

HARBOR COMMISSION
MINUTES
January 19, 2005

I. Roll Call

Jim Bartlett	Present
Yvonne DeWindt	Present
Al Dika	Present
John Flemming	Present
Tom Graham, Jr.	Present
George Kilborn	Present
Bill McCullough	Present
Fred Rachwitz	Present
Jane Ramer	Present
Dick Schiller	Present

Also present: Harbormaster Bob Bokram and City Manager Fred Geuder.

Chairman Jim Bartlett called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

II. Minutes

Motion by Kilborn, seconded by Dika, to approve the minutes of December 8, 2004, as presented. Motion carried.

III. Public Comment and Correspondence

None. (Note: Letters were received as a part of an agenda item.)

IV. New and Old Business

A. 2004 Annual Harbormaster Report

Bartlett asked Harbormaster Bob Bokram to give the Commission the highlights of the annual report.

Bokram noted that 2004 was a record year for revenue (increased rates), but not a record for the number of boats. He attributed the relatively low number of boats and boat days to a cold spring and fall, and higher fuel costs. However higher fuel costs did not seem to affect the larger boats.

Bokram noted that he had a young, but very competent staff and noted that he had received good comments about their work.

Bartlett noted the suggestion of Bokram to extend the reduced fall dock rates to boats up to 30', instead of the current 24' limit, and asked Bokram to comment on this idea.

Bokram said that boats up to 24' can be trailered, and the policy had probably not attracted many takers. He felt that the 25-30' boats were at the upper limit of trailering, and those owners might be willing to leave them in the water. He did not think it would necessarily increase revenues, but might be a good service.

Bartlett suggested that this idea be taken up in the summer.

Bartlett thanked Bokram for his report, and the efforts of the staff at the Marina.

Enter Schiller.

B. Consideration of Walstrom Marine Proposed Dock Expansion

Bartlett asked Fred Walstrom to review his revised proposal.

Walstrom reviewed the revised dock layout plan. Walstrom noted that the aisle width had been reduced to 90' (from 100'). The finger piers on the east side had been eliminated, and replaced with a parallel parking arrangement that would accommodate four boats in 50' spaces, although the boats would likely have to be less than 50' in length to maneuver into the spaces. He noted that the distance of the dock from the Zoll Street line was now 66'.

Bartlett noted and read into the record correspondence from the following:

1. Marina Village Property Associations (three groups)—letter dated January 17, 2005 opposed to the plan.
2. Kenyon Stebbins—letter dated January 13, 2005 noting concerns.

Bartlett asked for comments from the audience.

Martin Breighner, on behalf of the Marina Village Associations, added to the comments of their letter. He noted that looking at a map of the plan does not allow one to appreciate the scale of the proposal. He said that Marina Village owners are the most affected property owners, and they are opposed to the plan. They feel it will decrease the value of their property. Breighner questioned whether the proposed plan was in the best interest of the community; Marina Village owners feel it is not.

Linda Rachwitz, who is a kayaker, said she wanted to look at the positives of the proposal, and noted that Walstrom Marine is a good business and does provide an economic benefit to the community. In fairness to Walstrom's, they should be able to consider an expansion. But she also noted that the bottomlands are public lands entrusted to the state, and that the proposed use may not be in the best interest of the public and for Little Traverse Bay.

Mike Trumbull, a long-time resident of the area and boater, feels that a lot has changed over the past 50 years. He noted that it is a fine line to be fair to all concerned, but he feels the proposal is a good plan for the long term. Boating is part of the community; there is a large demand for additional space and he feels the proposal is a reasonable plan.

Harbormaster Bob Bokram responded to several points of the letter from Kenyon Stebbins. As Harbormaster for the past ten years, Bokram said he has probably spent as much time on the waterfront as anyone. When boats are docked at Marinas or moored in the water, they are not all out in the harbor at one time. He feels there is room for expansion; boating provides a large economic return to the community. He also felt the issue of overcrowding is very subjective. He further noted that most 60' boats do NOT have their own captain. (Ward Walstrom noted that it is usually 75' or longer boats that require captains.)

In response to a question, Fred Walstrom noted that the vast majority of his seasonal boaters own housing in the Harbor Springs area. Perhaps one or two of them use their boat as a cottage, but usually and primarily on weekends only.

Breighner commented that there is always a concern of what the actual uses will be versus what is shown on a plan. How big will the boats be?

Ward Walstrom said that the average length of boats sold is 33-36' in length; the average boat stocked at Walstrom's is in the 35-40' range, and the largest stocked would be a 60' Hatteras.

Kevin Kronk, representing Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council (TOM), said the TOM had discussed the proposed plan with Walstrom Marine. From TOM's viewpoint, water quality is their primary concern. Kronk noted that in looking at whether the State should lease the bottomlands one had to do a cost-benefit analysis. Kronk also noted that City Council approval would be required for the State to issue a lease.

Kronk noted that to date TOM has found no severe impact on fish habitats. Kronk noted that TOM was always concerned about the method and timing of dredging, and where the spoils would be placed. Generally TOM is opposed to deep-water disposal of dredging spoils because they are not sure of the impact of this practice.

Dave Lyle of Walstrom Marine noted that the State had mentioned that deep-water disposal of spoils MAY be one option. The City Manager noted that he had heard one concern about the dust raised when hauling spoils on land, and that clean-up is an issue.

Bartlett asked for further comments from Walstrom Marine.

Lyle noted that he agreed with the comments from Bokram, and noted that the current plan was down to 42 slips.

Fred Walstrom noted that the design of this dock did not have pilings everywhere and the height of the dock above water was only about 3'.

Bartlett asked for comments from the Commission.

Schiller noted that the revisions of the plan bring it much closer to what he could support and he liked the plan.

Dika noted for the record that he and two other commissioners do have slips at Walstrom's. He is personally a friend of the Walstrom family, but he also feels that he and other commissioners have always tried to make decisions in the best interest of the community. Dika felt that the proposal does fit the Harbor Plan. He would like to see no dock space on the East side break wall, which would further remove the impact of the proposal from Zoll Street.

Marty Breighner noted that he appreciated the fact that City Council will wait until summer to make a decision.

Kilborn asked several questions of Fred Walstrom about the leasing process.

Fred Walstrom noted that it would probably be a 25-year lease, with payments that are set by the State and escalate with time and value. The leased area cannot be converted into condo docks, and the State can impose conditions.

Kilborn noted some concern about people living on the boats; Fred Walstrom said that has not been the general pattern and very few use their slips in that way.

McCullough asked Breighner whether the living aboard issue is a big issue to the Marina Village owners.

Breighner noted that traffic and potential declining values are the biggest issues. He noted that more people mean more parties and noise.

Bartlett noted that the East dock is shown as seasonal and asked Walstrom what he meant by that.

Fred Walstrom noted that the plan was to move the East dock into the aisle way for the winter to reduce the area that needs to be bubbled. In response to a question, Walstrom noted that it would probably be relocated for a six-month period.

Fred Rachwitz noted that he appreciated the changes Walstrom had made to date.

Jane Ramer also noted that she appreciated the changes. Her concerns were about the use of the outside walls of the dock.

Fred Walstrom noted that on many days the wind would prohibit the use of the outside areas of the dock. The water depth would also be a limiting factor. He also noted that these areas were not being shown and could therefore not be used as permanent slips.

Bartlett noted that the barge and work boat (The Ottawa) are usually docked where the west end of the dock is proposed. He noted that this would be an example of the extent of the project.

Graham suggest that the SE corner of the proposed dock be cut off at a 45 degree angle for about 20', which would improve the view line from Ford Park.

Fred Walstrom commented that he doesn't see how the expansion of his facility would reduce the property values at Marina Village.

After further informal discussion, Bartlett noted that the concern for recreational (either transient or seasonal) boats docking on the outsides of the dock applied to all areas of the proposed dock.

McCullough noted that he likes the idea of Dika that there be no slips on the East break wall. He likes the fact that the docks do not have a high profile above the water, and he likes the idea of cutting off the dock on the 45 angle on the SW corner. He also noted that aesthetics and views are relative to the individual.

Fred Walstrom said that the corner could probably be cut back. Walstrom also noted that with the suggestions for the East dock to not have slips, he needs to think of how that part of the dock would be built (materials, etc.).

DeWindt noted that she too felt there should be no boats docked on the East side. She also suggested having an angle on that corner to further enhance the view from Zoll Street.

Flemming likes the compromises that have been offered to date. While he personally would rather see nothing built, he also recognized the need to be fair.

Bartlett suggested that perhaps Walstrom look at their plan with the ideas suggested at this meeting and bring back another version to the Commission.

Pringle Pfeifer also noted that she would like to see no boats on the East side. She is concerned with the height and mass of boats.

Bartlett suggested that a February meeting be scheduled.

C. Status of Shoppers' Dock (Two-Hour) Bottomlands lease.

The City Manager distributed the map that was sent in with the application.

Bartlett noted that the proposed lease area should have extended from the T's down to the shore. The City Manager said he would have Benchmark send in an amended application.

D. Kayak Storage Review

Bartlett deferred action on this item until the February meeting.

V. Meeting Schedule

The next meeting of the Harbor Commission will be scheduled for Wednesday, February 16, 2005, at 4:00 p.m.

VI. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Frederick W. Geuder, City Manager