

**CITY OF NORWALK  
NORWALK SHELLFISH COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
FEBRUARY 5, 2026**

**ATTENDANCE:** Steve Bartush (Chair), Jonathan Pageler, Pete Johnson, Mark Hiller,

**STAFF:** Bill Mooney, Assistant Director of Health.

**OTHERS:** Sgt. Justin Bisceglie, Tom Ryder (20 Wharf Rd.); Alan Kibbe, Norwalk Harbor Management; Geoff Steadman, Consultant; Grace Piselli, Maritime Aquarium; Dr. Sarah Crosby, Maritime Aquarium; Dr. Domenic Romanello, Maritime Aquarium.

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Bartush called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm. A quorum was present.

**II. ROLL CALL**

A roll call of those present was performed.

**III. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES**

**A. REGULAR MEETING: JANUARY 8, 2026**

**\*\*MR. PAGELER MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES.**

**\*\*MR. JOHNSON SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**\*\*THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

**V. REPORTS**

**A. TREASURER**

Mr. Mooney reported that the balance remains \$26,650. He advised that while reviewing prior year permits, he located two checks totaling \$3,903, which he submitted to the Comptroller's Office. The funds should appear on next month's expenditure report.

**B. SECRETARY**

Mr. Bartush reported that he contacted the Mayor regarding reinvigorating the Mayor's Water Quality Committee. The Mayor advised that no decision has been made yet but will provide an update once determined. He also noted that the Harbor Management Commission voted to draft a letter supporting the reinstatement of Dr. John Pinto, and offered to prepare a similar letter if this Commission wished. Additionally, Mr. Stedman attended the State Gathering of Shellfish Commissions on his behalf, and Mr. Stedman has since offered to serve as a formal advisor to the Commission.

**\*\*MR. JOHNSON MOVED TO SEND A LETTER TO THE MAYOR IN SUPPORT OF DR. PINTO'S REAPPOINTMENT TO THE NORWALK HARBOR MANAGEMENT COMMISSION AND TO APPOINT MR. STEDMAN AS AN ADVISOR TO THE NORWALK SHELLFISH COMMISSION.**

**\*\*MR. HILLER SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**\*\*THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

#### **C. HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

Mr. Mooney reported that there were no closures due to rainfall, noting January rainfall totaled 0.95 inches compared to 0.64 inches last year and a historical average of 3.27 inches. He also reported one plant bypass on the 15th due to a power loss, resulting in approximately 100 gallons discharged, which was remedied in under 30 minutes.

#### **D. WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT**

There was no report.

#### **E. WATER QUALITY**

Mr. Bartush noted the Commission is still awaiting the Mayor's decision regarding the Mayor's Water Quality Committee.

#### **F. PERMITS**

Mr. Bartush reported that an outreach was made to the vendor on Winfield Street, but no response has been received to date. Mr. Mooney confirmed he will follow up again when the vendor reopens for the season and will provide updates.

#### **G. POLICE**

Sgt. Bisceglie reported there were no significant updates aside from heavy ice conditions in the harbor. He noted the harbor had been largely frozen, and Bloom Brothers have been actively

breaking up the ice to keep the channel clear. He advised that the water temperature is approximately 32–33 degrees.

## **H. ADVISORY**

Mr. Steadman reported on the January 24 State Gathering of Shellfish Commissions in New Haven, noting Norwalk materials and historical displays were presented. He summarized presentations on shellfish growing area classifications, new annual training protocols for water quality samplers, distinctions between invasive and non-native species, eelgrass restoration, and the observed decline of hard-shell clams in Connecticut waters.

He further highlighted discussions on the economic value of recreational shellfishing, shell recycling and restoration programs, pesticide runoff impacts from golf courses, and PFAS concerns. Mr. Steadman discussed concerns raised regarding coastal development approvals that proceed despite DEEP objections, noting limited enforcement remedies. He referenced environmental remediation considerations along the Housatonic River and Manresa Island due to their proximity to natural shellfish beds.

He also highlighted Stamford’s efforts to strengthen shellfish protections through updates to its Harbor Management Plan, development of a shellfish management framework, and commercial harvest leasing initiatives. Additionally, he summarized discussions on changes to the public hearing petition process for DEEP applications, including a recent dock proposal affecting natural shellfish beds, related jurisdictional debates, and follow-up coordination with DEEP and local commissions.

## **I. HARBOR MANAGEMENT**

There was no report.

**\*\*MR. JOHNSON MOVED TO ACCEPT THE COMMITTEE REPORTS.  
\*\*MR. PAGELER SECONDED THE MOTION.  
\*\*THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

## **VI. OLD BUSINESS**

There was no old business.

## **VII. NEW BUSINESS**

### **A. 20 Wharf Rd.**

Mr. Ryder presented a shoreline stabilization project at 20 Old Wharf involving the installation of additional riprap along the final unprotected 30-foot section of seawall to address erosion and protect nearby geothermal infrastructure. He reported that DEEP is prepared to issue a permit and

that the work would be completed by barge, with the possibility of the barge remaining on site for up to three days if necessary. He noted the Bureau of Aquaculture reviewed the proposal and expressed no concerns due to the sandy conditions and absence of shellfish in the area. Mr. Ryder stated the project is now seeking input from the Shellfish Commission.

Mr. Bartush inquired whether the barge could rest on the sand at low tide without impacting shellfish resources. Mr. Ryder explained the barge is expected to rest only on sandy areas, with remaining portions floating in deeper water, and noted the contractor does not anticipate staging the barge. Mr. Bartush raised concerns regarding Commission policy prohibiting vessels from resting on natural beds. Mr. Ryder acknowledged the area is classified as a natural bed and confirmed no benthic or substrate studies were conducted to further assess conditions.

Commission members discussed uncertainty regarding substrate conditions where the barge may rest. Mr. Ryder stated he could not provide benthic data within DEEP's timeframe but offered to conduct a site check. Members suggested inspecting conditions during low tide, including visual review and sediment sampling, to determine whether the area consists of sand or natural shellfish bed. The Commission expressed the need for additional bottom condition information before providing approval.

Members discussed the possibility of a conditional determination given DEEP's timeline. Mr. Johnson offered to consult with local industry experts familiar with the area's shellfish conditions, and it was agreed additional information would be obtained before a final decision is made.

**\*\*MR. PAGELER MOVED TO APPROVE THE PROPOSAL AS PRESENTED BY MR. RYDER, CONDITIONAL UPON VERIFICATION THAT THE BARGE WOULD REST ONLY ON SAND AND NOT ON A NATURAL OR SEED SHELLFISH BED.  
\*\*MR. JOHNSON SECONDED THE MOTION.  
\*\*THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

## **B. Maritime Aquarium Shellfish Project Presentation**

Ms. Piselli presented a shoreline restoration pilot project led by the Maritime Aquarium Conservation Department in partnership with Norm Bloom and Cops Island Oysters. The project proposes establishing a small oyster nursery off the southern shoreline of Betts Park using aquaculture techniques, with comparison sites at Calf Pasture and Long Beach. She explained the project will involve annual planting, monitoring, and seasonal relocation of oysters to deeper waters, with the goal of supporting natural shellfish beds and evaluating shoreline protection benefits. Data collection will include water quality, shoreline erosion, and oyster growth metrics.

Ms. Piselli also highlighted a student engagement component in collaboration with Brian McMahon High School's Marine Science Academy. Next steps include incorporating commission feedback, coordinating with the Harbor Management Commission and Bureau of Aquaculture, finalizing student participation, and targeting an April project start.

Mr. Bartush inquired about the proposed size and location of the oyster beds shown on the project map. Ms. Piselli clarified that the mapped areas represent general operating zones and that initial beds will be much smaller, anticipated at approximately 20 by 10 feet, placed in accessible shoreline locations based on site guidance. Mr. Johnson commented that the oyster beds may ultimately be larger with Mr. Bloom's involvement and offered the Commission's assistance with the project.

Mr. Steadman added that recent Watershed Initiative discussions also emphasized increasing student involvement in environmental and conservation efforts, noting the value of engaging local high school programs, including participation in the oyster restoration initiative. Ms. Piselli requested permission to list the Shellfish Commission as a public authority partner on the shoreline restoration project for state documentation purposes. She noted the partnership would primarily be supportive in nature, with optional involvement, and added that a formal letter of endorsement from the Commission may also be requested.

**\*\*MR. PAGELER MOVED TO AUTHORIZE LISTING THE SHELLFISH COMMISSION AS A PROJECT PARTNER AND TO PROVIDE A FORMAL LETTER OF ENDORSEMENT FOR THE SHORELINE RESTORATION PROJECT.**

**\*\*MR. JOHNSON SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**\*\*THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

#### **VIII. DISCUSSION**

There was no further discussion.

#### **IX. ADJOURNMENT**

**\*\*MR. JOHNSON MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**\*\*MR. HILLER SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**\*\*THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

#### **UPCOMING MEETINGS**

**March 5, 2026.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:26 pm.