

Michigan State Waterways Commission

Meeting Minutes

Location: Virtual

Date: December 6, 2022

Roll Call

Present for the Waterways Commission:

- Commissioner, Secretary, Mary Rising
- Commissioner, Elaine Isely
- Commissioner, Scott Labonte
- Commissioner, Candice Miller

Others Present:

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

Not Present:

- Commissioner, Mark Yonan
- Commissioner, Fred Sitkins

Meeting minutes

Opening Comments:

- Secretary, Mary Rising called for the meeting to order at 10:35 a.m., December 6, 2022.
- The meeting began with reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Appearance:

- There were no members of the public in attendance.

Written Correspondence:

- There was an email received from Jerry McFadden. Mr. McFadden wrote in with concern to the boating access site on the Ocqueoc River at Hammond Bay. While the launch itself is great, getting out to the bay can be difficult due to shifting sands at the mouth of the river which essentially blocks off most boat traffic, as the water can be just one foot deep, Mr. McFadden remarked. In response, Jordan Byelich stated, from a maintenance dredging standpoint per information gathered, this is not an area that has received dredging nor does the DNR own the land adjacent to this river mouth. Furthermore, to dredge would be difficult as trying to get equipment to this river mouth to perform as-needed dredging would likely require more intense practices such as from a barge and coming in from the lake.

Action Items:

- 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 Scott Labonte and seconded by Commissioner Elaine Isely. Motion carried unanimously, 4-0.
- Vicki McGhee led the Commission through the Retreat Action Items. The updated document lists the action items' priorities for the next 3-6 months. Actions were updated showing the progress made.

Committee Reports:

- Operations Subcommittee met to discuss a variance request received from Northport Municipal Marina. The Village of Northport requested permission for two additional commercial use slips. The Operations Subcommittee felt this would be beneficial for both the marina and local community. The variance request was approved.

Informational Business:

General Updates

- Ron Olson reported to the Commission the Parks and Recreation Division is already setting hiring goals for the 2023 summer, with many other job opportunities being posted. Work continues at Port Austin State Harbor's breakwall project.

Financial Updates

- Financial information updates were provided to the Commissioners in the meeting packet. Michael Desnoyer provided detailed financial updates to the Commission.

Operations Updates

- Linnae Dawson provided an Operations update to the Commissioners. The annual boating survey results were shared. Polled from June to October, over 1,600 boaters responded with 94% saying they would return. The survey determined that power boats make up 80% of the boating population, with 19% being sailboats. The top 3 activities boaters participated in were, resting/relaxing, walking, and dining/breweries/wineries. Net nights and slip reservations are slightly down compared to last year, but otherwise showing strong numbers.

Marketing Updates

- Maia Turek spoke to the Commission regarding the Marketing and Communications Plan for 2023. Goals presented were, increase transient boating reservations from 33% to 43%, create tools for transient boaters to know how they can prevent the spread of invasive species, and recycling efforts from shrink-wrap to fiberglass boats.

Project Repots

- 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 construction improvements occurring at Lime Island State Harbor, Au Gres River Mouth Boating Access Site (BAS), Mackinac Island State Harbor, North Channel BAS, Eagle Harbor State Harbor, Klinger Lake BAS, Paw Paw Lake East BAS, Oman's Creek BAS, Cedar River State Harbor, and Saginaw River Mouth BAS. Facilities with improvements under design in 2022 include Cheboygan Lock and Dam, Black River Mouth BAS, Thornapple High Rollway BAS, Port Austin State Harbor, Grayhaven BAS, and Lexington State Harbor.
- Linnae Dawson provided an update to the Commission on various Grant-in-Aid projects that have been completed in 2022. Locations included Berrien County with 3 projects, Big

Traverse Marina, Caseville, and Frankfort. Multiple projects at Harbor Beach, upgrades at both Ludington Municipal Marina and Harborview, and lastly, Manistee and South Haven.

Transmittals

- Locations and dates for the 2023 Michigan State Waterways Commission meetings were submitted for the Commissioner's information.
- Commissioner, Mary Rising submitted a year-in-review summary highlighting the work the Commission accomplished in 2022.

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

- Commissioner, Candice Miller mentioned concerns of seaweed growth near the mouth of the river at Harley Ensign Memorial boating access site. The overgrowth has caused issues with sailboats and other watercraft using the site.

Adjournment

- The meeting adjourned at 12:37 p.m.

The next Michigan State Waterways Commission Meeting: February 10, 2022.