

**CITY OF NORWALK
SHELLFISH COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
NOVEMBER 7, 2024**

ATTENDANCE: Steve Bartush, Chair; Pete Johnson, Jonathan Pageler, Jordan Saxe

OTHERS: William Mooney, Health Department; Alan Kibbe, Harbor Commission; Police Sgt. Justin Bisceglia; Dr. John Pinto, Harbor Commission; Geoff Steadman, Norwalk Harbor Commission Consultant

The meeting was held via Zoom teleconference.

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Bartush called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. A quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

• September 5, 2024

**** MR. PAGELER MOVED THE MINUTES FROM THE SEPTEMBER 5, 2024 MEETING.**

**** MR. SAXE SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE SEPTEMBER 5, 2024 MINUTES AS SUBMITTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no one who wished to comment at this time.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Mr. Mooney presented his report. The current balance is \$28,323.00. A deposit of \$3,334 was made on September 16th from the sale of shellfish permits at the Fisherman's World.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Mr. Bartush said that Officer Lee had requested more white shellfish flags. Mr. Bartush said that he had ordered these and they have been delivered to the Marine Unit. He also noted that they had some exciting news about grants that will be presented later in the meeting.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

A) Health Department – Mr. Mooney reported that in September, there was 28 inches of rain. The previous year, there was 11.41 inches of rain and historically, it is 5.14 inches of rain. There were no closures or reported bypasses.

For October, the amount of rainfall was .023. Last year, there was 3.07 and historically, there has been 4.55 inches of rain recorded. There were no closures or reported bypasses.

B) Wastewater Treatment Plant – No report.

C) Water Quality – No report.

D) Permits – This was previously presented.

E) Police – Sgt. Bisceglia updated the Commissioners on a recent incident at Cove Marina that resulted in an arrest. Mr. Bartush asked for the name of the arresting officer, which Sgt. Bisceglia supplied. Mr. Bartush thanked Sgt. Bisceglia for his communication with the Shellfish Commissioners.

F) Advisory – Sgt. Bisceglia said that the water temperature was slightly over 56 degrees.

G) Harbor Management – Mr. Kibbe said that there was a new Harbor Master and Shellfish vessel on order. It will be delivered in 18 months. He thanked Ms. Vonashek for her efforts on this program.

New mooring balls arrived and will be installed in the spring for the transient moorings. He spoke about how they were working on creating Norwalk Harbor as a Marine destination. The response from all the visitors has been very positive.

The Harbor Commission has a full complement now with the appointment of Donald Remson, who was a long time DOT employee.

Mr. Kibbe said that he was excited to see the plans for Manresa Island.

The Port Authority has allocated \$3.5 million dollars for the East Harbor dock and mooring project. This funding will cover approximately 80% of the project costs. The schematic designs have already been completed and will support recreational boating and guest moorings.

Discussion followed about the transient moorings and where they would be located.

Mr. Steadman noted that while the Harbor Commission was primarily responsible for submitting the application for the Port Authority grant, there were several people from the City administration that were involved in the preparation of the application. Mr. Steadman said that both he and a City staff member had attended the Port Authority Board meeting where the application was presented and approved by the Board. The funding still needs to be approved by the Connecticut Bond Commission which will be meeting on December 6th. Mr. Steadman said that he hopes that this application will be included on the Bond Commission's agenda and that the funds will be allocated to them at that meeting.

Mr. Steadman said that there was an upcoming change in the DEEP application requirements for Certification of Permission that involved dredging and some additional work would have to be presented to the Shellfish Commission. Currently there is no requirement to notify the Shellfish Commission.

Mr. Steadman then updated the Commissioners about the Norwalk Watershed Plan that was developed some 25 years ago. The reason that the Plan was developed in the first place was because of the value of the shellfish beds and resources in the Harbor. There were concerns about runoff pollution adversely affecting the beds. The Connecticut Sea Grant received some substantial funding and they are working to develop a contract with a major engineering firm to update the basic Watershed Plan. Both the Harbor and Shellfish Commissions will have a major role in the updating of the Plan and the goals that the new plan will have. He mentioned that the two major studies that the Commissions contributed to:

- the run-off from the I-95 Bridge which led to the DOT changing bridge design plans to capture runoff and
- an earlier statistical analysis study of the river data in comparison to the water quality in the Harbor. This resulted in the establishment of the direct relationship between the increase in bacteria levels in the lower, more urbanized portion of the Watershed and the increase in the bacteria levels in the Harbor.

Mr. Steadman explained that a Watershed Committee would be examining Sasco Brook which is located between Westport and Fairfield. The Earth Place, which does a substantial amount of water quality testing in Sasco Brook and the various tributaries, will be working on DNA analysis to identify the sources of the bacteria. They hope to create a microbial source tracking method to determine if the bacterial source is human, domesticated animal or wildlife. They will determine if the method will be cost effective and how it should be best applied.

The USGS has been taking samples in the Norwalk Harbor from stations at Cove Marina and the Maritime Center to monitor the nutrients loads. The USGS was requesting additional funding from DEEP in order to publish the findings in a form for the public to review rather than just publishing the data.

He went on to briefly speak about the Save the Sound Water Quality report card that was just published. Norwalk received a grade of “F”.

Both the Harbor Commission and the Shellfish Commission will have important roles regarding the review of the proposed project plans for Manresa Island. A significant part of the project will be environmental remediation. DEEP will have an action plan that will be reviewed by both Commissions along with possible dredging permits and potential Coastal Site Plans.

Mr. Steadman then addressed the separation between the Commissions and the project planning teams similar to the type between the Commissioners and private developers. He then gave a brief overview of the history of the island’s development. He reminded everyone that there were old charts and maps from the 1800s that show Manresa Island and the causeway built to the Island.

The next topic Mr. Steadman reviewed was the issues surrounding the less than transparent public hearing process for the Eversource Project along with the letter that the Chairs of the Harbor Commission and the Shellfish Commission sent to the State DEEP Commission.

One of the issues was requesting clarification on DEEP's authority to determine that the Eversource project was consistent with the Harbor Management Plan. Mr. Steadman said that he had received information that the letter had been forwarded to DEEP's Law Department and they were working on a response.

With the conclusion of the election, Mr. Steadman said that other towns were approaching the legislature about an amendment to the Connecticut Harbor Management Act that would address the court decision against the Town of Greenwich stating that the Harbor Commission has no authority to even review DEEP permit applications. This will also affect the Shellfish Commissions in protecting the shellfish resources.

Mr. Bartush asked if there were any questions for the Harbor Commission Members that were present.

Dr. Pinto said that he would like to comment on the recent Save the Sound report that gave the Norwalk Harbor a grade of "F". He said that the concern was on the nitrogen content for what they referred to as the upper Harbor, but what is actually known as the Inner Harbor. He noted that the Norwalk Harbor received a "C" for oxygen saturation levels along with a "F" for Chlorophyll A, due to algae, a "B" for water clarity, a "D" for seaweed growth and another "F" for dissolved oxygen. All these things contribute to the nitrogen values. He pointed out that there was something going on near the bridges and that this had been a problematic area previously. He suggested that they take some strategic measurements in this area. It was noted that the Commission did not have access to the raw data. Discussion followed about the details for determining where the problem is originating.

**** MR. PAGELER MOVED TO ACCEPT THE COMMITTEE REPORTS AS PRESENTED.**

**** MR. JOHNSON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. Johnson suggested that they check with Mr. Harris about any recent readings. He also asked if Mr. Schnierlein had any data from the USGS on the water quality for that area. Further discussion followed.

Mr. Pageler asked when they expected to see any of the Manresa Island project plans. Mr. Kibbe said that he expected it would take a few years. Mr. Steadman said that he expected that the first report that they would most likely see would be the remediation action plan and reports.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business to consider at this time.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business to consider at this time.

ADJOURNMENT

The next meeting is scheduled for December 5, 2024 @ 7:15 p.m. via Zoom.

**** MR. PAGELER MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** MR. JOHNSON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

S. L. Soltes

Telesco Secretarial Services