

Harbor Commission

Regular Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, September 18, 2012
5:30 p.m., City Hall Council Chambers



City of South Haven

1. Call to Order by Arnold at 5:42 p.m.

Roll Call:

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

2. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Stephens, second by Jeffers to approve the September 18, 2012 Harbor Commission agenda with the addition of 5a.Chad Bard, Charter Boat, after Marina Reports.

All in favor. Motion carried.

3. Approval of Minutes: August 21, 2012 Meeting

Motion by Sullivan, second by Stephens to approve the August 21, 2012 Harbor Commission 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

None at this time.

5. Marina Reports

VandenBosch gave an overview of the Marina Reports.

Jeffers asked when the docks will be pulled out, to which VandenBosch responded that Pyle has asked that we keep the docks in the water as long as possible.

Stephens asked what VandenBosch can attribute the increased revenue to and VandenBosch listed good weather, good fishing, seasonal cards and the new gate.

VandenBosch noted that the lower lake levels are a concern and the main thing affecting the depth of the river. While many complaints have been received the City is unable to dredge deeper due to a conflict with the sanitary sewer. Traditionally, the dredging has been done to 5.7' below the low water datum. While the middle of the river is pretty good; there are a couple of spots, especially in the bends, which are particular problems, according to VandenBosch.

Sullivan asked what it would take to get dredging done and VandenBosch explained the application process, bid documents, and which areas could be dredged. Abonmarche has been asked for a proposal to put together bid documents for dredging the Museum, North and South Marinas. In addition to that VandenBosch hopes to try to spot dredge at Slipaway Cove and widen the river out by the boat launch. VandenBosch explained that the process leading to dredging is already underway. Exactly what gets done still has to be determined, but VandenBosch asserted that the Municipal Marinas can and will be done.

Sullivan asked what problems there have been in the Municipal Marina due to the water levels; VandenBosch said problems have mostly been with sailboats with deep draft. VandenBosch noted the dredging of the marinas will be done out of the Marina Fund and half of the application work will be paid for out of the Marina Fund as a way to share costs. VandenBosch would like to include spot-dredging if possible.

The board discussed assessments for dredging, those who will choose to opt out and when the various areas could be dredged. VandenBosch has talked to DK Construction, which has said they would have time during the winter to do the dredging. VandenBosch suggested maybe the Museum Marina and turning basin could be done in the winter. That would give assurance to the Friends Good Will.

5a. Chad Bard, Charter Boat Captain Proposal

VandenBosch introduced Captain Chad Bard of a local charter boat business. VandenBosch noted that Bard is thinking of bringing another boat into South Haven and asking to put a floating dock at Riverfront Park for the use of the charter fishing boat.

Bard noted this is his seventh season; there is a big demand in South Haven. Having another boat available would increase the number of people coming to South Haven.

VandenBosch said the proposal is to put in a floating dock with two walkways that pivot. There is some surge there; and while the current floating dock is a dinghy dock which isn't designed very well because the whole dock has leverage at the two mounting points, Bard assured that he can bring in a better designed dock. Bard said what he is proposing will look nice and be well-designed; we are professional, we pay for everything and ensure safety and hold the City harmless. Bard's business carries \$500,000 of liability insurance, which is a lot, but if you need it increased that is not a problem and simple to do.

Stephens noted that usually when the Commission considers things like this we have a diagram and site plan to look at. There was discussion of the possibilities of location, security and that the boat would not be beyond the headwall of the marina. VandenBosch noted that one option is that the charter boat captain installs it, while the other is that the marina could install a head dock. The area being considered is fairly deep because it is on the main channel. There is a shortage of deep slips in the marinas. VandenBosch if the City would consider putting in a head dock the City could rent space to charter boats.

Bard asked what arrangement the City has with Vanderzee which VandenBosch said Vanderzee pays \$1,500 per year.

Bard said his proposal is a win-win situation for everyone; he is willing to work with the City and would like his business to be more visible. Sullivan has an issue with the jet-ski operation and the river has gotten crowded down there. VandenBosch said we had talked about putting Charter Boats at Southside but the concern is putting them near boats that have people sleeping in them, charter boats go out early and come back late. Sullivan suggested a touch-and-go spot in the South Side. Sullivan does not like to see the commercialization of anything west of the South Marina.

Jeffers suggested designating some slips on the South Side for charter boats. Bard commented that is what he initially wanted and he would be willing to pay \$4 grand to rent the slip; that is what his business pays in Grand Haven. Bard says he thinks renting a slip will work even better than putting in the head dock. Stephens asked whether we could have a conversation about designating some slips for charter boats. VandenBosch explained that perhaps the City could look at putting some transient slips on the North Side and explained how the Waterways grant requires the City to have a designated number of transient slips. If charter fishing boats are to be accommodated at the South Side there will have to be transient slips elsewhere. VandenBosch noted it is a complicated situation but it can be done.

Arnold said one of City Council's priorities is for the South Side to become a destination. Arnold would like to see some other options. Bard's response was, "If you would just let us put a boat in the last slip, the one no one wants, then others will want to do something similar they could come back to the Harbor Commission and get permission".

VandenBosch suggested asking the Marina Manager to look at the idea and give his input. VandenBosch suggested talking about the concept to other people and the Harbor Commission could talk about this proposal next month. VandenBosch noted it would be a good way to show that South Haven is a fishing destination, not just a recreational boating destination.

Several members made comments about keeping the commercialization of the South Side to a minimum.

6. 412 Walnut Street

Vandenbosch explained the application and noted that he saw no concerns; the proposed pilings are well within harbor lines. It seems to be a fairly minor project. VandenBosch recommends that the Harbor Commission approve it. There was discussion regarding why it was being done, which VandenBosch did not know, and whether the aerial on page thirty (30) of the packet shows the harbor lines in red, which VandenBosch confirmed as correct.

Motion by Sullivan, second by Stephens to approve the application as submitted.

All in favor. Motion carried.

7. Marina Rates

VandenBosch noted that the only thing that is changing is the text about discounts. One change is a promotion for new seasonal boaters to get a one-time discount of \$500 and after the first year we hope they come back for many years. It also includes a proposal for shallow draft slips to be used for inflatables, dinghies and other small boats.

VandenBosch said in the past if people come in and requested a slip longer than their boat, Abshire would take two feet off the length of the slip (if one was available) just to lessen the blow a little bit. What is being proposed for seasonal slips is that the Marina Manager could sell longer slips and charge a rate equal to the boat length plus one half the difference between the slip length and boat length.

This document also gives the Marina Manager the ability to request special rates with the written approval of the City Manager. This would be for extraordinary conditions such as surge, shallow draft or other conditions that make the slip difficult to rent. VandenBosch noted that he hopes to see this used infrequently but applied when appropriate.

VandenBosch noted that Transient Slip fees are the same. A new remainder of season discount has been proposed; after July 15 a seasonal slip may be rented for the remainder of the season, with the fee calculated as the number of days remaining until October 15 times the minimum Waterways Transient rate for the length of the boat.

VandenBosch outlined the possibilities for Commercial Use of Slips at Black River Park. Sullivan questioned if there are any prohibitions at Black River Park for commercial use of slips. The Marina Manager will have to use discretion in indicating where charter or commercial boats may be located.

Sullivan asked whether boat launch fees should be increased. VandenBosch noted that keeping the gate up all year may bring in more revenue. VandenBosch noted it is a good time to start thinking about whether there should be a transfer from the boat launch fees to the River Maintenance Fund. This is a budget issue so VandenBosch will try to speak with Finance Director and City Manager closer to budget time.

Motion by Stephens, second by Jeffers to approve the Resolution setting the seasonal and transient slip rates at South Haven Municipal Marinas as presented.

All in favor. Motion carries.

8. Marina Manager Contract

VandenBosch gave an overview of the contract and how it works; the Marina Manager's business, HAPA, LLC, will contract with the City of South Haven with details outlined in the South Haven Marina Manager Independent Contractor Agreement. The Marina Manager will hire employees who will be HAPA employees, not City of South Haven employees. VandenBosch noted that there are still some cost lines that have not been filled out; still waiting for the Finance Director to provide those figures.

VandenBosch noted that there are two incentives for the Marina Manager: 1.) increased revenue over the previous year and 2.) keep the personnel cost lower than the budgeted amount.

Jeffers inquired about customer satisfaction; VandenBosch detailed several customer service activities that the Marine Manager has to do which will provide feedback.

There was discussion about the attire of employees. VandenBosch detailed who will pay for the shirts and type of shirts.

VandenBosch said it is a very busy time and it has been difficult for VandenBosch to get responses to complete the details of the contract; the City Attorney is reviewing the draft contract at present.

9. Customer Satisfaction Survey

The board discussed some of the responses included in the compilation of the last survey and noted that this is very helpful feedback.

Member and Staff Comments

VandenBosch: Will be out of town for two weeks.

Sullivan: Noted that a boater complained that he was seldom able to find staff at the pump-out facility, and requested a coin operated or honor box so he could put in the money and do the pump-out himself.

Sullivan: Asked what City Council has been thinking regarding the South Beach.

Arnold noted that one of City Council's priorities for this year is to make the South Beach a destination point; there are several possible improvements for the pavilion/restroom area that are being considered.

Sullivan: Interested in what is happening with the grant for the City Garage area.

VandenBosch noted it is a resubmission of the grant, which was turned down. Arnold said the resubmission sounds like a similar plan but a rock wall instead of a metal wall.

Jeffers: Wondered what will happen regarding Pero's equipment.

Sullivan: Wondered whether we should begin looking at the Strategic Plan again.

Jeffers: Regarding Chad's proposal, we do need to protect the harbor and the first impression when boaters come in.

Arnold: Shares everyone's concerns and also wondered why Vanderzee was given space and wonders where it will end. Jeffers noted that renting transient slips on the south side to charter fishing and moving some transient slips to the north side could be an option. VandenBosch agreed this is something to look at. There was discussion of rates for the seasonal slips for a commercial renter.

Adjourn

Motion by Stephens, second by Sullivan to adjourn at 7:15 p.m.

All in favor. Motion carried.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Marsha Ransom
Recording Secretary