

Harbor Commission

Regular Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, January 15, 2013
5:30 p.m., City Hall Council Chambers
South Haven City Hall



City of South Haven

1. Call to Order

Present: Pyle, Stephens, Strong, Sullivan, Arnold
Absent: Jeffers, Silverman

Also present: Patti Montgomery, Michigan Maritime Museum; John Marple, Marina Manager

2. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Sullivan, second by Strong to approve the agenda as presented.

All in favor. Motion carried.

3. Approval of Minutes: December 18, 2012 Meeting

Motion by Strong, second by Pyle to approve the December 18, 2012 minutes as written.

All in favor. Motion carried.

4. Interested Citizens in the Audience Will be Heard on Items Not on the Agenda

None at this time.

5. Marina Reports

VandenBosch reviewed the Marina Reports.

6. Dredging

VandenBosch updated the board on dredging activities. The Marina museum/barge work is done. A permit request for the north and south side marinas was sent to the Department of Environmental Quality and Army Corps of Engineers and is currently being reviewed.

Staff has been doing soundings and working on bid documents. VandenBosch asked if the board wants to add the turning basin to the dredging.

The board discussed various scenarios and combinations of areas to be dredged. VandenBosch noted that hydraulic dredging, which includes beach replenishment, is costlier than mechanical dredging which is what has been done this month. Since the permit is not in to the Army Corps and the Department of Environmental Quality, VandenBosch is not sure the city can dredge before July due to a prohibition on dredging in May and June. VandenBosch said his plan is to continue to move forward with a bid document but is still not sure the hydraulic dredging is possible in mid-July. VandenBosch suggested that staff have some soundings done so that perhaps some mechanical dredging/spot dredging can be done.

VandenBosch is only guessing at costs for dredging; not sure dredging will be possible at the pier head due to lack of funding and noted that the board has discussed the possibility of a special assessment to do the pier head dredging.

The board discussed doing a special assessment. VandenBosch explained the special assessment process, which includes public hearings and bringing dredging before council again. After a question regarding whether City Council has been made aware of the dredging need, VandenBosch said a recommendation has been sent to City Council but VandenBosch has not heard of any response.

Patti Montgomery, Michigan Maritime Museum. Explained the docking procedure of the Friends Good Will, noting that 90' of turning area is required and soundings in front of the museum dock are at 7'. Montgomery noted that there are other boats also that draw similar drafts. Montgomery requested some assistance from the board noting that the dredger has been very helpful; the Friends Good Will is presently not sitting on the bottom. Montgomery explained that the low water last year forced them to quit sailing three weeks early.

VandenBosch noted that at the Municipal Marina we tried to take the approach area down to 10', noting that there is the issue of timing and of funding with the current dredger.

Strong pointed out that "It doesn't do much good to be able to get in and out of the slips if you cannot get in and out of the lake." VandenBosch noted that he has seen breaking waves at the pier head which is kind of frightening; those breaking waves mean shallow water.

As Harbor Master, VandenBosch cannot authorize the kind of spending being requested by the Maritime Museum and the board cannot either; they could recommend help to the City Council.

VandenBosch pointed out the possibility of adding the turning basin to the north and south side dredging permit. Montgomery said the dredger is willing to do whatever dredging can be done but is limited by funding.

VandenBosch said he will get a report of what is available in the River Maintenance fund and the Marina fund.

Stephens asked if there is anything the board can do to speed up the process of getting the dredging done. VandenBosch reiterated the prohibition on dredging between May 1 and June 30, and noted that the current delay is the permitting process; VandenBosch thought we would have a bid the end of last week but it has not been received yet. It probably takes about sixty days for the Department of Environmental Quality, which brings us to March 15. Upper harbor bids will be started immediately but VandenBosch needs direction from this board, because the upper harbor needs to be done and the pier heads needs to be done.

Stephens asked what specific guidance is needed from the board. VandenBosch said the board needs to get the soundings before any recommendations can be made to Council. Stephens asked what the board can do to speed up the process, to which VandenBosch responded by providing guidance on how the funding should be spent.

Stephens asked if we knew the condition at the pier heads, we could make a better decision. VandenBosch said he will ask the engineer to do soundings on the main channel. VandenBosch explained that there is not much more the board can do; as soon as he has the soundings and a recommendation from the board, he will send the request off with a check to the Department of Environmental Quality.

Motion by Stephens, second by Pyle, that soundings be done in the entire main channel as soon as possible.

Sullivan asked what area that entails doing soundings to which VandenBosch said he would want soundings from the pier head to the city limits. Strong said the sandbar is not inside the pier heads, but outside the pier heads. VandenBosch said the biggest part is getting them out there to record that area. Stephens said usually on soundings reports an area outside the pier heads is shown.

Arnold called the question. All in favor. Motion carried.

There was discussion about timing, including if the river gets icy the soundings will have to be postponed.

Arnold said that with limited funds the board is trying to focus on the most immediate needs. Montgomery explained that if the pier heads are not dredged, they might need to find another port to call home for this season. Public safety was discussed, as well as this being an important year for the Friends Good Will with scheduled re-enactments and appearances. Montgomery noted that the pier heads are her big concern; also, noting that with the Lindy Lou they understand the need for some dredging upriver. Montgomery noted that the museum would contribute financially what they could.

Arnold assured that the board does not want to see the Friends Good Will leave so the museum's needs will be considered in any discussions.

7. Fish Cleaning Station

VandenBosch has heard some concerns from the Council and others along with suggestions that the station be put outside the gates. There was also discussion regarding the grinder not being strong enough. VandenBosch said he is not sure what the needs are from the fisherman point of view. Strong noted that there are people that are not moored in the city marina who are told that they cannot use the fish cleaning station. VandenBosch explained why staff has had that policy.

Pyle said some of the bigger things that creates a problem is lack of lighting and hours of operation. Guys fish at night; some night fish only. Pyle noted that Grand Haven and Holland both have very nice facilities, noting that she has seen fishermen cleaning fish with their headlights providing the only light. VandenBosch asked if putting the station outside the gated area would be a good idea to which Pyle responded that she believes it would attract fisherman if there was a good fish cleaning station. VandenBosch noted that there would need to be water extensions. Possible alternative locations were discussed. VandenBosch said staff is looking for grants. Pyle said she thinks moving the station away from the gate would be helpful because of the congestion that happens in that area.

Stephens asked whether making the north side fish station more accessible would be good to which Strong replied in the affirmative. VandenBosch will get as much information as possible about the Holland fish cleaning station and their grant application.

Stephens asked about grants for dredging. VandenBosch said he heard recently at a meeting that there is grant money available for dredging transient marinas.

8. General Comments

Strong requested an update on the North side project. VandenBosch said the project is on schedule according to the city's schedule; the contractor is two weeks behind by his own schedule, which is a mid-March completion.

Member and Staff Comments

Stephens said St. Joe ran out of money and water; so they are closed to commercial traffic. VandenBosch pointed out that our marinas will be open for boating this year.

Pyle asked whether staff is marketing the marinas to reflect that. John Marple, Marina Manager stated he is receiving one or two phone calls a day with people looking for a place to dock their boats. Marple is starting a waiting list for one year only people; "I want to fill up every slip we have this year one way or another." The transient marina worries Marple but he informed that other port cities are experiencing the same problems. Marple saw an

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island in the Kalamazoo River up by Saugatuck/Douglas. Some boaters are worried that they might not be able to get their boats here due to where they stored their boats for the winter. Marple acknowledged that we are in a difficult situation, however the City is responding quite well. Marple is worried about allocating the money; "So many things are important, where do you decide to put your money?"

Marple will get a feel for the market at the sail only show, where he hopes to listen to boaters and what they have to say.

VandenBosch. March 1, 2013 at 10:30 am there will be a Webinar and he will have it going here for those who are interested.

VandenBosch. Was interviewed by the Free Press. So you may see an article mentioning South Haven in the Detroit Free Press.

9. Adjourn

Motion by Strong, second by Stephens to adjourn at 6:38 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Marsha Ransom
Recording Secretary