

Darien Advisory Commission on Coastal Waters

Minutes from October 2, 2013 Meeting, Town Hall 7:30 PM

Present: Chairman McDonald, Vice Chairman Jewett, Vice Chairman Raleigh, Commissioners Cavers, Huffard, Munro and Harbor Master Bell. Visitors Sean Shay, David Kahn, Steve Spivey were present, having been invited to attend by Vice Chairman Raleigh

Absent: Commissioners Kemp, Schoudel, Sparkman, and Vilter.

The meeting was called to order and the minutes of February 6 and May 1, 2013 were approved.

Chairman's Report

Chairman McDonald noted that he presented the 2013 annual report of the Darien Advisory Commission on Coastal Waters to the Darien Board of Selectman on August 5th. A copy of the report was handed out to the Commission.

Chairman McDonald noted that a high-speed ferry service to Pier 35 in New York City was being considered as an emergency measure for beleaguered Metro-North commuters. The Darien Boat Club would serve as a pick-up point (both the boat club and Darien Marine Police have given preliminary approval for use of the dock) and service would entail one round trip per day. A number of feasibility questions surround this proposal from First Selectman, Jayme Stevenson. A test run is scheduled next week to see if the 65' ferry can safely reach the dock at low water. Chairman McDonald requested that the boat operator, Seastreak (a ferry services company headed by James Barker in Stamford), also meet with the Commission to discuss the safety of the proposal from the perspective of the small recreational boater in Darien Harbor. Harbor Master Bell agreed to relay the request to the ferry operator.

Commissioner McDonald noted that the Darien Junior Sailing Program needs support in replacing the sheds and building adjacent to Weed Beach that they lost during Tropical Storm Sandy. The Commission agreed to send a letter of support to Darien's Parks & Recreation Department with the intention of spurring more town involvement in helping the group re-establish operational facilities.

It was noted that the season's last day at Darien Boat Club was November 2nd and that Noroton Yacht Club's haul-out dates are Thursday and Friday, October 17 and 18, and Wednesday, October 23.

Chairman McDonald relayed several additional boating related news items:

SoundWaters is hosting the SoundWaters 2013-2014 Speaker Series entitled, "Sound Adaptations – Regional response to a Post Sandy World". The series of lunch/evening talks are open to the public and will take place from September 2013 to April 2014.

The Darien Marine Police Department, regularly at the Darien Boat Club dock or on the water from 11 AM – 7 PM May-September, have shifted to their off-season arrangements. They are now available on-call only, able to respond to emergencies 24/7 as needed.

The Darien Firefighters Fund has decided to fund the purchase of a new search & rescue RIB with amphibious capabilities (SeaLegs inflatable) for one of Darien's fire departments.

Chairman McDonald handed out the Darien Advisory Commission on Coastal Waters' new meeting schedule for 2014 and noted that the Commission would now be meeting in Room 119 of the Darien Town Hall.

Harbor Master Report

Harbor Master Bell noted that he plans on filing an application with CT DEEP to re-align the "No Wake" buoys more directly across from each other at the entrance to the harbor. He noted that speeding was Darien Harbor's number one problem and that the buoys at the entrance were confusing as to the exact starting point of the indicated slow zone. Harbor Master Bell is talking with the Darien Police Department on proposed solutions.

Harbor Master Bell reported that rafting continues to be a problem in Zeigler's Cove. As many as ten boats have been on the moorings and as a result, some moorings have shifted. Ordinances limit the number of rafted boats to three, although Harbor Master Bell noted that five boats are tolerable if anchors are used on the external boats. The Harbor Master is making plans to hand out instructions to boaters entering Zeigler's next season and then to subsequently have the Darien Marine Police issue fines for any violators thereafter.

Shellfish Report

Vice Chairman Raleigh reported on the following matters concerning Darien's shellfish and supporting habitat.

Various testing are being undertaken on Goodwives River oyster beds that could open up the water to recreational shell fishing. Initial water quality tests were recently completed by the CT DEEP and Darien's Health Director. The waters were found to be clean and the oysters were virus free. Further testing and assessment by the CT Aquaculture Department will be undertaken when the Darien Boat Club boats are removed for winter.

Commercial oystering in Scott's Cove ceased for the season on May 17th. All went well except for one mooring being inadvertently dragged and damaged by the permittee, Darien Seafood, Inc. (the damage was promptly and responsibly repaired by Darien Seafood). Nash Island oyster dredging operations were also concluded at the end of April. Re-leasing of that plot was halted because the commercial operator now claims he owns part of the plot. This issue needs to be resolved.

On July 25th, Great Island and Contentment Island beds were stocked with 30 bushels of oysters by Pramer, a local commercial oysterman. The weather was too rough to stock the full 60 bushels that are part of the agreement with Pramer in return for his being allowed to farm 25 acres of oyster beds near Smith Reef. Pramer will return to complete the remaining 30 bushels soon.

On June 26th, an informative on-the-water tour of nearby oyster beds and surrounding waters was give by Norm Bloom, a large commercial oyster operator in and offshore Norwalk. Attendees included Darien's First Selectwoman, James Stevenson, Darien's health Director, David Knauf, and Representative Terri Woods, as well as Vice Chairman Raleigh, and Chairman McDonald.

A brief discussion of the CT Shellfish Management Plan was held. This plan is sponsored by Sea Grant and UConn and it contains multiple suggestions for the Darien Advisory Commission on

Coastal Waters to consider with regard to managing the town's shellfish beds. Vice Chairman Raleigh noted that Darien's biggest shellfish challenge is how to adequately test for pollution in our harbors, particularly Scott Cove.

Harbor TV Project

Harbor Master Bell informed the Commission of the public hearing held on Monday, September 30th, regarding his proposal for the installation of 4-6 television monitors in Darien Harbor. Four of the proposed cameras would be fixed focus and two would have zoom capabilities accessible by the Harbor Master and the Darien Police Department (with a warrant). Images would be stored at an offsite location. Harbor Master Bell noted that there was much discussion at the hearing and that privacy concerns were paramount among a number of harbor-side residents. While the cameras can be installed with limits on viewing scope, local residents were still worried. The potential benefits of the cameras were discussed amongst the commissioners. Noroton Yacht Club and the Darien Boat Club already have such cameras installed. While the cameras can provide some monitoring of boats during storms, the Commission did not reach a conclusion on their absolute value. Accordingly, it was decided that the Commission would not seek to counter opposition to the cameras.

Status of "Sandy" Repairs and Darien Boat Club Expansion

Vice Chairman Jewett delivered an update on the Darien Boat Club's rebuild projects. The club has arrived at a final proposed plan to restore its deck and clubhouse. The deck rebuild involves driving 40 pilings fifteen feet into the earth to comply with the town's toughest "VE14" standard in order to withstand significant storms. Total reconstruction costs are estimated at \$250,000 and club officers will seek approval of the plan and its funding from club members at a Special General Meeting at the Piedmont Club on October 7th at 8 PM. Thereafter, club officers are scheduled to appear in front of the Darien Zoning Board of Appeals on October 16th to seek approval for a zoning variance for the plan (a variance is required because repair costs are estimated to exceed 50% of the value of the buildings on the property). The plan calls for construction to start in November 2013 and end in March 2014.

Vice Chairman Jewett also gave an update on the Darien Boat Club's expansion project. Responses to the questions posed by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers and adjacent Darien residents have been provided by the club and its consultants. The Corp of Engineers has indicated that they have sufficient information for their decision. No decision or precise timetable for a decision has been disclosed.

Other Business

Chairman McDonald noted the restoration status of two piers in Darien Harbor that were damaged by Tropical Storm Sandy. The Noroton Yacht Club is in the midst of finishing its end of pier refurbishment and repair of the remaining residential pier damaged from the storm is also underway on an adjacent harbor property.

Chairman McDonald presented his findings on certain harbor depths post Tropical Storm Sandy, taken by him on September 27, 2013 at Low Tide -1.5 feet. As compared to the harbor's 2001 dredge report and the Coastline Consultants LLC survey undertaken in March 2012, the observations would seem to indicate that some scouring has occurred in the harbor and that some depths had increased since Sandy. The observations were based on a limited sample of soundings and one particular depth datum. The Commission discussed how it should best monitor and measure the harbor depths going forward. It was noted that if dredging was required, it would

seem beneficial to piggy back off the dredging activities being undertaken by the Darien Boat Club if/when it undertakes its dock expansions.

Chairman McDonald distributed some material from the National Marine Manufacturers Association (NMMA) showing the profile and economic significance of recreational boating in Connecticut. The data showed that boating accidents in Connecticut were quite low in 2013, with only one fatality yet this year.

There was the Citizen's Advisory Committee of the Long Island Sound Study on September 20 at Stony Brook. Commissioner Kemp and Chairman McDonald attended. Also a meeting of the CT/DEEP on Boating was held on September 25. Chairman McDonald handed out a list of state boating oriented legislation that become effective on October 1, 2013.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:30 PM. The next meeting of the Commission is scheduled for Wednesday, November 6nd, 2013 in Room 213.

Respectfully submitted,

William Cavers, Acting Clerk