

HARBOR MANAGEMENT COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, March 22, 2016
City Hall, Room 210, 5:00 PM

MEMBERS PRESENT

Alderman H. Tucker Braddock, Jr.
Alderman Gerald Martin
Josh Bakoulis
Michael Gualtieri
Richard Benoit
Homer Callicutt

OTHERS PRESENT

Deberey Hinchey – Mayor
Geoffrey Steadman – Consultant
Michael Valentine – Harbor Master
Melinda Wilson – Recording Secretary

MEMBERS ABSENT

None

CITIZENS PRESENT

Joanne Miller
Richard Zictorac

1. Call to Order: Alderman Gerald Martin called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM.
2. Determination of Quorum: It was determined a quorum was present.
3. Approval of Minutes, Nov 24, 2015:
On a motion to accept as submitted by John Salomone, seconded by Dick Benoit, the Commission voted to accept the minutes of February 23, 2016 as presented.

On a motion by Tucker Braddock, seconded by Dick Benoit, the Commission unanimously voted to suspend the order of the agenda.

f. Shipping Street update: Mayor Deb Hinchey spoke regarding the future of the boat launch and development project at 1 Terminal Way. She reviewed the recent history of the project, including the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) grant proposal for \$2 million to assist the City with the process. The plan included the purchase of the property by the City for \$400,000. However, the purchase was not supported by the City Council. The \$2 million application from DECD was not successful for two reasons, namely that the City did not purchase the property and the property's designation as a flood way.

In order to further develop the property, the property would need to be re-designated as a flood plain. Geoff Steadman, Consultant to the Harbor Management Commission (HMC), explained that a flood way indicates the expectation of high velocity flood waters during a flood. A flood plain designation would indicate slower moving water. Construction requirements differ due to the expected flooding. A boat launch can be built in a flood way, but the proposal to DECD included economic development of the area.

Tim Sullivan, Deputy Commissioner of DECD, called a meeting of interested parties, including the Mayor and Gary Evans, Community Development Supervisor, of Norwich, and representatives from the Connecticut Office of Brownfield Remediation and Development (COBRD). Deb gave a summary of the meeting. The COBRD representatives indicated the designation of the property as a flood way may be incorrect. There is a process to request a change in designation, for either incorrect designation or to reassess the designation; however the process is laborious. Even with a re-designation to a flood plain, the topography is lower than necessary to support development. The entire area would need to be filled to raise the elevation, which is feasible. DECD and COBRD expressed support for the project. Consensus existed on the appropriateness of moving the boat launch to 1 Terminal Way. However, a more comprehensive, area-wide plan would strengthen the City's position.

DECD and COBRD support the general plan and suggested the City make a proposal for \$100,000 to continue to investigate options with the property, including the flood plain re-designation, and creation of a comprehensive plan. Deb is in favor of developing this application. The City Council's support is imperative to the plan's success.

Geoff noted that the future of the entire area's development is in question. Also DECD is willing to work on the flood way issue and take into consideration the entire area as part of the development plan. Josh Bakoulis indicated that from an engineering standpoint, raising the elevation is straightforward. Deb indicated that the new DECD proposal would include the design work necessary. Tucker suggested involving the abutters to 1 Terminal Way in a plan for the entire area. Deb offered to be involved in such a meeting if the HMC could set it up.

Deb asked for the HMC members' opinions and how they would like her to proceed. Jerry Martin indicated the HMC would take the matter up at next month's meeting.

On a motion by Tucker Braddock, seconded by Mike Gualtieri, the meeting returned to the established agenda with unanimous approval.

4. Correspondence:

Jerry handed out copies of the three documents sent with the meeting announcement, a thank you letter he wrote to the City Manager regarding the Department of Public Works (DPW), several fishermen's response to his online inquiry for comments on the existing boat launch, and recent Public Safety Committee minutes indicating issues with the existing boat launch.

The February budget report was reviewed.

5. Harbor Master Report:

Michael Valentine, Harbor Master, reported on recent activity in the harbor. Thayer's Marine put their docks in. After the storm at the end of February, DPW removed a large tree stump from the dock on February 26th. On February 29th and March 1st the tree warden, DPW and harbor workers removed a large tree that was jammed next to the wharf. On March 6th there was no water activity due to the City's parade. He noted there might have been parking issues that day to the large volume of people in the area. On the warm days there have been kayakers and fishermen on the town dock.

6. New Business:

a. Painting of caution area at boat launch: Jerry would like the parking lot painted.

b. Repainting of no parking area at end of boat launch: Jerry noted this needs to be redone since people are still parking there.

c. Approach parking commission about ticketing those who park in boat launch area: Jerry asked Tucker and John Salomone, City Manager, to reach out to the parking commission for enforcement of the parking rules around the boat launch. They agreed.

d. Discuss dive team setting no wake buoy in proper location: Dick Benoit noted that they are ready anytime.

e. Public works to fabricate 3 moorings capable of holding no wake buoy and welcome to Norwich waterfront sign: Dick said DPW would like to fabricate anchors for buoys that are removable. Jerry asked John to ask DPW to assist in the project by fabricating 3 removable moorings for two buoys and a Welcome to Norwich sign. John agreed.

7. Old Business:

a. Downtown Policing: Sgt. Peter Camp was not present.

b. CT Port Authority: Geoff reported their first meeting was held but no decisions were made.

c. Kayak Trail Map Sign Installation: Tucker said he will raise the issue at the DPW meeting on Monday at 8 AM.

d. Harbor Cam Installation: Tucker said Scott Capano will accommodate the project. Josh noted that social media should be engaged with the webcam. Dick said it will stream live so people can go see what's happening at the launch and weather conditions.

e. Harbor Management Plan Review: Geoff gave no update.

f. Shipping Street Review: Reviewed earlier in the meeting.

8. Citizen Comment:

Richard Zictorac noted there were no shallow spots on the Yantic River from the harbor to the Falls that could not be navigated with a kayak, even in the summer. Tucker agreed. Geoff said larger boats could go through to the Falls if the river was dredged. Richard agreed and commented that Norwich lacks some amenities, such as swimming and certain types of fishing, that other area launches offer. Tucker noted there are times that the Thames River hosts many types of fish.

9. Other:

Jerry asked Tucker to share information about the planned kayak trips. Tucker reported the kayak trip is planned to leave from Thayer's Marine on June 11, 2016 at 10 AM. Rain date is June 18th. This trip is planned with the historical group. Jerry asked Tucker to do another kayak trip near the end of August. Tucker agreed, noting that Norwich is a fun place to kayak to observe birds, vegetation and the beauty of the rivers.

Jerry noted that the Chamber of Commerce needs a resolution to approve the serving of alcohol at Rock the Docks. Tucker agreed to co-sponsor the resolution.

Geoff asked the HMC to authorize him to research the flood way issue. He can find out when designation was changed and other helpful details. The HMC agreed.

Tucker announced Thayer's Marine is having an open house on Saturday, March 26, 2016 from 10 AM to 4 PM with lunch at 11:30. There will be seminars, bass fisherman, and displays.

Josh Bakoulis asked for follow-up from the last meeting regarding reaching out to Montville. Tucker did speak with the Mayor of Montville. He noted low use of their dock which is located in a beautiful spot but the boat launch in itself is in bad condition. Josh noted that a brochure containing a map with more area kayak trails would increase tourism.

10. Adjournment:

On a motion to adjourn by Tucker Braddock, seconded by Dick Benoit, the Harbor Management Commission meeting adjourned at 5:46 PM.

*Respectfully submitted,
Melinda Wilson
Recording Secretary*