

HARBOR COMMISSION
MINUTES
February 8, 2006

I. Roll Call

Jim Bartlett	Present
Yvonne DeWindt	Absent
Al Dika	Present
John Flemming	Present
Tom Graham, Jr.	Present
Bill McCullough	Present
Jim Offield	Present
Fred Rachwitz	Present
Jane Ramer	Absent
Dick Schiller	Present

Also present: Harbormaster Bob Bokram and City Manager Fred Geuder.

Chairman Jim Bartlett called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

II. Minutes

Motion by Dika, seconded by Schiller, to approve the minutes of October 19, 2005, as presented.
Motion carried.

III. Public Comment and Correspondence

None.

IV. New and Old Business

A. Update on West Dock Project

The City Manager noted that only the portion at the shore connection point needed to be completed. He expected that Walstrom would open that portion up as soon as possible after April 15th, and then it could be completed in plenty of time for the season.

B. Walstrom Marine Dock Plan

Bartlett noted that Walstrom Marine was at the meeting to present a revised proposal, and asked Fred Walstrom to explain the new plan noting the differences from the prior submission.

Fred Walstrom reviewed the new plan, and noted the following major differences:

1. This plan had a wider entrance opening, now about 85', and was more in line with what the state would require, and to express a concern from the previous plan. It did take out one slip on the south side to leave room for the wider opening.

2. Because of the wider opening, Walstrom was showing rip-rap placed along the outside of the existing sea wall, which would prevent the waves from bouncing back into the inside of the new area, which might make it rougher than the rest of the bay. The rip-rap would absorb the waves. As a consequence, in times of low water, the boats could not go into the slip as far, and would hang out past the end of the finger piers. The fairway was then widened to compensate for this possibility.
3. Walstrom made a number of design changes to comply with barrier-free accessibility. This resulted in a design change on the west dock coming out to the south from the existing shoreline. The units would have step-down ramps, attached to fixed pier sections (that could also be adjusted up and down with the water level) in order to have dock meet the accessibility standards. The fixed pier areas would also permit kayaks and canoes to more easily pass under this dock.
4. The total number of slips was now 37; two (2) less than the previous plan.

In reply to a question, Walstrom noted that the slips on the north side would still be 60' slips, but reiterated that boats may stick out past the end of the finger piers.

In reply to a question, Walstrom noted that the east side breakwater was placed 40' away from the shore in order to allow kayaks to pass through near the shore, but at a slow speed.

Linda Rachwitz, 519 East Third, asked Bartlett whether the Commission would vote on the plan at this meeting. Bartlett said the Commission could vote, but didn't know for sure.

Rachwitz noted the opposition to the previous plan, and hoped that the Harbor Commission would listen to any comments.

Rachwitz also asked Walstrom whether the kayaks would be able to go through the west dock at high water levels. Walstrom said that with the design he was using, there would always be room for kayaks to pass under the dock at some point of it.

Rachwitz noted that the safety issue for kayaks is very real, but noted that most kayakers are very cautious. She suggested perhaps placing caution signs for boaters and kayakers.

Rachwitz did note she was against the plan in general; but she also noted Walstrom's need to ask for the expansion.

Jim Grogan, 20 Birch Court (and a Council member), suggested that the Harbor Commission have a hearing.

Pringle Pfeifer, 437 East Bluff, feels that the plan represents a substantial change. She noted that the issues of views, pollution, dredging, etc. still remained. She also felt by moving the east dock out about 15 feet consumed about 8000 sf of water, and she felt the trade-off of two less slips was not enough.

Bartlett said that in his opinion the change was not substantial, but asked the Commission whether they should go back to Square One in the approval process.

Fred Rachwitz felt the changes may be fairly significant, and noted his surprise that it was back, and that some process should be followed.

Dick Schiller did not think the Commission needed to go through a long process.

Tom Graham said he felt a shorter process might be more appropriate; he noted that the new design allowed better water flow and was better for kayaks.

John Flemming felt a shorter process was in order.

Jim Offield felt a shorter process would be better, and he noted that the changes made the plan better.

Dika noted that he was ready to vote today.

Bartlett noted that the consensus seemed to indicate some type of shorter process should be used, and suggested perhaps holding a public hearing in March.

The City Manager noted that the Harbor Commission did not use a public hearing during the previous process, but the process did last several meetings, and the public was allowed to comment.

Bartlett determined that the next meeting should be scheduled for Wednesday, March 22, at 4:00 p.m., and asked the City Manager to advertise the hearing/comment on the plan as he saw fit.

C. 2005 Harbormaster Report

Bartlett asked Harbormaster Bob Bokram to give the Commission the highlights of the 2005 report.

Harbormaster Bob Bokram reviewed the report, noting that boating numbers were down again from the year before, but noted that revenue figures were up because of the increased prices.

Bokram noted that again the Regatta was very well organized. He also told the Commission that the Courtesy Dock was very well received and well used.

Bokram further noted that the addition of 50 amp service on the floating dock made us competitive again with other marinas and was another good addition.

Bokram gave the Commission two ideas for their consideration:

1. Bokram felt that the dock that was a part of the Ford Park Launch Ramp was in need of an upgrade, and asked that it be looked at.
2. Bokram felt that Overflow Lot on Zoll Street could perhaps get greater use if trailers only could be left, perhaps under the same rules as the permit—not to become a storage area.

Bartlett suggested that the City Manager discuss the overflow lot with the Chief of Police and come back to the Commission with a report. He also said the Commission will look into the Launch Ramp dock.

Fred Rachwitz said the courtesy dock worked very well. He asked where the boat days were lost.

Bokram noted that he felt it was more at the end of the season than the beginning.

Rachwitz also noted that the revenue for electricity did not seem to increase, given that we had the new 50 amp service available on the floating dock.

Bokram did not have an answer for that, but suggested he needs to make sure staff is charging it out correctly.

It was also suggested that the City Manager have the Electric Department meter one or two of the 50 amp services to check the usage rates.

Bartlett thanked Bokram for the report.

D. 7-Day Rule Discussion

Bartlett noted that for the first time, it seemed that enforcement of the seven-day rule for transient boaters resulted in the Marina having empty slips on the nights of July 5th and 6th, which resulted in a loss of revenue. Should the Commission consider doing anything differently?

A lengthy discussion ensued. Suggestions and comments that were made included:

1. Could the starting date for high season be changed to June 29th or 30th, so that the exodus would not happen until the 6th or 7th of July.
2. Was it only the two days that were effected?

3. Was it a bigger problem because the 4th fell on a weekend?
4. Could a reverse waiting list be used?
5. This is only one day; Mackinaw Island has a four-day rule, but offered some flexibility when there were empty slips.
6. Should the seven day rule be extended one or two days, perhaps at the 4th only/
7. Should we give the Harbormaster some discretion?

It was noted that the check-out of 11:00 (effective checkout time) should be moved back to noon, which is what many other marinas do. It seemed to be a consensus to give the Harbormaster some discretion.

Motion by McCullough, seconded by Schiller, to recommend to City Council that the following wording be added to the Rules and Regulations for Transient Length of Stay Limits:

In the event the Harbormaster has empty slips available at the end of check-out time, the Harbormaster may at his discretion offer one-day extensions to those boaters who are at the seven-day limit, provided however that if new boats come, those boats who have had extensions would be required to leave on the basis of a first in, first out basis (in other words the boat that has been there the longest, would be required to leave).

Motion carried, 7-1, Rachwitz dissenting.

E. City Master Plan

The City Manager noted that the City's Planning Commission is reviewing and updating the City's Master Plan. The Master Plan has objectives listed, and the City Manager felt it would be appropriate for the Harbor Commission to review those objectives concerning the Waterfront and Harbor. These objectives can be discussed at a later date.

V. Meeting Schedule

The next meeting of the Harbor Commission is scheduled for Wednesday, March 22, 2006, beginning at 4:00 p.m.

VI. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:45 p.m.