

HARBOR COMMISSION
MINUTES
November 10, 2004

I. Roll Call

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

Also present: Harbor Master Bob Bokram and City Manager Fred Geuder.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Jim Bartlett at 4:00 p.m.

II. Minutes

Motion by Schiller, seconded by Kilborn, to approve the minutes of October 13, 2004, as presented. Motion carried.

III. Public Comment and Correspondence

None.

IV. New and Old Business

A. Revised Rules for Smoking and Fuel Cans on the Docks

The City Manager noted that he did not have this information available yet, so this item was tabled until the December meeting.

B. 2005 Seasonal Rates

Bartlett reviewed the handout showing the various cost increase scenarios for the docks, and also reviewed the dock rate comparisons to other area public and private marinas. Bartlett then invited comments from the Commission.

Schiller asked what other public marinas had been doing.

Bartlett noted that the State sets minimum rates for seasonal dockage (and maximum rates for transient dockage). So individual marinas then look at that as well as the market in their area.

Bartlett also explained that the City needs to run the marina as a business, balancing potential market rates against costs, and to give a reasonable return to the City. He felt that perhaps the market was saying we should be higher than we are.

Kilborn stated that he agreed with Bartlett, that rates should be higher because of the market.

Enter Rachwitz.

McCullough noted that the City's rate for a 40' slip was at approximately 2/3 the rate charged by the private marinas. He suggested that we should probably be at 75-80%, but that we should not get there all at once.

Flemming suggested that a 10% increase would begin to bridge such a gap.

DeWindt felt that a 10% increase would be okay, if the City was making an investment in the electrical system of the floating dock.

Enter Dika.

McCullough asked the Commission what their feelings were on the proportion the rate of our facilities versus the private facilities should be.

Dika said if we get too far below the 75-80% range, we are probably not doing an adequate job of managing the facility for the community.

Mike Esposito asked how many slips these rates covered. Harbormaster Bob Bokram said the City had 31 seasonal slips.

Dika suggested that he would prefer a 7% increase.

Motion by Schiller, seconded by Fleming, to recommend to City Council a 10% increase in the seasonal dock rates. Motion carried, 6-2, Dika and Rachwitz dissenting.

For the moorings, Bartlett suggested that an inflationary increase would probably be appropriate, when you look at the revenues versus the costs for the mooring field.

Motion by McCullough, seconded by Rachwitz, to recommend to City Council a 3% increase in the seasonal mooring rates. Motion carried, 8-0.

C. Consideration of Walstrom Marine Proposed Dock Expansion

Bartlett asked Fred Walstrom to review his proposal.

Walstrom reviewed the current dock layout, and also the area on the west side of the basin where the travel-lift will operate.

The proposed dock expansion will include 45 slips, using a floating dock system. The dock would use a 12' wide floating breakwall on the South side, and a similar floating breakwall would be needed on the East side. Walstrom also proposed placing a 6' wide lower dock along the East side, which would be available for use by the public and the City.

The proposed expansion would give Walstrom's a better mix of slip sizes, by adding larger slips than are currently available in the basin area. He noted that the East dock would be about 5' off the water (the public dock would be about 1' off the water) and would likely require a railing of some sort.

Bartlett wanted to clarify whether Walstrom was offering to build the lower dock on the East side at his expense, and Walstrom stated "yes".

DeWindt said she was having a hard time visualizing how far out the dock would go, and she noted that there were some channel buoys in the vicinity. Walstrom stated that the dock would be somewhere between where the two are currently.

The City Manager said it had been suggested to him that the buoys be placed at the mark where the dock would go out to (approximately 220').

Walstrom also noted that the floating breakwall might be able to be used as a spawning area.

McCullough asked whether fuel sales were being contemplated at the basin area.

Walstrom said they are not looking at any fuel sales on the proposed floating docks. They might look at adding diesel fuel sales near the service area, but at this time it is not part of the current plan. Walstrom also noted that it is very busy at the downtown location, particularly without a high-speed diesel filling set-up.

McCullough asked whether boats would be rafted on the outside.

Walstrom said that might be a possibility, but would also depend on the lease from the state.

In response to a question, Walstrom said the new dock would still be about 250' from the mooring field.

Walstrom also said that the State did not approve a similar plan about 20 years ago.

McCullough stated he was concerned about the water flow in the area of Zoll Street and the impact of the proposed dock on the water circulation.

Walstrom thought that the breakwall portion of the East side dock would not need to be as deep as the South side one, so it may not be a major impact. He also thought that the breakwall portion would not be as deep as the City's floating breakwall.

DeWindt wondered if the railing would hurt the view from Zoll Street. (It was noted that boats docked there would likely be taller than the railing.)

Dika said his major concern with the plan was the effect on the views from Zoll Street; he suggested perhaps eliminating or lessening the slips on the East side. He noted that this would eliminate the feasibility of the public dock offer.

Sears suggested that by having only 40' slips on the East side, it might be able to be a lower dock.

Walstrom and the Commission discussed the overall uses of the Zoll Street beach area. Would it be feasible to have more kayaks there? Is swimming a good use, and when it interfaces with being a dog friendly beach? What is the best use for this area, because it is already a multi-use area?

It was suggested that the City needs to discuss the uses at Zoll Street.

A comment was made on whether the parking on Zoll Street would be impacted by the additional docks on the East side.

The City Manager noted that the Planning Commission had approved the plan, and that Walstrom would be providing parking that meets the code provisions. He also noted that a concern about the use of the Zoll Street parking area was discussed, but it is more of a regulation issue, not a Planning Commission issue.

Mike Esposito commented that the Harbor does need more slips. But he also commented as a citizen user of the Zoll Street beach. He noted the multiple uses—water access and swimming, dog access to the water, a view access, and kayak and dinghy access. He would NOT want to see the East dock line up directly with the west boundary of Zoll Street, because of both visual and safety concerns. He also thought that if there are more kayaks, they should be placed at Ford Park (with safety again being a concern).

Linda Rachwitz spoke as a kayak user who uses the Zoll Street beach. She feels that to encourage more use of the Zoll Street beach, such as with the public dock, would be a mistake. There is enough going on there already.

Steve Banks, owner of the property at 3 Beach Drive, said he was completely opposed to the expansion project. He said it would obstruct his view of the Harbor from his beach property, and it would stick out like a sore thumb. He said other Wequetonsing property owners would also be opposed. He also wanted to know the process for consideration of this project.

Bartlett explained that the Planning Commission had reviewed this already, but their review is very objective based on their criteria. The Harbor Commission is also required to review the plan and also make a recommendation to the City Council, based on multiple criteria including aesthetics and looking at the Harbor Plan.

Bartlett said the City Council then reviews the recommendations and then passes on their opinion to the State DNR. Both the DNR and the Army Corps of Engineers would have to approve the plan also.

The City Manager stated that the City Council will be soliciting public opinion via various methods over the next several months, and would likely hold a public hearing.

Linda Rachwitz asked Walstrom what the benefits are to the City.

Walstrom said that boating and the waterfront have always been an integral part of the community. The project will provide the City with additional tax dollars. And the project does allow for more people who do NOT own waterfront property to access Lake Michigan. Walstrom noted that almost everywhere where people own waterfront property, more docks have been built, but that there is still a large demand for slips.

Mina Hill commented that as someone who does not own waterfront property, and will not have the means to lease a slip, she felt that the view and ability to continue to use Zoll Street were both very important.

Mike Esposito also commented on the positive effect on the economy and jobs that this project would have.

Bartlett thanked everyone for their comments, and noted that the Commission would continue to discuss the proposal at the next meeting.

V. Meeting Schedule

The next meeting of the Harbor Commission will be scheduled for Wednesday, December 8th, at 4:00 p.m.

VI. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Frederick W. Geuder, City Manager