinion, the installation of those docks has worked well.
- City Council approved the new fee schedule.

7. Other Business

Because of the uncertainty caused by COVID-19, the Harbor Commission will meet again on Tuesday, April 14 at 7:00 p.m.

The Yankee Homecoming committee asked Andrew Casson about presenting the Cashman Award at the same time as the Rybacki Award ceremony this year. The Commission members were pleased with the smaller event that was held last year at the Black Cow because it was more personal, and they would prefer to maintain the same format this year.

8. Adjournment

Ron Thurlow moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:26 p.m. Bob Dow seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.