

Newburyport Waterfront Trust
Online Meeting
September 20, 2023
Minutes

1. Call to Order

Chair Matt Pieniazek called an online meeting of the Newburyport Waterfront Trust to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Roll Call

In attendance were Trustees Dan Mello, Mike Sullivan, Steven Wallace, Matt Pieniazek and Leslie Eckholdt.

3. Minutes

Dan Mello moved to approve the minutes of the August 16, 2023, meeting. Mike Sullivan seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

4. Treasurer's Report

Leslie Eckholdt said she is working to update the budget. There will be no payments for the winter boats this year, but the increased interest received from the new account should help keep income near its current level. New contracts are needed for the Firehouse, SLS and the Harbormaster.

5. Approval of Invoices

Mike Sullivan moved to approve the payment of invoices totaling \$13,680.42 and the credit card bill in the amount of \$248.05. Steven Wallace seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 5-0 vote (Matt Pieniazek, yes; Dan Mello, yes; Mike Sullivan, yes; Steven Wallace, yes; Leslie Eckholdt, yes).

6. Ongoing Projects

a) Market Landing Park Expansion

Some City Councilors have expressed concern about the ability of the City to pay for the maintenance of the expanded park. The Trust has provided data to help with the preparation of cost estimates. Decisions have yet to be made about the allocation of responsibilities between the Trust and the City.

An article recently appeared in the *Boston Globe* about the loss of parking on the waterfront. The timing of the article seems to be odd, as decisions about parking were made several years ago. The amount of parking in the Trust's lot will not change. The position of the Trustees should be that their role is to maintain the park and the accommodation of parking is the responsibility of the City. It is the understanding of the Trustees that the construction would not result in any net reduction in parking when the spaces in the garage are taken into account.

b) Bulkhead Repair

Matt Pieniazek will stress the need for communication at the upcoming meeting of the stakeholders. The Trust was not informed when segments of the boardwalk were closed to the public due to the repair project. The tour boat captains experienced some disruption to their operations but have expressed no ongoing concerns.

The City has obtained \$5.3 million in grant funding for the project. Geordie Vining has stated the total cost of the work is estimated at \$5.7 million, and some change orders are to be expected. The Trust agreed to contribute \$50,000 towards the work. The Trustees would like to make the contribution at the end of the fiscal year to allow their funds to continue to earn interest. The interest rate of the new account was negotiated based on the balance of the Trust's funds.

c) Boardwalk Repair

Matt Pieniazek arranged a site walk with the Mayor and staff from the Planning Office and the DPS to observe the condition of the boardwalk. It was acknowledged that there is rot under the planks and the boardwalk is at the end of its useful life. Currently, work on the boardwalk is being treated as maintenance and is being done in a piecemeal way. It must instead be addressed as a capital project. The Trust will continue to be involved with the temporary repair of the planks while the City develops a plan for a long-term solution. An existing conditions report will be prepared and provided to the City.

d) Website

No update.

7. Park Committee Report

a) Park Manager's Report

None

b) Park Use Applications

Dan Mello moved to approve an application for a wedding on June 8, 2024, subject to the applicant's confirmation of an awareness of potential impacts due to the construction. Leslie Eckholdt seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 5-0 vote (Matt Pieniazek, yes; Dan Mello, yes; Mike Sullivan, yes; Steven Wallace, yes; Leslie Eckholdt, yes).

A certificate of insurance was provided for Indigenous Peoples' Day events scheduled for October 7. The coverage appears to be adequate. The application indicated some events would be held on the NRA west lot. Dan Mello will confirm with the applicant that no alcohol will be served at the event and will recommend a site visit, as the NRA west lot is not under the jurisdiction of the Trust and would not be available due to the construction.

8. Other Business

a) Signage Request

A high school student requested to be allowed to mount a plaque on a light pole indicating the bulkhead was raised two feet to address the rising sea level. Mike Sullivan moved to approve the request with the condition that the location and mounting mechanism shall be coordinated with the Trust after the first phase of the park construction has been completed. Leslie Eckholdt said she is not in favor of signs in the park, as they interfere with the ability of visitors to appreciate nature. In addition, the message could be seen as a political one, and its approval could make it difficult to reject future requests for signage that some might find objectionable. Matt Pieniazek will inform Geordie Vining that the Trust would not be able to approve the request at this time and will suggest the sign could be located on City property. The Trustees will work to develop a signage policy. The motion was not seconded and was withdrawn.

b) Meeting Schedule

The next meeting of the Waterfront Trust will be scheduled for October 18.

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 p.m.