

ADVISORY COMMISSION ON COASTAL WATERS TOWN OF DARIEN

WILLIAM CAVERS, INTERIM CHAIRMAN
JIM FURLONG, INTERIM VICE CHAIRMAN
SAM BRIDGES
DAVE DEVER
FLIP HUFFARD
JULIE JONES
DAVID KAHN
KEVIN MARKS
ROB ROBERTO
GRANT TANKOOS
WILLIAM WRIGHT



Green's Ledge Light

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS:
LORENE BORA, PARKS & REC COMM.
JOHN KEENA, HARBOR MASTER
OFFICER JAMES PALMIERI, POLICE

Minutes of Meeting – Monday, June 12, 2023

Darien Town Hall, Room 119

Meeting called to order at 7:32 PM by Chairman Cavers.

Present: William Cavers, David Dever, Rob Roberto, Flip Huffard, Julie Jones, David Kahan, Grant Tankoos, Bill Wright, Sam Bridges, Kevin Marks, Chairman of Parks and Recreation Commission Lori Bora. Flip Huffard and Dave Dever attended by phone.

Absent: James Furlong

Presentation and Discussion with Sargent James Palmieri

- Introductions were made with the new head of Darien Police Marine Division, Sargent James Palmieri. Sargent Palmieri gave an overview of current priorities of the marine police unit. After several fatalities in the area last year, his unit is doing more to focus on the use of life preservers. They intend to carry spare life preservers on their boat and we discussed the benefit of undertaking more safety boardings on the water. Darien's marine unit has also met with other Fairfield County marine police units and discussed the issue. Sargent Palmieri indicated that publicizing their annual coldwater training might be beneficial and Chairman Cavers offered the Commission's help on any publicity efforts. Harbor Mater Keena mentioned a Sea Tow program that provided life jackets on beaches and docks for free borrowing. Commissioner Marks said he would report back on what Sea Tow's program and life jacket rack looked like.
- Sargent Palmieri indicated that the boating season has started out fine so far. He noted two initial focal points: 1) Greens Ledge Light House and increased vessel traffic surrounding the newly renovated structure, and 2) Darie's recent Great Island purchase and current no-public access status. Multiple Great Island issues were discussed. Commissioner Bora indicated that late night partying on boats in Ziegler's Cove is a significant concern. Sargent Palmieri agreed, also noting the potential for illegal access to Great Island from the boat dock. Commissioner Roberto expressed safety issue regarding the jetty issue at the beach. Sargent Palmieri agreed with our recent memo on pre-access and safety issues and agreed to be on an email to the First Selectman's office to push for these to be quickly addressed.

- The Commission and Sargent Palmieri discussed rafting in Zeigler's and the issue with tackle standards. Harbor Master Keena said higher tackle standards are needed for Zeigler's. Discussion ensued on a standard that would safely handle varying visiting boat sizes and 3-boat rafting. The Harbor Master and Sargent Palmieri agreed that police discretion was currently the best way to approach the issue (proximity to navigable channel, size/type of boat, type of mooring, etc.). The Commission discussed the possibility of a no wake zone / 5 mph buoy for Ziegler's Cove. Harbor Master Keena was strongly supportive of it. Palmieri said it would provide a clean enforcement line. The permit must be granted by the state and the process to acquire the permit is involved
- Finally, the Commission addressed the issue of speeding and excessive wakes in Darien Harbor with Sargent Palmieri. Commissioner Marks suggested speeding/wake enforcement measures become a higher priority for the Marine Unit– more presence, an earlier presence, writing more tickets as required. Commissioner Marks indicated that Darien has more speeding than Norwalk or Stamford. Sargent Palmieri agreed with the concern and will consider additional enforcement steps.

Chairman's Report

- Harbor dredging – Chairman Cavers relayed that he had advised the First Selectman to immediately start a harbor channel dredging application process in light of the recent alarming survey results. The Commissioners urged Chairman Cavers to re-emphasize the need for the Town to start the application process right away. Chairman Cavers agreed to do so.
- Chairman Cavers said he submitted the Commission's Great Island advisory points to the First Selectman's office. Commissioner Roberto emphasized the danger of the post-acquisition situation and said that key dangers should be addressed right away. Bill Wright and Frank Kemp visited the island's beach area and took pictures of the exposed jetty and rebar features. It was agreed to ask the Town to immediately remove the rebar and consider placing hazard buoys atop the jetty as soon as possible. Chairman Cavers agreed to follow-up with the First Selectman's office.
- Commissioner Wright agreed to pick up consulting report regarding rights end bridge repairs and at first selectman's office.

Updates on Activities

- Harbor Moorings Policy Committee – Team members agreed to move work forward by the next Commission meeting.
- Water Quality Testing – The start of the season's testing has been delayed due to Save the Sound sonde (probe) problems. New sondes are expected to be distributed next week. A June water sampling will follow.
- Shellfish Restocking - Chairman Cavers said he would line up a restocking date with the Frates. Commissioner Jones and Roberto volunteered to go. Commissioner Kahn said he would place stakes on adjacent shores to properly guide the restocking effort.
- Debris Clean-ups – Commissioner Kahn suggested July 8 as a debris clean up date for the Commission. He will send out an email for confirmations. Discussion ensued on the persistent problem of mylar balloons in our waters and Commissioner Bora discussed Park & Rec's recent placement of debris pick-up buckets at Weed Beach.

Harbor Master's Report

- Harbor Master Keena noted that the train trestle over the Norwalk River is being rebuilt and that construction barges will displace some recreational vessel moorings in Norwalk harbor. Surrounding marinas will house the displaced boats. We may see barges anchored off Greens Ledge Light in connection with the effort.
- 236 moorings have been approved so far this year and a large number of these are awaiting mooring assignments. 35 mooring spots in Darien Harbor had been opened to new users this season, with 14-15 being filled to date. Progress has been a little slow in mooring installations due weather and air quality.
- Harbor Master Keena stated that he intends to reorganize the moorings north of the Darien Boat Club, placing the area's six existing boats further out into the harbor and replacing them with shallow draft vessels that can easily moor in area. The existing moorings are in poor condition, of unknown standards, and need replacement, something that the new mooring owners will need to undertake.
- Four moorings have been freed up in Ziegler's Cove and will be offered to wait listed boat owners (the existing mooring owners either owned no boat or did not have proper documentation). Discussion ensued on the proper standards for moorings in Ziegler's Cove, a day harbor (as opposed to a berthing harbor).

Other Business

- Commissioner Tankoos relayed an inquiry from a resident about whether the Commission could field a question about Gorham Pond. Commissioners indicated that Gorham Pond is private property and not under the Commission's purview. The Friends of Gorham Pond organization is the right party to contact.
- Commissioner Huffard indicated that Noroton Yacht Club is re-permitting 14 of its club moorings. These are not new moorings. They were previously permitted by the Harbor Master but now are in need CT DEEP permits. The Coastal Commission will receive an official notice of this permitting activity. It was believed that the Tokeneke Club was undertaking a similar transition on several of its moorings.

Adjournment

Chairman Cavers adjourned the meeting at 9 PM.