

Harbor Commission

Workshop Minutes

Tuesday, September 30, 2014
4:30 p.m., North Side Marina
148 Black River Street, South Haven, Michigan



City of South Haven

1. Call to Order at 6:03 p.m.

Present: Silverman, Stephens, Sullivan, Pyle, Arnold
Absent: Reineck, Strong
Also present: John Marple, Marina Manager

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

Mission Statement

VandenBosch read and commented on the mission statement. Minor changes suggested were to replace the words "Black River" with South Haven and correct "it" and "it's" to "its".

Silverman suggested defining what we mean by "South Haven Harbor", which was followed with discussion regarding whether people think of the area from the bridge to the channel as "the river"; the use of "the harbor", "the river", etc. in a general form. Silverman suggested an asterisk or footnote by the words "South Haven Harbor". After the following definition was offered: "Beginning at the entrance to the pier heads, the channel, the harbor and the Black River to the city limits," VandenBosch pointed out that the city now considers Sherman Hills being the end of the city limits. Silverman commented that if someone submitted an application for development along there, the Harbor Commission would go through the navigational assessment as we would do in the harbor itself. VandenBosch will put something together for review.

Goals and Objectives:

VandenBosch noted that some of the following items are ongoing; there may be some that are completed.

A. Safety & Navigation.

1. Dredging Needs of the Harbor

Assess the river conditions – general, ongoing, continuous project with new challenges.

After discussion, it was noted that there seem to be general statements and occasional very specific ideas. Feels the document does not read smoothly. Requested to go through this document and determine what is general and what is specific.

Silverman commented perhaps the general items would remain over a period of time and the specific ones would disappear over time.

Develop a checklist – the board has never done that, and now that we've learned how to get through the permitting and dredging process we could put a checklist together. The term "the process of dredging" was questioned for meaning. VandenBosch thinks that means "getting the dredging done". Sullivan commented that process might include finding sites for dredge spoils. Stephens asked if it would be like an implementation plan, for next time we need to dredge.

Maintain valid permits for maintenance dredging. We currently have a permit. Experience has taught that it takes a long time to get a permit; need to start a year ahead of time.

Delete the comment about dredging being one element of a maintenance program.

Sullivan suggested adding something about "sedimentation traps" and "working with Conservation District." Stephens noted that the Conservation District has a different approach – being proactive about planting native species that prevent erosion and sedimentation. "Investigating proactive means of controlling sediment in the river." Debate ensued regarding whether this is the responsibility of the Harbor Commission. Pyle noted that the DNR is offering very large grants to implement this proactive measure; are we passing that by because no one is taking responsibility for it? Pyle pointed out that our mission statement talks about maintenance. VandenBosch noted it also relates to "navigability" which is our responsibility/mission.

VandenBosch pointed out that prior to the Army Corps stepping back from their responsibility of dredging; the city and Harbor Commission were not involved with dredging.

Stephens reminded about filters for the storm drains as something to consider in the maintenance or preventative program.

Develop recommendations for maintaining ingress and egress . . . – Pyle asked if that statement could be part of the checklist. VandenBosch noted this is a general statement, while the details are specific. Suggested that this statement be combined with the first statement in this section.

Apply for . . . grant funding . . . other funding . . . for dredging . . . or other safety improvements - VandenBosch noted the city did get some funding for dredging and were fortunate that the Waterways Commission restated their priorities. General statement. Ways the commission can help: Ask the legislature to fund the Army Corps. Recommend that City Council pass a resolution which can then sent to our senator and representatives. Silverman noted that the

Harbor Commission does not apply for grant funding; VandenBosch noted there is a bit of overlap.

Things have happened due to Harbor Commission recommending activities. Silverman suggested “support efforts to obtain funding” as opposed to “apply for grant funding”.

2. Electrical Utilities.

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

Silverman thinks this is odd wording. “Is it within our area of responsibility?” VandenBosch said when people do work they must meet the code. Silverman wondered how the Harbor Commission can encourage electrical upgrades. Silverman wonders whether we need to have any reference to electrical. Sullivan noted he’s been working with an electrician who has told him that there have been deaths related to incorrect wiring across the country. Suggested educating as the commission did with direct fueling. Silverman asked what we can do to educate.

Delete or reword this statement? Replace “marinas and private slips” with “marinas and boat owners” since Sullivan noted that most stray voltage issues seem to originate with boat owners.

After discussion regarding the responsibilities of the Harbor Commission, Silverman read the Harbor Commissions statement in the City Code. VandenBosch asked if river safety is included in that. Stephens said it is a general statement but it seems to include code. VandenBosch suggested including this in the draft for further discussion. What about plumbing, mechanical and building codes? All affect the safety of the harbor.

3. Fueling of Marine Vessels.

VandenBosch said we did quite a bit; educated everybody in the harbor, including himself, fire marshall, marine patrol and the public. Everybody learned what rules apply. Made quite a bit of progress on this but it is ongoing.

Stephens noted that in the city code it says “the Harbor Commission shall with concurrence with the governing agency . . . recommend ordinances to the city.”

VandenBosch noted that when we started working on this there was not a lot of knowledge about how that ordinance should be applied and it was only by this board discussing it that we were all educated.

Discussion ensued whether the electrical issues and other codes (plumbing, building, mechanical) relates to what was done regarding direct fueling. VandenBosch wondered if we added “in the city marinas” would that make the electrical issue more relevant.

Annual electrical safety inspection has been done for several years; the city manager pushes testing for stray voltage each year before the boats get in the water (in the city marinas). Discussion of whether stray current is usually from a boat, which Sullivan stated the electrician he has been in contact with has said stray voltage usually originates with an incorrectly wired boat. Silverman believes we can encourage the city to continue to maintain their electrical system according to standards. Sullivan doesn't see much difference in education for the boaters about direct fueling or electrical safety while Silverman does not believe that our charge is that broad.

4. Emergency Services.

Promote a close working relationship. Meet at least annually to discuss mutual issues related to harbor safety. - Ongoing

VandenBosch noted we have been and probably should continue to work with agencies such as the Sheriff Marine Patrol, Coast Guard, Coast Guard Auxiliary, South Haven Police Department and South Haven Emergency Services.

Review procedures . . .

Encourage agencies to maintain oil absorbent equipment . . .

The city does maintain some oil absorbent equipment, probably could use more.

5. Erosion and Contaminants

Work with the DEQ, DNRE, and Drain Commission etc.

Add the Conservation District to this list.

Later discussion suggested changing the name of this section to read "Erosion, Contaminants and Other Environmental Issues.

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

The city has been testing for E.coli; we have a grant in to continue to do that. It is very difficult to follow it and make conclusions from the test results due to a time lag in receiving results.

Generally muddy water and high temperatures are indicative of possible presence of E.coli. It was noted that we do test in the river; we do not allow swimming in the river so other than kayakers and canoers there are not many direct contact issues. The city relies on the county to tell us when the count is too high in the beach area. VandenBosch said the purpose of the E.coli testing is to try to understand how it affects the beaches, not to shut off a section of the river or allow no contact. Pyle asked if you are testing the same area each time to develop a possible

pattern. VandenBosch said it hasn't been very helpful so far, inconclusive, just getting started, but we are writing a grant to do more testing.

Sullivan asked about sewage treatment plant or sanitary system overflows but generally the high E.coli counts are not coming from our system. Discussion of farming, animal feeding practices. VandenBosch stated he does not like to point fingers because currently we do not know where it is coming from.

6. Harbor Traffic Flow and Safety.

Discussion of the lights on the bridge and the video monitor for the bridge tenders due to the upcoming bridge work. Might help with traffic flow and safety. Silverman said he does not see congestion very often; VandenBosch said for the fireworks congestion is an issue but we do have the marine patrol for those times.

Ensure that the channel between the harbor lines is kept clear . . .

Silverman isn't comfortable with the word ensure. Sullivan said that is part of the duties of the harbor master, perhaps change "ensure that" to "support" Silverman said we don't have much to do with it, other than when the materials come before us for a permit, then we make a recommendation. If a dock is built without a permit it is up to the Harbormaster and the building department.

Silverman asked if there was a permit for docks by Oak Harbor. There is now a series of floating docks. Silverman said there are boats in there. VandenBosch will check into that.

Add a light to the bridge . . .

The City Engineer said there will be lights on the bridge. There were questions about how the lights will be set up to signal when the bridge is going to close, or whether there will be red and green lights for boats coming up and down river. Silverman said we should have the answers to those questions before they complete that bridge work as this directly impacts navigation and safety.

7. Public access.

Support public access and use . . .

It was suggested that the above stated be amended with the addition "of the South Haven Harbor."

Explore installation of a mast hoist . . .

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

Pyle wondered if the redevelopment of that area will include clear markings on pavement and noted that the driveway reconfiguration should be a help.

Silverman suggested changing the wording of this item to “Encourage safe use of the launch ramps”.

Silverman reminded that there was previous discussion of changing the launch area’s location. VandenBosch said we looked at that and did not pursue that because the sediment falls out there and the launch ramp area scours out. A grant application has been submitted to replace the launch ramps. There was discussion regarding accessibility and the narrowness of the docks; VandenBosch will look into width issue. It was noted that modifying one ramp for handicap access would be an improvement.

8. Signage.

After discussion of current and future signage, VandenBosch stated he needs to check the bridge signage plan. Silverman noted that the no wake sign has disappeared. Discussion ensued regarding signage for no wake sign; on the pier head is fine but the size was too big.

B. Municipal Marina Facilities.

1. Municipal Marina Facilities.

Promote quality facilities at all municipal marinas. – Ongoing

Delete the next two paragraphs (completed or outdated).

Reword the fourth paragraph to read “Support upgrade and expansion of the facilities at the Maritime Marina and Black River Park.”

Delete most of the next paragraph retaining “Keep all facilities handicap accessible.”

Support availability of bicycles for boater use at the municipal marinas. VandenBosch noted that bicycles have been a very popular item and we want to buy more.

C. Infrastructure.

1. Develop a Capital Improvement Plan

The first paragraph can be deleted since it has been completed.

Annually review all capital improvement plans. Slight wording change - Ongoing

2. Dinghy Docks and Paddle Craft Facilities

Eliminate the word “fully” so the paragraph reads:

Support the Pedestrian, Bicycle and Paddle Plan which was adopted by the City Council on 2/15/2009. Improve existing dinghy docks and access at the Dyckman bridge.

VandenBosch noted that we would like to have more dinghy docks but there are budget restrictions. Dinghy docks are also a maintenance issue as they must be removed for winter.

Link to the Paddle Plan is included here.

Clean out celery pond and creek (this has been done) to create a small craft launch site and dinghy dock.

High water makes it possible to be used although no dock has been installed. VandenBosch noted that the city applied for handicap access docks but didn't get any of those grants.

Add a dinghy dock to the Museum Marina.

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

There are river launch tours now . . . the launch is not being used as river taxis but they could be. We have a few docks. Need more.

3. Harbor Walk.

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

VandenBosch noted the city spends a lot of time on maintenance of the Harborwalk.

Stephens asked Marple about the harbor walk and maritime district. Marple said new interpretive displays will be modeled after our catwalk, all existing will be upgraded and we hope to add additional ones as time goes on. Once one is done and received we can start fundraising for subsequent ones.

Public access by Mariner's Cove and Piers End Cove – needs to be cleaned up to the greatest extent possible as we have an asset here that's unbelievable – miles of public access you don't get anywhere else. Maritime District wants to celebrate the history. Marple would like to see emphasis on ensuring that public access of harbor remains free and clear.

VandenBosch said we have discussed how to acquire land next to Piers End Cove; currently trying to purchase a little bit more room along what used to be the Three Pelicans property. Doesn't completely eliminate the pinch point.

Stephens suggested "Support the maintenance of all public access along the Harborwalk / Maritime District. Discussion ensued regarding the narrowness of the Harbor Walk in some areas.

Questions and discussion regarding what the Maritime District is. Marple explained that there are no defined boundaries by design. Stephens noted that some business owners are promoting the Maritime District. Marple (speaking as a business person) noted the Maritime District provides a unique characteristic for South Haven. Designation of a district is a proven method of attracting additional visitors. Speaking as a historical person, Marple stated, "We have a rich history, let's celebrate it!" then commented, "All we need is an Indian massacre."

VandenBosch stated that we do and told about the Ottawa, Potawatomi massacre near Harbor Springs. After interest was shown, VandenBosch stated he will send everyone a link. Suggested that South Haven needs to have a Chief Pokagon memorial; Pokagon himself claims this is his home. The bluff near the light keeper's house is significant in Chief Pokagon's narrative.

4. Green space & Views

Silverman suggested the following wording: Support the retainage and acquisition of adequate public space along waterfronts.

5. Former Street Garage

Keep sea wall extension statement.

D. Planning.

1. Future Development and Impact on Safe Navigation.

Silverman volunteered to revise this section and submit to VandenBosch.

2. Development Approval Role

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

Delete: Participate in any discussion regarding the Celery Pond property.

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

3. Natural Environment Preservation.

Consensus to delete this section, retaining only

Work with DNRE and other entities regarding environmental issues for the entire Black River watershed. – ongoing

Include the above statement in Section A-5 with suggested rewording.

VandenBosch will research the criteria of Clean Marina Status.

4. Effects of Development and Loss of Marine Services.

The group discussed why this section was written. It was during the era when the city lost Patterson Marine and was concerned about losing All Seasons Marine.

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.

Silverman suggested including these concerns into the study we have a consultant do.

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 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 appropriate contribution to harbor maintenance.

After questions and comments, VandenBosch informed the Commission that they may forward the bridge work email to anyone. This change was necessitated by a ruling from the Coast Guard.

3. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 7:47 p.m.

All in favor. Motion carried.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Marsha Ransom
Recording Secretary