

Harbor Commission

Workshop Agenda

Tuesday, September 30, 2014
6:00 p.m., North Side Marina
148 Black River Street, South Haven, Michigan



City of South Haven

1. Call to Order

Roll Call: Chairman Jeff Arnold, Vice-Chairman Mary Stephens, Cathy Pyle, Tim Reineck, Alan Silverman, Daniel Strong, Greg Sullivan.

2. The Harbor Commission will hold a workshop to discuss its strategic plan for the harbor.

3. Adjourn

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,
Paul VandenBosch
Harbormaster

HARBOR COMMISSION STRATEGIC PLAN
Approved April 17, 2012

Mission Statement

In the performance of its duties the Harbor Commission shall remain committed to the continuous improvement of the Black River Harbor by taking a long term view of the harbor's capacity, its navigability, its value to the community, and its use by both public and private interests, and shall assure the health, safety and enjoyment of the harbor by providing recommendations for its maintenance and operation.

Goals and Objectives

A. Safety and Navigation

1. Dredging Needs of the Harbor

Assess the river conditions and prepare to perform maintenance dredging as necessary. *-ongoing*

Develop a checklist that outlines the steps to be used in assessing the need for dredging and the process of dredging.

Maintain valid permits for maintenance dredging. *-ongoing*

Dredging is one element of a comprehensive Black River maintenance program that must be ongoing. *-ongoing*

Develop recommendations for maintaining ingress and egress to the harbor, including adequate depth at the pierheads.

Apply for any grant funding or other funding that becomes available for harbor dredging or other safety improvements. *-ongoing*

2. Electrical Utilities

Encourage all marinas and private slips to upgrade their electrical wiring if they are making any electrical improvements. *-ongoing*

3. Fueling of Marine Vessels

The Commission has identified the direct fueling of boats as a major safety concern and has developed the following action steps to educate the public and enforce the laws regarding direct fueling:

- Work with marina managers and commodores to have signs posted clearly explaining how and where boaters may fuel their boats.
- Develop an educational campaign that can be used in local schools, boater safety classes, in the newspaper and other outlets.
- Enlist support of the Van Buren County Sheriff Marine Patrol along with SHAES and South Haven Police to educate boaters on the dangers and laws regarding direct fueling. Encourage warnings before citations and fines.
- Send a letter to the State expressing concern and requesting a statement on the back of the Marina Operating Permit (MOP) stating: "Direct Fueling is against the law and can lead to revocation of this MOP".
- Provide the fire code letter from the SHAES Executive Director to marinas.

4. Emergency Services

Promote a close working relationship with the Sheriff Marine Patrol, Coast Guard, Coast Guard Auxiliary, South Haven Police Department and South Haven Area Emergency Services. Meet at least annually to discuss mutual issues related to harbor safety. - ongoing

Review procedures to respond to fuel and contaminant spills.

Encourage agencies to maintain oil absorbent equipment to manage emergencies.

5. Erosion and Contaminants

Work with the DEQ, DNR, Drain Commission, farmers and other entities to ensure proper procedures are followed to reduce erosion and contaminants in the river in the City and upstream from the City.

Support testing for E. coli and work to resolve any related issues. -ongoing

6. Harbor Traffic Flow and Safety

Identify ways to improve traffic flow especially on weekends and during special events

Ensure that the channel between the harbor lines is kept clear of natural obstructions, anchored boats and barges, and all new docks and headwalls. -ongoing

Add a light to the bridge that will signal to boaters when the bridge is closing.

7. Public Access

Support public access and use. *-ongoing*

Explore installation of a mast hoist for people launching sail boats at the boat launch.

Traffic at the launch area can be dangerous, identify safety improvements.

8. Signage

Evaluate the current signs and upgrade/remove as necessary. Locate signs strategically so as not to block valued views.

Increase the number of No Wake signs, including adding signs at the bridge and at the Southside Marina.

B. Municipal Marina Facilities

1. Municipal Marina Facilities

Promote quality facilities at all municipal marinas. *-ongoing*

The Southside Marina has excellent facilities (showers and restrooms, lounge and meeting rooms, picnic areas, etc) for its boaters. Similar quality facilities should be provided to all other Municipal Marinas.

The City should move forward expeditiously with the construction of a new facilities building at the Northside Marina. Support use of grant funding to replace the existing facility.

The City should upgrade and expand the restroom/shower facilities at the Museum and Black River Park Marinas, adding a lounge area. These are likely to be long term projects.

At Black River Park Marina and the Museum Marina, add a roof and screen walls to the new deck. All facilities should be handicap accessible. Boaters should be surveyed first to determine if this meets their needs.

Promote availability of bicycles for boater use at the municipal marinas.

C. Infrastructure

1. Develop a Capital Improvement Plan

A capital improvement plan should be developed for each of the marinas. The Harbor Commission should review the plan and identify projects that it would like to see completed. The plan should include a budget and timeline for such improvements.

Annually review the River Maintenance capital improvement plan. *-ongoing*

2. Dinghy Docks and Paddle Craft Facilities

Fully support the Pedestrian, Bicycle and Paddle Plan which was adopted by the City Council on 2/16/2009. Improve existing dinghy docks and access at the Dyckman bridge.

<http://www.south-haven.com/csh%20folder/csh/Pages/Communications/PlansReportsStudies.html>

Clean out and trim Celery Pond creek to create a small craft launch site and dinghy dock.

Add a dinghy dock at the Museum Marina.

Try to design dinghy docks so they would be usable for a river launch service if one becomes available.

3. Harborwalk

Complete the Harborwalk to include signage, lighting, benches, landscaping etc.

Find and analyze the original plan for the Harborwalk to determine if the plan has been fully implemented. If it has not continue implementing the plan.

Improvements are needed on the public easements through Mariner's Dockage and Pier's End Cove.

Complete Harborwalk to create a unified concept by adding better way finding signs, paving materials, improve interpretative plaques etc.

Encourage a cooperative maintenance agreement between the City and the Michigan Maritime Museum.

4. Green Space/Views

The Commission recommends that the city retain and acquire, when available, adequate public space along waterfronts. These areas should be maintained and developed for open green space and public access.

5. Former Street Garage

Add a sea wall extension and dinghy dock at the former street garage, encouraging natural sea walls.

D. Planning

1. Future Development and Impact on Safe Navigation

The Harbor Commission supports a detailed Harbor study that would update existing material from the 2001 Smith Group JJR report. To accomplish this we need to hire a competent and professional consultant to determine the capacity of the Black River Harbor and to provide guidance for future policy and decision making with a 10 year outlook.

The South Haven City Council should authorize a forward looking study of our Harbor to determine if additional slips and/or services are needed. Is our Harbor at capacity (defined as its ability to safely handle its current usage)? If not, how many additional boats can it handle given its current configuration? Are additional slips needed? If so, where should they be located? If it is at capacity based upon current configuration, are there modifications that would permit increased capacity?

Consider funding a comprehensive professional study. The study should look at where are we and where do we want to be in the next 5 to 10 years. This study should be delayed at this time due to the unusual economic conditions until a certain level of economic normalcy returns to the harbor. In the interim, contact area schools, colleges and universities seeking their help with acquiring accurate data on size, quantity and frequency of use of vessels using the Black River. Analyze the new numbers from the study with a focus on the last paragraph on page 4 of the JJR memorandum of 4/23/2001 which discusses the capacity of the river based on channel widths.

Additionally the needs assessment should look at existing facilities to determine if they currently serve our needs, how they could be modified to best serve our needs today and what needs to be changed to best serve our future needs?

A process needs to be defined, created, promoted and followed setting development goals and criteria based on consideration of our harbor size, location and boating and community concerns.

Continue to monitor and provide guidance on the new waterfront park extension east of the Steelheader's fishing wall and its impact on safety and navigation

Any additional waterfront development or development affecting the waterfront must be scrutinized very carefully, both before, during and after the planned construction. In advance of any construction the impact upon the harbor (which includes the Black River to the City limits) by the project as well as the proposed methods of construction of the project (remember Sherman Hills) must be carefully examined and evaluated. The impact on boat traffic (if, for example, additional slips are proposed) and the impact upon navigation must be evaluated. Of concern is erosion of soils flowing into the river caused by poor and unsupervised developments.

As proposals for the development are presented, the Harbor Commission will consider issues of need, safety, navigational hazards and environmental concerns and make appropriate recommendations.

2. Development Approval Role

All projects using harbor maintenance funds and all developments along the river should come before the Harbor Commission for their recommendation. *-ongoing*

Participate in any discussion regarding the Celery Pond property. *-ongoing*

The Harbor Commission should have a role in any changes that affect marinas, river or harbor. *-ongoing*

3. Natural Environment Preservation

Allow for innovative development without totally eliminating the vegetation and public access in the Black River around the present canoe launch area.

We need to be proactive on waterfront development for example Sherman Hills. The City needs to determine how the river needs to be protected when a development is proposed. *-ongoing*

Work with DNRE and other entities regarding environmental issues for the entire Black River Watershed. *-ongoing*

Encourage all marinas to achieve Clean Marina Status. *-ongoing*

4. Effects of Development and Loss of Marine Services

Assess whether we have adequate marine services in the harbor, including fueling, haul out, storage, marine repair service, marine parts and supply, dockage (seasonal and transient) and pump out facilities. If some services appear to be lacking, encourage private businesses to provide them. If private businesses are unable to provide the services or stop providing needed services, consider municipal services.

E. Funding

1. Ongoing Dredging Project Funding

Investigate other sources of revenue for dredging. *-ongoing*

Recommend an increase from 3% to 6% of marina revenues set aside for the River Maintenance budget.

Recognize the need for additional funding for dredging and allocate some of the tax collection from the increased assessments of property and homes on the river for dredging.

Request funding from the DDA to allocate toward harbor maintenance. *-ongoing*

Determine if the current method of calculating special assessments for dredging is equitable and or if changes are needed.

2. Capital Improvement Plan

The Commission duties include an annual review of this plan along with the Black River Maintenance document. As part of that review recommendations must be made in a timely manner.

3. Harbor Budget Policies

It is the duty of the Commission to review and make recommendations to the annual River Maintenance, Marina Fund and Black River Park budgets in a timely manner so they can be considered during the budget adoption process of the City Council. *- ongoing*

All assessment categories should identify a budget and funding mechanism. Consider for example:

- Future waterfront developments should be specifically assessed for their impact on the harbor.
- Establish a broad based assessment (as broad as possible) to fund the maintenance of the harbor.
- Analyze the current income from the operation of the Municipal Marinas and Public Launch site to get a full understanding of the usage and to determine an appropriate contribution to harbor maintenance.

F. Marketing and Communication

1. Emergency Communication

Be in a position to communicate safety information for ongoing and emergency issues with marina owners, managers and users. Develop ways to communicate safety information with boaters. *-ongoing*

Establish an email list for contact with boaters and harbor stakeholders.

Install bulletin boards at the boat launch.

2. Marina Management

Evaluate management of municipal marinas. *-ongoing*

There needs to be more communication with transient and seasonal boaters using marina facilities and the boat launch. Create and distribute feedback cards to survey customer service and desired amenities. Do customer satisfaction surveys on a regular basis and conduct appropriate follow up.

Include welcome packages with information on the City and local businesses, gifts and coupons. Inform boaters where they can rent bicycles and vehicles.

Install informational bulletin boards at all municipal marinas to inform boaters and the public of events, phone numbers, tourist information etc.

Improve on-going staff training. *-ongoing*

Encourage development of a marina and harbor marketing plan on an annual basis. *-ongoing*

The Commission needs to schedule annual meetings at the marinas to hear concerns and suggestions for improvements of services.

3. River Stakeholders

Communicate with the City and its boards and commissions as well as the DEQ, DNR, Drain Commission, farmers, boaters etc. to ensure we maintain a high quality harbor, including water quality issues.

Promote the Clean Marina program to harbor marinas and as a marketing approach for the harbor.

Use bulletin boards at marinas and boat launch to post Harbor Commission meeting schedule, agendas and Harbor Commission contact information.

4. Survey and Feedback Procedures

Survey boaters and slip owners to determine what services they want and how it should be provided. Gather feedback and implement changes on dredging and other issues.

Survey all boaters, slip owners and marina owners regarding river maintenance and safety issues. Use an email list to inform and listen to river stakeholders.