

Harbor Commission

Regular Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, January 17, 2012
5:30 p.m., City Hall Council Chambers



City of South Haven

1. Call to Order by Jeffers at 5:30 p.m.

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

2. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Arnold, second by Sullivan to approve the agenda with the addition of:

- o 6a. A resolution recommending use of the Harbor Maintenance Fund
- o 6b. Election of a chair and vice chair.

All in favor. Motion carried.

3. Approval of Minutes - November 15, 2011 Regular Meeting

Motion by Strong, second by Sullivan to approve the November 15, 2011 Regular Meeting minutes as written

All in favor. Motion carried.

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

There were none.

5. Financial Report

VandenBosch gave an overview of the financial report, noting there is not much financial action this time of year. VandenBosch pointed out that there were deposit dollars which came in for seasonal dock rentals for 2012.

VandenBosch indicated the silhouette of a coyote which he hopes to use at the Black River Park to scare the geese away. The City of St. Joseph has had success using similar silhouettes near the Carousel on Silver Beach and at the marina.

VandenBosch updated the commission on the construction of the new North Marina clubhouse which will not begin until October 15, 2012. VandenBosch noted that planning for the project is moving along.

VandenBosch reviewed the State Reservation System and noted that city staff is working on the steps to get the state system implemented. One question yet to be answered is whether the City only implements the system in the South Marina or does more than that. One aspect is that the State has to receive information from the City regarding how many slips and where they are located to put into their database before the City can do anything. VandenBosch said staff is moving towards a resolution with the state.

VandenBosch noted that staff has been working with Carrie Brantley on marketing the marinas. Stephens asked whether the City would be attending the Grand Rapids Boat Show. Abshire noted that there is a fee to participate and the City will not pay the fee. A paid and an unpaid participant cannot get in free under the non-profit. VandenBosch explained the financial aspects, noting that the Maritime Museum gets in free and will take some of our brochures there and perhaps to Chicago and another show.

Regarding the Queen's Cup, VandenBosch noted that there has not been a lot of activity recently; that will probably pick up early in the spring. The various committees met intensively before the snow birds left for the season.

Stephens asked whether the seasonal boaters have been notified of the construction start date. VandenBosch noted that an e-mail was sent out to the full mailing list when that decision was made in mid-November 2011.

6. 2012 Meeting Schedule

VandenBosch said this is a standard meeting date resolution required by the Open Meetings Act. VandenBosch reviewed the dates in case of conflicts with holidays but other than December 18, which is fairly close to Christmas, did not really see any conflicts. The regular scheduled meeting dates for 2012 are as follows:

- o January 17, 2012
- o February 21, 2012
- o March 20, 2012
- o April 17, 2012
- o May 15, 2012
- o June 19, 2012
- o July 17, 2012
- o August 21, 2012
- o September 18, 2012
- o October 16, 2012
- o November 20, 2012
- o December 18, 2012

Motion by Arnold, second by Sullivan to approve Resolution 12-01, a resolution setting Harbor Commission meeting dates for 2012.

All in favor. Motion carried.

6a. Use of the Harbor Maintenance Fund

VandenBosch noted that there is a Harbor Maintenance Fund which is available to fund maintenance on rivers but is being used by the federal government for other things although it was paid for by harbor freight company's fees. This resolution calls for a law to be passed to give the Army Corps of Engineers money to dredge harbors. Stephens asked if that fund is designated for commercial harbors. VandenBosch said no, "but it is paid for by commercial freight fees." VandenBosch noted that there is a Great Lakes Coalition which has been working on this for some time.

Stephens asked if this resolution would be passed to City Council. VandenBosch responded that this resolution will be sent to our representation in the United States Congress: Representative Upton, Senator Stabenow and Senator Levin.

Motion by Strong to approve Resolution 12-02, a resolution calling for use of the Harbor Maintenance Fund. Second by Arnold.

All in favor. Motion carried.

6b. Vote for Chair and Vice-Chair

VandenBosch noted that he received a voice mail from Jeffers stating that since he would not be able to attend meetings for a while Jeffers did not feel it was right for him to continue as chair. VandenBosch stated that he usually likes to receive such notice in writing, so he is just passing on the message as he received it. After discussion, the commission decided to table any decision until the next meeting.

Motion by Arnold, second by Strong to table the vote for Chair and Vice-Chair until the next meeting.

All in favor. Motion carried.

7. Wave Absorbers

VandenBosch asked Abonmarche whether there was anything that could be done to control the wave/swell issue at the South Beach. The short answer, according to VandenBosch, is that we could control the swells by installing wave absorbers; which would extend out to the sides and consist of rip-rap, which would include both demolition and construction. Although actual pricing has not been done, VandenBosch feels it could be a possible one million dollar project. VandenBosch cautioned that the commission and staff would want to keep that in mind; that the City needs and wants to have a wave absorber; they have been

installed in other places. VandenBosch will notify the Army Corps of Engineers that the City does have a problem and would like to have a wave absorber. Staff may try to write a grant. If the Army Corps is funded and looking for projects; the city might get in a queue to get something like this done. VandenBosch noted that there is an Army Corps meeting coming up in February; and that any time he has reason to correspond with the Corps he will mention that we have a problem with swells that could be solved with a wave absorber.

Strong said he came into Saugatuck harbor on a very rough day and when he hit those absorbers the swells were flattened right out. String noted that while he hardly believed it, it really helped. The board discussed the affect of waves on the South Marina. Abshire noted that it is pretty bad; when there are straight westerly winds the folks in the South Marina do not get any sleep due to the rocking and rolling.

VandenBosch said he does not know how the city could fund something like the wave absorber; he does not think anyone wants a special assessment on such a project. VandenBosch suggested that maybe the federal government will do something.

8. Marina Audit

VandenBosch noted that the three items; record-keeping (how many boats are in the harbor how many nights and the financial tie to the revenue/deposits made), discounting and staff hiring, are the main focus after staff's review of the audit findings.

VandenBosch noted that the city will be putting in *fiber internet* sometime in the summer of 2012; staff is in the process of responding to the request by boaters for hard wired internet access.

Reservation System. VandenBosch noted that many people reserve slips ahead of time. The Reservation System includes every transaction including credit card point of sale; it is in an accounting system that requires staff, at the end of every shift, to count their till and report any shortage/overage. VandenBosch noted that this is a very important part of the operation.

Ticket and Database System. VandenBosch said if the city does not adopt the State Reservation System on the Northside Marina, Museum Marina and Black River Park, some changes will have to be made in the current ticket system for those locations. Tickets with numbers on them are written up for every boat in the harbor; VandenBosch noted that if there are errors on a numbered ticket, employees should void it and not destroy it, as has been done in the past. Mistake tickets will be added into the database. Short term dockage will be a separate item in the database.

Stephens had questions about where the new record keeping will be implemented. VandenBosch said there will be some training in March which VandenBosch and Abshire will attend. The city has to get computers and get our inventory (number of docks) into the State's Database. VandenBosch noted that there is a lot to be done before April 15, the first day of the boating season. At this point, VandenBosch explained, staff cannot tell whether just the Southside Marina will implement the state system or whether other city marinas will be included.

VandenBosch said the City Marinas will have to pay a fee to the company that implements this program for every boater. VandenBosch noted that staff is looking at a variety of different options right now. Stephens has some concerns about continuing to use the ticket system.

Discounting. Discounts will be submitted in writing to city management before use. VandenBosch noted there really are not many discounts and in the future the only ones to be used must be approved by city management.

Staff Hiring. VandenBosch said the Human Resource Director will review and approve all hires prior to employment.

VandenBosch noted that auditors come in and look for specific things and some of the findings were errors in the audit which Abshire can explain. VandenBosch opened the meeting for Abshire to respond to those and to air her concerns.

Abshire noted that she has reviewed the audit and made several pages of notes; she stated that the system in use right now has room for improvement. This system was put together by Abshire and another staff member due to a request from the State of Michigan. The state wanted information on boat size; whether the boat is power or sail and the length of stay. Abshire noted that staff used a model from the state. In keeping records, some staff entered the amount of money and some did not; Abshire pointed out that there was nothing requested or required by the state about money/fees at that time.

Abshire said the auditors did not have the right number of boat slips and noted that the Finance Director would like to see everything match and if there is a discrepancy that there be a note why.

The ticket numbers are out of sequence because they are shared between all the marinas and Black River Park. The tickets were kept in one place and when another location needed tickets, staff would grab a stack and take them to that location. Abshire stated that there will have to be a way to keep track of the numbering if this system continues to be used. Abshire also said if the City continues to use this system, all transactions need to be entered on a daily basis rather than on an "as time allows" basis.

Abshire noted that the auditors found fees not being consistent but there are so many variables with how the fees are determined. For example, a boat might come in and there are no slips available for the size the boat is, so Abshire will assign them to a longer slip and charge them a fee between the two.

Some of the things that the auditors considered errors were things Abshire just had in her head. She said maybe there should be a daily journal of these events; currently Abshire makes notes or just remembers things.

Abshire noted that when a boater comes in, they have already paid a whole night's stay as a deposit. If they stay for four days they only pay for three at the time they arrive. Abshire explained that when some boaters came in for a short time and then decided they wanted to stay the rest of the season, Abshire worked with someone in the Finance Department to

figure out a fair fee to charge them. These situations would account for at least some of the discrepancies noted in the audit.

An overcharge found by the auditors, according to Abshire, was charged correctly but recorded incorrectly in her Excel spreadsheet due to a copy error.

Early deposits boaters paid for the 2012 boating season do not, properly, show up in the 2011 revenues and the \$1,000 a 125' boat gave her does not match the typical fee charged, which accounts for some of the discrepancies as well.

Abshire noted that she counts transients that are here for a few hours as a boater day, and pointed out that they generally come in, do some shopping, have lunch, and stock up with groceries and beer, then head out, which contributes to the city's revenues. Cancellations are not counted as a boat day because although they had a reservation, they did not come; they did not fill out the boater registration.

Regarding the maintenance position, Abshire stated she had discussed this hire with the City Manager. The maintenance person saved the City quite a bit of money by doing repairs and maintenance that would have had to be done by a contractor and paid for at a much higher rate.

VandenBosch said staff looked at the auditors comments and were able to focus in on just the items we proposed as a response and we are making a good effort to address those issues. By April 15, we should be ready for some improvements for the 2012 season.

9. Strategic Plan

VandenBosch noted that it is getting near budget time; looking at the Strategic Plan helps in zeroing in on items that need to be done which might need to be funded through the budget. VandenBosch asked for comments and changes which could be discussed tonight or at the next meeting.

Sullivan asked if the items we have accomplished could be removed. VandenBosch said he can go through and mark those that have been accomplished and provide the information in the next agenda. Strong said we could go over it next month after VandenBosch has cleaned up the Strategic Plan; at that time we can determine what is left to do.

Stephens said she would like to see the process go faster next month than it has in the past. Strong said two things he is concerned about: 1.) *upgrade of electrical wiring* and how it could be communicated to the private marinas that it is a safety issue and needs to be addressed. Strong mentioned seeing boats with electric cords running from somewhere on the dock or land on to a boat in a slip. Strong also pointed out that there is nothing about 2.) *safe refueling* in our bylaws. Most marinas as old as Strong's are old and not up to code. Stephens said that is an excellent question. VandenBosch said he sent out letters last year and got about a 50% response. VandenBosch noted that probably the mailing needs to be repeated every year. Last year's mailing was mainly done in an attempt to educate about direct fueling. We could use that list to send a reminder about proper refueling and about electrical

upgrades. VandenBosch reiterated the question of how to encourage marinas to upgrade wiring noting that private ones probably do not want others to tell them what to do. VandenBosch agreed It would be good to have a statement encouraging the upgrade of electrical wiring; but it needs to be done diplomatically. If you see electrical problems as you go down the river, let VandenBosch know and he will try to contact people. Sullivan said it is important to make people aware of the dangers of outdated electrical wiring, similar to what the Harbor Commission did with the direct fueling issue.

VandenBosch said one thing that can be done is make marina owners aware that the City is having its electric system tested on an annual basis; maybe that would encourage them to do the same kind of a test. Letting people know there is such a service in town might be helpful. VandenBosch said the City could run a news brief noting that the City has done this, using Russ Puckett, for marine safety reasons. Sullivan noted that private marinas have to do cross-contamination water tests every year; maybe we should be required to do electrical inspections. VandenBosch noted that once a new installation is approved there is no further inspection required by the city. When something needs repair, you have to get it inspected, and then the inspector tells you what you have to do. Stephens said if there is a need for help gathering more marina names and contact information she could help with that. VandenBosch said he could possibly put a notice in the Waves, the newsletter that is sent out to all the utility customers. Strong suggested rules concerning marine vessels; perhaps a poster that private marinas could post on their bulletin board. Stephens said we have a poster we can use. VandenBosch will write a news item to be put in the Waves, and closer to spring we can talk about the poster.

Member and Staff Comments

There were none.

Adjourn

Motion by Arnold, second by Sullivan to adjourn at 6:32 p.m.

All in favor. Motion carried.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Marsha Ransom
Recording Secretary