

Harbor Commission

Workshop Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, April 21, 2015, 5:30 p.m.
Council Chambers, South Haven City Hall



City of South Haven

1. Call to Order

Present: Pyle, Reineck, Silverman, Stegeman, Stephens, Arnold

Absent: Sullivan

2. The Harbor Commission will hold a workshop to discuss dredging options.

Discussion revolved around types of dredging, contaminated versus uncontaminated dredge spoils; hauling versus hydraulic dredging. Nearest sites for contaminated dredge spoils are Watervliet or Zeeland; trucking is not cheap. If not contaminated, dredge spoils can be trucked locally, which is more affordable. The city does not have to own the land where the non-contaminated material goes.

Discussion ensued regarding whether hydraulic dredging has to be non-contaminated; working with the Army Corps (adding on to the contract we have with the Army Corps where the city would pay for dredging in the marinas); whether or not the Army Corps will do dredging in the actual slips; the process to get a dredge permit through the Army Corps is lengthy. The Army Corps can do beach replenishment.

VandenBosch noted some downsides to purchasing land for dredging: takes away any natural characteristics of that area; would create a muck field; will look bad for as long as material is being added to it; impacts neighbors; screening; distance to nearest neighbor.

VandenBosch noted that there can be beneficial re-use of dredge spoil area: design something that can go on top of dredge spoil, so when you are done you go in and complete the improvements and have some amenities that people use where you have put dredge spoil. Example: Black River Park; we have raised an area and now we are looking at using that area for a parking lot. VandenBosch suggested being creative ahead of time; know where you are going to put your spoil and how it will look when it's done.

After a question from Stephens regarding staff recommendations, discussion ensued about the lack of budget to buy land with, VandenBosch pointing out that the fund for river maintenance has \$75,000.

Discussion ensued regarding this year's dredging needs, which includes the bump near the Idler that has been there for some time and whether the higher water might allow time to do that application with the Corps, so they are doing our dredging, which eliminates the need to

put spoils on land. Further discussion included whether the city can do hydraulic dredging and put the spoils into Lake Michigan; that the DEQ does not permit the city to do so; suggestions of places where dredge spoils might be able to be placed.

Stegeman would like to see the Harbor Commission go to the other side of Slip Away Cove and the boat ramps, put a wall in there and do some paving for a corner for when we have to privately dredge or otherwise; create a designated spot for dredge spoils. Other comments: The city does not have a space to put dredge spoils; the city needs to get an official dredge spoil space; we do not have a maintenance area for our harbor; it is getting so there is more development along the shoreline. Silverman noted that it is clear that there is no place to put a dredging vehicle which means the Harbor Commission needs to look at the financial side for a long-range dredging fund; the water level is cyclical. "It goes up and down and we don't know when it will go down and when it does we need that money."

Discussion ensued regarding doing an assessment, much like a road millage; if property owners were involved and the city did permitting and contracting, the broader the outreach the smaller the impact on every individual. VandenBosch noted that City Council added the purchase of land for dredge spoil into their priority list. Stegeman noted that in the end we could draft some language for a recommendation and Arnold confirmed that a 2015 - 2016 priority for City Council is looking at dredge spoil land acquisition.

Stegeman wondered whether such a site would be reserved for city dredging only or can others add their spoils to the city's site. Silverman says he has trucked his own spoils; Stegeman asked whether the commission is looking at the whole picture, both private and public dredging.

Discussion ensued regarding whether to tackle funding; ways dredging could be funded and who would participate in a potential assessment; broad range assessment where the community participates; projected dredging needs and assessing. Silverman noted that the assessment he participated in as an owner was limited to property owners on the river and he urges a broader based assessment; if we still had ten dollars (\$10) per year with a broader base, we could address all our dredging needs. Discussion continued regarding those who do not want to dredge and just have shallow draft boats; the difficulty of the process of getting the dredging permit. Silverman said whether the city will have the ability to dredge the individual slips along with the pathway the combination of permits and getting a contractor is daunting. Stegeman said once you get them there, it's cheaper to dredge everything rather than piece-meal. VandenBosch suggested if the money was available the city could purchase a small mechanical dredge for smaller areas and contract the larger. Silverman asked VandenBosch's expectation to which VandenBosch responded that City Council is going to ask us to look into the land acquisition; without resources (money) to buy land, our strategy is somewhat difficult. Once we are looking at specific properties, we need to look at how we are going to dredge; hydraulic versus hauling; put together a strategy; how the dredging will be done; what the land will be used for in the long term.

Stegeman pointed out that most of this is already in our plan. Pyle noted that the commission just needs to start tackling some of these issues. Silverman asked whether the state's acquisition of Riverwoods provides an opportunity. VandenBosch explained the state is very conservative about the filling of wetland/lowland; the state will not want to see fill, and definitely not contaminated fill; the Department of Natural Resources has a very naturalist point of view and VandenBosch doubts they will want to see anything filled in.

Stegeman spoke to the conservatism of the State regarding the power plant and critical dunes.

Pyle asked if the Army Corps can put contaminated soil on the beach. VandenBosch said he is not aware that they have put contaminated spoil recently, but years ago they did, our harbors were a mess and they did beach replenishment back then. VandenBosch said the Army Corps can also pump straight out into Lake Michigan; they are not tied to state law. VandenBosch has tried to promote doing that when dredging, because the sand is moving that way anyway. Silverman noted that if contaminated dredge spoils are moved from a concentrated area into a larger area it probably isn't as contaminated, percentage wise.

3. Adjourn at 7:15 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Marsha Ransom
Recording Secretary