

MINUTES OF WATERWAYS MANAGEMENT COMMISSION MEETING

Tuesday August 12, 2008

A meeting of the Waterways Management Commission was duly called and held on Tuesday, August 12, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. The meeting was called to order by the Chairman, Gerald Hickey. The following people were present: Robert Metcalf, Roger Race, Michael Gill and Norman Peloquin. Excused were Warren Hathaway and Chris Hemingway. Also present was Mr. Steven Melo, Harbormaster.

Mr. Hickey reviewed the meeting agenda. Mr. Race moved to accept, Mr. Peloquin seconded. So Moved.

The minutes of the meeting of July 29, 2008 was discussed. Mr. Peloquin moved to accept the minutes. Mr. Metcalf seconded. So Moved.

Harbormaster Report.

Park Department Triathlon. Mr. Melo reported that the Park Department annual triathlon was held Sunday August 2, 2008 at Round Hill Beach. The Harbormaster and one Assistant patrolled the water event for 3 - 4 hours. Fire Districts one and two also sent water resources for the event. The water event was the first portion of the three-tiered event. Everyone was safe and accounted for. Mr. Peloquin asked if the Waterways Department received reimbursement money from the event. Mr. Melo said no, he had no information on finances for the event, but his work hours on that Sunday started at 6 a.m. and ended at 8 p.m. without overtime or comp time involved. It does cost the Department for a few hours of an Assistant's time during the event.

Boat Update. Mr. Melo reported that he is accumulating prices for refurbishing and powering the Guantanamo Whaler, including a counter-rotating lower leg for one of the surplus engines received. He will present a complete price-picture once he has one ready for the Commission to decide whether to go or no go. Mr. Melo also met with Michael Gagne and Ken Pacheco regarding the Shellfish Parker which had been on the south bridge mooring all season. After speaking with Mr. Pacheco, Mr. Gagne decided to have the boat hauled and parked behind the police station. Mr. Melo and Mr. Pacheco worked together on that. Mr. Gagne was supposed to clear that storage arrangement with the Police chief.

Drowning at Town wells. Mr. Melo provided some assistance to the police dive team on Saturday August 9th. They recovered the body of an a.t.v. rider from a pond adjacent to the wells on Old Westport Road. He was located using a surface vessel search.

Waterspout 8/11/08. Following the heavy rain and thunderstorms of Monday August 11th, the Harbormaster Office received calls regarding submerged vessels off of BayView. Mr. Melo responded shortly after 10 a.m. despite being scheduled for that day off. Seven vessels in a line leading toward shore were found completely capsized. Two larger trees on the shore were up-rooted. An eighth boat, a Rhodes 19, was found with a twisted, broken mast also in the same line as the over-turned vessels. It was obvious that some form of cyclonic wind had passed through this narrow path. One vessel, a 30' inboard lobster-style power boat had apparently been lifted clear of the water and dropped upside-down based upon damage seen. Mr. Melo assisted with safety and environmental concerns as commercial salvors and owners worked throughout the day. Assistants also checked boats elsewhere in the harbor for signs of damage. The Department de-watering pump was deployed to assist several boats prior to hauling. Despite the number of boats involved, no significant loss of pollutants was observed, certainly not any reportable quantities. Mr. Peloquin asked if any of the commercial entities had filed a written salvage plan with the Harbormaster. Mr. Melo said that he had conversations with the providers, but not any written plans. Mr. Peloquin was concerned about the potential for both pollution and the impact of any one of those vessels completely sinking and blocking the navigation channel as it was towed to the crane. He suggested that the Harbormaster has the right to demand a salvage plan with all contingencies addressed.

Old Business.

Concordia Mooring Update. Ms. Carol Hill of Concordia was not present. Mr. Melo described an e-mail he received from Brian Valiton of the Army Corps. The ACE questioned what the Town had done, or intended to do with the four mooring sites Concordia relinquished for municipal use this year. They also questioned what transient anchoring accommodations could be found in Padanaram Harbor. Mr. Melo will get gear bids to fill those sites from the three providers.

Transportation charges re-visited. Mr. Hickey had a phone conversation with Michael Gagne regarding several issues. The big issue involved the money taken from the 2008 Waterways budget for transportation of the building materials from Georgia. Mr. Gagne explained that he was up against a payment and fiscal year ending deadline and that was why he needed to move quickly on payment. He offered to restore the funds if necessary. Mr. Hickey declined and explained the concerns over a loss of trust and control over waterways funding, as well as a lack of a concrete plan for a return on that money spent, despite the extensive dedication shown by an all-volunteer board. He would like to know where a building will be erected for our department, when, how and how much more money it will take to see that happen. It was suggested that Mr. Gagne would be willing to attend one of the future meetings of the Commission to hash out all of these issues if necessary.

Rogers Street Update. The meeting of the Conservation Commission went well. The ConCom approved the plans as shown. Roger Race has met with the DPW for an “out to bid” package. DPW has existing bids for paving in the area of \$42 per square meter. Mr. Race said that Steve Gioisa of SITEC engineering now “has the ball” and will get specifics to Dave Hickox by noon on August 13th to prepare a bid publication package. Bids get submitted to DPW for a public opening and DPW will make a recommendation to the Commission based upon the bids received. Mr. Melo wanted to add that Mother Nature, by virtue of the recent rain deluge, has washed-away the sand at the bottom of Rogers Street exposing a paved ramp leading toward the water. The tide was high, so it was difficult to determine where the paving ended.

New Business.

Waterways Subcommittees. Mr. Hickey said that he would announce the membership of the Commission subgroups. Mr. Peloquin expressed concerns that a merging of the ideas of subgroups might be viewed as giving the appearance of a violation of the spirit, if not the intent of the open-meeting requirements; even if those working sub-groups are open to public participation. Mr. Hickey said that if the subgroups were each assigned different issues, similar to what was done last winter, it might be more beneficial. Mr. Hickey asked that each member “brainstorm” a list of mooring-related issues, and submit by e-mail, to the Harbormaster, those issues that they have come up with. He will then organize those issues and assign them to the subcommittees. Some examples he put forth included for example, Concordia’s permit application – What if they do get permits for all sites? What if they do not? How many people rent Concordia moorings as a “means around” the waiting list? How do we make most effective use of the newly-acquired municipal sites?

Mooring Re-Gridding project. Mr. Hickey said that the Commission must explore the big question of “Why” we should be undertaking such a monumental project. Somehow we need to estimate how many new spaces will be generated by organizing the moorings in a more scientific manner. If it is determined that the project will yield sufficient results, the Commission must determine “How” best to arrange the new grid, and then “How best” to implement the moves – all at once, or in sections. Stronger regulatory changes will be required regarding the movement of most of the moorings to address the expected reluctance from some boaters. Those should be done first. Those unwilling to move as directed could create additional new opportunities for waiting list candidates.

Public Comment. Mr. Don White saw the photos of the water-spout aftermath taken by the Harbormaster staff and commented that he had seen several taken during the storm. He noted that four of the over-turned vessels were owned by members of his family. He said it was a very strange and unexpected site from his home, which narrowly avoided a direct hit. Mr. White confirmed that although there was a light odor of petroleum in the area, no spill or sheen was seen and he thanked the quick and thorough response from all concerned.

The next meetings are scheduled for Tuesday September 9th.

It was moved by Mr. Peloquin and seconded by Mr. Race to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 p.m.

(Compiled from Harbormaster notes in the absence of recording secretary Diane Vieira)