

# Michigan State Waterways Commission

## Meeting Minutes

Location: Virtual  
Date: April 28, 2023

### Roll Call

#### Present for the Waterways Commission:

- Commissioner, Susan Stewart
- Commissioner, Mary Rising
- Commissioner, Elaine Isely
- Commissioner, Scott Labonte
- Commissioner, Candice Miller
- Commissioner, Fred Sitkins

#### Others Present:

- Michael Desnoyer, DNR
- Nick Van Bloem, DNR
- Jordan Byelich, DNR
- Maia Turek, DNR
- Michelle Wieber, DNR, Recorder
- Vicki McGhee, DNR
- Linnae Dawson, DNR

#### Special Guest:

- Deanna Fielder, Physical Scientist, USACE

#### Not Present:

- Ron Olson, DNR

## Meeting minutes

### Opening Comments:

- Secretary, Mary Rising called for the meeting to order at 9:20 a.m., April 28, 2023.
- The meeting began with reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

### Public Appearance:

- No public appearances or comments.

### Written Correspondence:

- There was not any written correspondence to include in the meeting packet.

### Action Items:

- Motion: Secretary, Mary Rising asked for a motion for approval for the minutes from the February 10, 2023, Michigan State Waterways Commission meeting. The motion was paused after consideration of attendance.
- Motion: Secretary, Mary Rising asked for a motion for approval for the minutes from the December 6, 2022, Michigan State Waterways Commission meeting, with suggested edits. The motion was put into place, by Commissioner Scott Labonte and seconded by Commissioner Fred Sitkins. Motion was carried unanimously, 6-0.
- Motion: Secretary, Mary Rising asked for a motion for approval for the minutes from the October 5, 2022, Michigan State Waterways Commission meeting. The motion was put into place, by Commissioner Fred Sitkins and was seconded by Commissioner Elaine Isely. Motion was carried unanimously, 6-0.
- Motion: Each December, officer elections take place. This was delayed at the December 2022 meeting, so nominations took place in April. Commissioner Susan Stewart nominated Secretary Mary Rising for the Chair position. The Commission approved Susan's recommendation, and Mary Rising was named Chair of the Michigan State Waterways Commission unanimously.
- Motion: Commissioner Elaine Isely volunteered to step into the position of Vice-Chair. The Commission approved of Elaine's self-nomination, and Elaine Isely was named Vice-Chair of the Michigan State Waterways Commission unanimously.
- Motion: Commissioner Scott Labonte volunteered to step into the position of Secretary. The Commission approved of Scott's self-nomination, and Scott Labonte was named Secretary of the Michigan State Waterways Commission unanimously.
- Subcommittee assignment changes occurred based on vacancies and the Commissioner's area of interest to serve.

- Retreat action items were reviewed, and Commissioner Mary Rising will follow-up with MBIA.
- Review of the bylaws led by Vicki McGhee, after mentioned edits, will review again at the next meeting.

## **Committee Reports:**

- Operations Subcommittee reported of a variance request received from Cheboygan County Marina. After review, it has been approved for the marina to utilize 3 vacant seasonal slips for commercial use.

## **Informational Business:**

### **General Updates**

- Vicki McGhee reported to the Commission the House and Senate produced bills for DNR programs. There are ongoing discussions regarding registration fees. A mention of BAS improvements in which Jordan Byelich detailed in his state project report.
- Nick VanBloem provided an update to the Commissioners on the Waterways Grant Coordinator position, working with Civil Service currently, with an anticipated posting date of June.

### **Financial Updates**

- Financial information updates were provided to the Commissioners in the meeting packet. Michael Desnoyer provided detailed financial updates to the Commission. Revenue was nearly even, and expenditures are slightly up.

### **Operations Updates**

- Linnae Dawson provided an Operations update to the Commissioners. Harbor slip reservations are slightly down, but overall numbers are up, with a strong outlook for the season. Spark Grants for round two go from May 1 – June 26. Round two results are to be announced in September. Harbor facilities are starting to open for the season.

### **Marketing Updates**

- A social media campaign is to come out this summer. Aquatic invasive species messaging is in the works, partnership exploration to take place.

### **Project Reports**

- The Michigan State Waterways Development Program Project Report was included in each Commissioner's meeting packet for their information.

- Jordan Byelich provided an update to the Commission on various State projects. This included Port Austin State Harbor, Lexington State Harbor, Clinton River Cutoff Boating Access Site (BAS), and Grayhaven BAS. Port Austin State Harbor has permits in hand now and have the design selected, finalizing design, then LARA permits, followed by bidding. First bidding out to breakwall in spring 2023 with spring 2024 completion. Second bidding out docks in 2023 and working on project in 2024. Lexington State Harbor has federal grant approval for \$1.2 million BIGP Tier 2 grant, with another grant approved prior for \$200,000 BIGP Tier 1. Working on getting design moving forward for waterside in concert with Village improvements. Working with the Village on continued partnership and possible funding assistance for waterside improvements. The project at Clinton River Cutoff BAS was put on hold during the winter but is beginning to move forward again. Geotechnical investigation in new ramp location to assess soils for subsoil stability and determine design installation from there, which has created some delay in the project. Drilling to take place approximately in the first week of May. Additional paving to be completed for spring followed by site restoration. Anticipated completion spring 2023 and the team is working on getting signage at the site to notify the public of the delay. The project at Grayhaven is under contract for design services. The concept development stage has produced a preliminary cost estimate of approximately \$2.3 million for BAS development. Will be discussing latest site concept with City of Detroit for feedback. Public engagement sessions are slated for late spring 2023 with both in personal and virtual being planned. DNR staff provided an update to the Lake Erie/St. Clair Citizens Fishery Advisory Committee including that preparations are underway for upcoming public engagement. Once plans are finalized, then construction will be planned.
- Linnae Dawson spoke to the Commission regarding the Grant-in-Aid updates, which included the FY2023 Grant-in-Aid Waterways Grant Project Recommendations. The meeting packet contains the location and issues of each facility listed.

### **Transmittals**

- A letter was in the meeting packet for review regarding responses offered to public comments.

### **Guest Speaker**

- Deanna Fielder, Physical Scientist, Hydraulics and Hydrology Branch, Detroit District – UCASE, spoke to the Commission on the great lakes water levels. Topics included outflow regulations, the monitoring of great lakes water levels, annual water levels and the hydrologic cycle, basin conditions regarding precipitation, seasonal temperature, and precipitation outlook, and water level future scenarios. Deanna wrapped up her presentation by providing the following key points; Water level fluctuations are primarily driven by weather and hydrologic conditions. Water levels are above average on all lakes but are forecast to remain below record high levels. Regulations of outflows (St. Mary's and St. Lawrence) cannot prevent extreme high or low water levels nor fully control water levels. Lastly, resilience to a wide range of water levels remain important.

### **Great Lakes Water Level Report**

- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Detroit District Great Lakes water level outlook was included in each Commissioner's meeting packet for their information.

### **Non-Agenda Items**

- Nothing to report.
- Mary Rising raised the question of getting customer numbers included on their Boating Safety Certificates as a topic, and was directed to LED's Tom Wanless.

### **Adjournment**

- The meeting adjourned at 11:34 a.m.

The next Michigan State Waterways Commission Meeting: October 6, 2023.