
SITKA PORT AND HARBORS COMMISSION
Regular Commission Meeting Minutes
February 14th, 2007
Harrigan Centennial Hall

I. CALL TO ORDER

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

II. ROLL CALL

| | | |
|-------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| Members Present: | Grant Miller Chuck Woods | Ken Creamer Keith Nyitray |
| Absent and excused: | Mike Slifer Marc Moats | Rich McIntyre |
| Others Present: | Ray Majeski | Stan Eliason |
| Member from the public: | David Tjomsland Don Kluting Mike White | |

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE JANUARY 10TH, 2007 MONTHLY MEETING

MOTION: M/S Woods/Creamer moved to approve the minutes from the Jan. 10th, 2007 meeting.

ACTION: Motion **PASSED 4-0** on a voice vote.

III. CHANGES TO AGENDA

Mr. Creamer requested adding a discussion on electric rates for the harbors. The Chair added this as the 4th item under New Business.

IV. CORRESPONDENCE - NONE

V. PERSONS TO BE HEARD

1. Don Kluting – Director, Search and Rescue Department

Mr. Kluting brought before the Commission the possibility of partnering with the Harbors Department for the construction of a storage facility next to the Harbors Office. He explained that the Assembly authorized the purchase of SAR equipment using Title III grant funds and to find a location for storage facility.

On Mr. Nyitray's query regarding the possibility of using the structure that exists near the Eliason Harbor, Mr. Kluting said that it does not meet their needs. They envision a 1,000 square foot garage type storage building with roll-up doors that could accommodate a boat trailer and ATV's.

On Mr. Creamer's remark that the Harbors Department never expressed interest for a storage facility, Mr. Majeski said that they could use a storage facility but they never had the funds to construct one. Mr. Creamer requested Mr. Kluting to bring forth estimates on the annual cost of maintaining the building and what SAR expects from the Harbor Department in sharing the expenses.

Mr. Majeski indicated that locating the SAR storage facility next to the Harbor Office would be beneficial for both SAR and the Harbors Department since the mission of SAR involves water and they use the Harbor boat frequently while at the same time, having SAR in proximity will provide additional security to the Harbor Office.

The members unanimously agreed to add this item in the next meeting's agenda.

2. David Tjomsland

Mr. Tjomsland raised two issues before the Commission:

- (1) Garbage fees: He thought that the City is pocketing almost \$21,000 annually without providing any service for garbage collection.
- (2) Boat tax: The Commission should ask the Assembly to give all the boat tax money to the harbors.

He said that the Harbor Department paid in 2006 \$31,057 for garbage fee while liveaboards paid \$20,976, which means that the Harbors should only pay \$10,088/year on the average.

Mr. Majeski, however, explained that the Harbors do not pay the first garbage pick-up. They only pay the second pick-up during the summer months and the sac roe herring fishery season. The \$31,000 that Mr. Tjomsland was alluding to covers the second pick-up.

Mr. Tjomsland also urged that the Commission should try once again to get the boat tax money back to the harbors. Otherwise, he plans to start a ballot initiative to allocate 100% of the boat tax revenue to the Harbor Fund.

The members told him that his proposal has been one of their recommendations to the Assembly but the Assembly rejected the idea. They agreed however to revisit their list of recommendations and decide what to do next.

3. Mike White

Mr. White expressed his disappointment regarding the launch fees, explaining that people will be paying a premium fee for launch ramps which are among the worst in SE Alaska. He pointed out that the City launch ramps have parking and low-tide issues as well. He said if people have to pay for the launch ramps, the City has to get them up to speed.

The Chair stated that the Harbor Fund never had the opportunity to generate reserves/income to do repairs of its facilities. Mr. Majeski added that they will do a month-long public education on the launch ramp fees effective today.

Mr. White also suggested that the Commission asked SAR about their parking requirements in connection with the proposed storage facility, saying that harbor parking is an absolute premium.

VI. REPORTS

1. Harbormaster

Mr. Majeski gave the following update:

- The Assembly passed last night Ordinance No. 2007-01 amending Title XIII of the Sitka General Code regarding launch fees, waiting list, and "retention of a waiting list priority."

- Expect substantial completion of the new harbor beginning March and final completion by March 15.
- On the Crescent Harbor liveaboard proposal, the City Administrator recommended to hold off action until a viable sewer system is in place.

Mr. Creamer stated that he didn't see any reason for not going forward with the proposal. He requested to bring up this item under General Discussion.

2. Assembly Liaison - None

3. City Staff - None

4. Chair - None

5. P&H Subcommittee Report

Mr. Nyitray said that they have not met due to conflict in their schedule and as such, the subcommittee is dissolved. He thought that instead of having a subcommittee, the Commission as a whole can discuss the proposal for a commercial user fee for entities doing business on the loading zone. He felt that the Harbor Department is not enforcing the time limit for the use of that ramp.

VII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1. Liveaboard Fee

Mr. Majeski said that he spoke with Finance Director Dave Wolff who informed him that everything is in place and if the residential user fees for liveaboards are eliminated, they will have to come up with something to replace it. He thought that it is easier to push for the lowering of the garbage fees.

Mr. Woods pointed out that liveaboards pay more for electricity but consume less than residential users. He felt that electric rates should be lowered as well.

Mr. Nyitray remarked that they have a valid point to recommend to the Assembly the following: (1) Eliminate water fee for liveaboards; (2) lower garbage fee, and (3) negotiate the sewer fee. He said he is willing to work with the Harbormaster to draft the ordinance. Mr. Woods offered to help as well.

The draft ordinance will be discussed in next month's meeting.

2. Launch Fees for Companies with Multiple Vessels

Mr. Majeski said that Juneau charges recreational boaters an annual flat rate fee of \$225. He thought that charging companies a flat fee is easier to administer. He also told the members that he tried to get in touch with the State Parks in Juneau but they haven't got back to him if the State will honor the City permit.

The Chair raised the issue of a company with 2-3 boats paying the same fee as a company with 40 boats.

The members agreed to continue discussion of this agenda item in the next meeting.

3. Establishing a Fairway No-Anchor Zone off the Northwest End of Eliason Harbor

Mr. Majeski said that in speaking with the FAA, he was told that it is the pilot's responsibility to land in a safe area. He will have to find out with the Coast Guard if they can designate an area as no-anchor zone by placing a buoy and/or if they have better suggestion. He also said that he will try to check if he can designate an area administratively. If not, he will come up with a draft ordinance and bring it back in the next meeting.

Mr. Creamer stated that the designated area as wide as the entry to the northwest end of Eliason Harbor will take care of the problem especially in summer. He stressed that his concern is safety more than anything else, adding that an ordinance will give the Harbormaster the authority to require a vessel to move out of the designated area.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

1. *Kayak Safety in the Harbors*

Mr. Majeski told the Commission that a ramp can be created for kayaks to launch from Thomsen Harbor instead of Crescent Harbor. It will be a safe place and away from the heavy traffic area. John DeLong of Sitka Sound Adventures has looked at it and felt that it will work for them. They are willing to sink in some money to install the ramp.

The Chair said that he has checked the area with the Harbormaster and thought that it is a good area.

Mr. Nyitray expressed reservation on the proposed kayak launch ramp, saying that it will be a subsidized launch ramp for a private business. He didn't want to see the Commission recommending it.

On Mr. Woods' query about using the float plane ramps to launch kayaks, Mr. Majeski explained FAA wouldn't allow it for security reasons.

The Harbormaster will look into the feasibility of this proposal and will report in the next meeting.

2. *Electrification of West Breakwater*

Mr. Majeski spoke with Ken Helem of Sitka Electric who informed him that it will be problematic to electrify the west breakwater. The electrical system on Eliason Harbor is designed for what it is right now. They would need to add new wiring that is estimated to cost \$60,000 - \$70,000. He said he is not in favor with the idea.

3. *What to do with 'Doggie Doo'*

Mr. Majeski said that this item is on the agenda at the behest of the City Administrator. The Harbors Department bought dog bag dispensers but these were installed in less accessible areas. Ideally, there should be one dog bag dispenser for every transformer but he said it will cost money. He said solving this problem requires a concerted effort among harbor users. The Harbormaster will go on the radio and place a PSA on the paper to remind dog owners in the harbors about being responsible to clean up.

4. *Electric Rates for the Harbors*

Mr. Creamer explained why he brought this issue up, saying that he doesn't understand the disparity in the charges between residential users and harbor users who, he thought, are paying more. He felt that harbor users are discriminated against.

Mr. Nyitray concurred with Mr. Creamer's remarks and suggested that they invite a staff member of the Electric Department to shed light on this issue.

Mr. Woods stated that somebody from the Electric Department explained to him that being on the water, the maintenance costs are higher for the harbor system. Mr. Creamer said he wants to see the maintenance cost of the harbor electrical system in the past years,

Mr. Majeski said that he will invite Acting Electric Utility Director Andy Eggen to attend next month's meeting and answer the questions and issues raised by the Commission.

IX. GENERAL DISCUSSION

New Electrical Pedestals at Thomsen and Crescent Harbor

Mr. Creamer sought clarification on a note written on the "Utility Customer Fact Sheet" that reads:

"There is a risk of unauthorized persons using electricity in the harbors. You are responsible for all the KWh used; therefore, you may want to secure your meter. Meters must be accessible to city and borough utility employees at all times."

He explained that the design of the new electrical pedestals doesn't allow the harbor user to secure his own meter.

Mr. Majeski said that he will have to look into it and report back to the Commission.

Liveboards at Crescent Harbor

Mr. Creamer urged the Commission that they should move ahead in allowing liveboards at Crescent Harbor on the condition that there will only be two liveboard vessels per float and that the Harbormaster can board the boat and do an inspection. He thought that not having a sewer system should not be an impediment to allowing liveboards at Crescent Harbor. He stressed that liveboards improve security in the harbor and increase vigilance on boat fires and other boat safety issues.

MOTION: **M/S Nyitray/Creamer** moved to recommend allowing liveboards in floats 1- 5 of Crescent Harbor with a maximum of two liveboard vessels per float and provided that liveboards shall meet the criteria to be established.

DISCUSSION: Mr. Majeski told the Commission that there is no existing covenant with any entity not allowing liveboards in Crescent Harbor, adding that Sheldon Jackson College has no problem with the proposal. He also said that the Harbors Department will be selective in who will be allowed to live at Crescent Harbor.

The members briefly discussed how to address the sewer issue raised by the City Administrator.

ACTION: Motion **PASSED 4-0** on a voice vote.

Other issues

On the request for an update on the proposed drive down ramp to the work float and how much it would cost, Mr. Majeski explained that it might take awhile before he can get the cost estimates from the PW Department as they are currently short-handed.

On how long it takes to get the Sitka General Code on the website get updated, Mr. Majeski said he will have to ask the Municipal Clerk about it.

X. CLOSING

A. AGENDA

Under unfinished business:

1. Lowering of residential user fees for the harbors
2. Launch Fees for companies with multiple vessels
3. Establishing a fairway no-anchor zone off the northwest end of Eliason Harbor
4. Electric Rates

Under new business:

1. SAR storage facility
2. Boat tax revenues

B. NEXT MEETING DATE HARRIGAN CENTENNIAL BUILDING – March 14th, 2007

C. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Prepared by: **MARIA FINKENBINDER**
Contract Secretary