

Harbor Commission

Regular Meeting Minutes

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



City of South Haven

1. Call to Order

Present: Jeffers, Pyle, Silverman, Sullivan, Stephens, Strong, Arnold
Absent: None

Also present: John Marple, Marina Manager

2. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Stephens, second by Silverman to approve the agenda as presented. All in favor.
Motion carried.

3. Approval of Minutes: June 19, 2012 Meeting

Motion by Silverman, second by Sullivan to approve the June 19, 2012 regular meeting minutes as corrected. 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

John Marple, Marina Manager updated the board on the condition of the marinas, which have been kept up well by Abshire; he has encountered very few issues with such things as electrical and plumbing. Updated the board on one area of concern; the electrical system. Boaters have complained of insufficient voltage at some pedestals and Marple knows the ones at the Maritime Museum are about twenty-five years old because he was Harbor Master when those pedestals were installed. Marple gave kudos to the City Electrical Department for quick response times to check things out when there has been an electrical issue. According to Russ Puckett Electrical Services there is no problem with the amount of electric coming

into the facility itself. Marple updated the board on when Russ Puckett will be in the marinas again; Puckett is coming down this week to see if the electrical problem is with the pedestals.

Marple updated the board regarding the Queen's Cup event, noting that he was very proud of the staff at the Municipal Marina during this event, especially given that staff had to deal with a new boss who had only been there two (2) days or so. Marple feels that the weak link at the marinas is lack of training, since there is not much training prior to the season. Marple is working on updating job descriptions for positions at the marinas, noting Abshire only had one job description: "everyone does everything". Marple found that some of the seasoned staff are great at customer service. Marple has one person who is in charge of cleaning and is a wizard at keeping everything clean. Marple has instituted a reservation desk; based on his experience at managing Old Harbor Inn, "You have to call the State" is not the right way to go about making reservations when a potential client calls into the marinas.

Marple updated the board regarding the transient marina, which seems to be empty most of the time. Marple advanced some possible theories, including customer service and the economy, both of which may have had a small part to play. Marple strongly suggested that there be more emphasis on attracting boaters. Given our location and the condition of the facilities, including that the City will have a new marina facility at the North Marina next year, the City needs to market this great property. After questions from the board, Marple noted that VandenBosch has a list of marketing ideas, Marple has a list of ideas and they are both open for suggestions. Marple stated, "These boaters are a great asset to our City".

Marple explained that marina staff are lacking in training, not in their ability to carry out their jobs; "We are working on that (training) daily".

Marple updated the board on marina staff attire, stating that he hates the lime green t-shirts. Marple, with the agreement of VandenBosch and City Manager Dissette, has some nice polo shirts on order, which should arrive soon but unfortunately probably not in time for the visit from the Waterfront Commission this week.

After questions from the board, Marple confirmed that Marina staff is doing all of the reservations in-house, including making the reservations online at the State web site after getting the information needed from the caller. Marple believes these boaters need to be treated as potential guests. Marple has some concerns about the administrative part of how the State does the reservations but the front-end, taking a reservation on line, is relatively simple. Marple feels comfortable with staff handling that; Marple is not comfortable telling folks, "You have to call the State". Some potential customers are not computer savvy; some are out on the lake with no access to the Internet when they call in. City staff needs to be friendlier, according to Marple.

Sullivan asked about the electric pedestals at the Maritime Museum; Sullivan thought Abshire had started replacing the pedestals and wondered if the replacements needed are already budgeted. Marple said the original pedestals on the head dock on the North Side were put in twenty-five years ago when he was Harbor Master. Marple noticed that some of the dock lights were out and contacted Russ Puckett Electrical Services, who has been able to get most of the lights going. Marple noted that there are a lot of thirty amp services while many

newer boats require fifty amp services. After further discussion, Marple noted that the South side pedestals were upgraded this year; VandenBosch confirmed that those pedestal replacements were budgeted for. Marple explained to the board that the City has a great facility; there needs to be investment in upgrades to keep our marinas attractive. Silverman said many marinas are also having this problem; the electric services were not designed for the electric draw of some of the bigger boats; some of them are running five (5) air conditioners.

Silverman thanked Marple for taking over the Marina Manager position and for his immediate realization of the importance of the Queen's Cup. Marple was also thanked for sitting down with one of the South Haven Yacht Club members who was a volunteer for the Harbor and Marina Division and for the long hours they worked, doing incredible planning. As a result when approximately one-hundred seventy-five boats entered our harbor they had better accommodations than many other harbors could have provided. Every boat was identified as it came in; instructed where to go; if arrival was after dark the new arrival was led in by a dinghy. Silverman also updated the board and staff that the comments and accolades he has received have been extraordinary; that Marple did a great job and his staff did a great job under Marple's direction. Silverman told the board that he left to participate in the race with no worries, knowing everything was under control.

Chairman Arnold noted that as a City Council member he has heard nothing but positive comments.

Marple noted that the initial rush of fifty big boats was bedlam and during that time he looked upriver and another fifteen were coming down the river; simultaneously he got a message that sixty-five more were right behind the fifteen. Marple described it as Intense but noted that everybody did a terrific job.

VandenBosch gave an overview of the financial reports included in the agenda packet. VandenBosch noted that the Transient Marina revenue is coming in differently than it did in the past, with a delay of a month or so from the time when the State gets their money until it filters down to the City. Silverman asked whether the revenues are being tracked on a "cash received basis" which VandenBosch responded is correct.

Silverman asked if there is anything in particular to which VandenBosch attributes the increase in revenue; VandenBosch agreed with board members who pointed out the good weather and the good fishing. Pyle thinks the checks and balances of the new system are contributing, also. VandenBosch noted that the beach parking revenues are much better, and attributed some of that to there being more parking spaces on South Beach. The new meters are working well and a record was set on boat launch fees which VandenBosch cannot explain.

VandenBosch directed the board's attention to a thank-you note which was received from the Kalamazoo Sail & Power Squadron because they were permitted to do vessel safety checks at the public launch ramp of Black River Park.

VandenBosch commented on Lake levels.

VandenBosch updated the board on the pending visit by the Waterways Commission which is doing a video on how to market a marina and requested that South Haven participate. The commission will be in South Haven on Thursday. Silverman commented positively on Marple's focus on marketing the transient marina.

VandenBosch also updated the board on bids received for the North Side Marina facility; the low bidder came in lower than the architects estimate.

6. 423 Williams St, Boat Lift Site Plan

VandenBosch noted that this plan is on the land side of the harbor lines, so it does not encroach into the harbor. VandenBosch reviewed the Site Plan Review application.

Motion by Silverman that the Harbor Commission make findings as to questions 1, 2, 3 and 4 and recommend that the project be approved. Second by Stephens. All in favor. Motion carried.

7. Bridge Response

Video monitoring system and warning lights will be added to the bridge during the rehabilitation project which should begin this fall and as funding becomes available. Jeffers asked about a specific date but although the City Managers goal is to have the work done during the off-season sometimes things come up; noted that the bridge will be open and unusable and perhaps closed to boat traffic while the work is being done.

8. Dredging Permit Proposal

VandenBosch pointed out to the board that the emergency permit application is the same one used for regular dredging but the Corps may respond more quickly. VandenBosch explained about some of the issues regarding permits; VandenBosch asked for quotes from Abonmarche, an engineering firm, they gave us a 3-part bid which VandenBosch explained. Abonmarche's recommendation was to not do the Federal Navigation Channel unless we have to, because we may have a chance for them to come back. VandenBosch is hoping to authorize Abonmarche to go ahead with Section 1 & 2 because it takes a year to a year and a half to get these permits.

Stephens asked if the City is resolved not to pursue Army Corps permit; VandenBosch said that is his recommendation. Silverman suggested considering acquiring a permit for the pier heads; Stephens supported that suggestion. There was some discussion regarding boats running aground, particularly during the Queen's Cup. Silverman suggested dredging pier head to pier head and 50-to 100 feet each side of the pier heads.

The board discussed whether doing some of the dredging ourselves would mean that the Army Corps would not come in to dredge in the future; VandenBosch noted that is speculation. There was discussion regarding dredging, fishing, the wall that is planned,

sediment traps and if the cost is related to whether you have property to put the spoils on. There was discussion regarding testing; VandenBosch noted that this request asks Abonmarche to do more than the last firm did previously. VandenBosch asked if there is consensus to add the pier head shoaling as a separate request. Silverman supported that due to the positive impact of Friends Good Will to the community; if they get locked out they might leave South Haven. Silverman also noted that it is very important for the City to maintain that channel.

Motion by Silverman that an additional permit be obtained to dredge the area generally described as between the pier heads and extending east and west of the area between the pier heads to provide an ample opening into the harbor. Second by Stephens. All in favor. Motion passes.

Member and Staff Comments

Silverman noted that the Queen's Cup was a success due to the cooperation of many entities.

VandenBosch hopes to schedule a meeting between the Harbor Commission and the North Side boaters tentatively scheduled for August 11, 2012 at 10:00 a.m. After discussion, that date was changed to August 18, 2012 at 10:00 a.m. because August 9 through 12 is Blueberry Festival. The discussion turned to the reasons for meeting with the boaters. VandenBosch asked the board about including transients and discussion found the board in agreement that the transients are among the ones we need to market, so VandenBosch will invite the transient boaters.

Pyle had questions about the fish cleaning station: "Is the fish cleaning station open? What are the hours?" VandenBosch noted that the current grinder cannot handle the salmon and the sewer got clogged. Staff is looking into acquiring a new larger grinder. The current one is 17 year old and needs replacing. Pyle suggested step-by-step instructions be posted in the fish cleaning station. Pyle has gotten a lot of complaints about the dead carp in the drainage ditch along the celery pond; right by the bike trail. VandenBosch explained that the Department of Environmental Quality required the city to put in a rock dam to maintain the level of the celery pond, so the carp cannot get into the celery pond and those already in the pond area cannot get out. VandenBosch will check into the drainage situation.

Strong mentioned an issue of a potential customer calling for a charter for the next day which would require an early bridge opening at 6:00 a.m. Strong called the Police Department at 4:00 p.m. and no one was there; the call got sent to Van Buren County Dispatch and resulted in quite a run around. Strong pointed out that this is a potential problem for someone who does not have the names and personal numbers of the bridge tenders as Strong does.

Silverman inquired about applications for Marina Manager and whether Marple has an interest.

Adjourn

Motion by Silverman, second by Stephens to adjourn at 6:39 p.m. All in favor. Motion carried.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Marsha Ransom
Recording Secretary