

# Michigan State Waterways Commission

## Meeting Minutes

Location: Virtual meeting

Date: February 2, 2022

### Roll Call

#### Present for the Waterways Commission:

- Commissioner, Chair, Barb Brooks, Boyne City, MI
- Commissioner, Secretary, Pat Egan, Marquette, MI
- Commissioner, Fred Sitkins, Suttons Bay, MI
- Commissioner, Elaine Isely, Grand Rapids, MI
- Commissioner, Chris Shepler, Harbor Springs, MI

#### Others Present:

- Ron Olson, DNR, Ann Arbor, MI
- Maia Turek, DNR, Traverse City, MI
- Jordan Byelich, DNR, Haslett, MI
- Paul Petersen, DNR, Holt, MI
- Michelle Wieber, DNR, Recorder, Haslett, MI
- Vicki McGhee, DNR, Lansing, MI
- Michael Desnoyer, DNR, Jackson, MI
- Linnae Dawson, DNR, Elmira, MI
- Scott Pratt, DNR, Novi, MI
- Jackie Blodgett, DNR, Portland, MI

#### Guest Speakers

- Nicki Polan, Michigan Boating Industries Association, White Lake, MI
- Greg Weykamp, Edgewater Resources, Daytona Beach, FL

#### Absent:

- Commissioner, Vice-Chair, Mary Rising
- Commissioner, Mark Yonan

### Meeting minutes

#### Opening Comments:

- Chair, Barb Brooks called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m., February 2, 2022. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this meeting was held virtually.
- The meeting began with reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **Public Appearance:**

- Written correspondence was submitted for the meeting packet by James Sarna, lifelong Michigan boater. Mr. Sarna sent an email to express his concern regarding seasonal slip rates at Elk Rapids – Edward C. Grace Memorial Harbor. Further information regarding the slip rates will be provided to Mr. Sarna.
- Brad Moffatt, resident of Petoskey, joined the meeting with concern regarding who to contact, how to go about seeking designation for quiet and no-wake zones within the Harbor Island National Wildlife Refuge. Ron Olson informed Mr. Moffatt that he would contact the DNR's Law Enforcement Division for follow-up.

### **Action Items:**

- MOTION: Chair, Barb Brooks asked for a motion for approval of the minutes from the December 2, 2021, Michigan State Waterways Commission meeting. The motion was put into place by Commissioner Pat Egan and was seconded by Commissioner Fred Sitkins. Motion carried unanimously, 5-0.
- Chair, Barb Brooks reminded the Commission of the Retreat Action Items, and to update them as appropriate.
- The Commissioners did not present goals for 2022, but instead would like to continue their focus on current items of interest.

### **Committee Reports:**

- The Finance Subcommittee and Special Projects Subcommittee met, and both discussed the topic of boater registration fees. The Special Projects Subcommittee also mentioned the Consumer Price Index had an increase of 77 percent and concluded that further research is required for additional conversation regarding the registration of non-motorized watercraft.

### **General Updates**

- Guest Speaker, Nicki Polan, Executive Director of Michigan Boating Industries Association (MBIA), spoke to the Commission. Ms. Polan went on to mention that statistics have proven strong for the boating industry with 14 consecutive years of growth. Michigan ranks number 2 nationally in registered boats and remains number 3 as having the largest marine market in the country. The positive impacts of the boating industry in Michigan include a 7.8-billion-dollar economic impact, supports more than 1,500 businesses and 58,000 jobs. The MBIA is actively involved with introducing the abandoned boat program to legislation, the Michigan State Waterways Fund, Pure Michigan funding, and supporting the availability of marine grade fuel with ethanol labeling at the pump.

- Guest Speaker, Greg Weykamp, Principal, Edgewater Resources, presented a summary of the 2019 Waterways Program Facilities Assessment report. This presentation was requested since many of the current Commissioners were not elected to the Commission at that time.
- Ron Olson provided written updates to the Commission with a memo in the meeting packet regarding the Watermaster, which is a machine that is designed for dredging and other waterways functions and has been reviewed as a possible investment to be used as part of the Waterways Maintenance program. The memo also provided an update on the Mackinac Yacht Races. An agreement has been reached with both race groups – Chicago and Port Huron. Channel and beach safety was addressed. The DNR met with the Michigan United Conservation Club with a focus on operation hours for boating access sites. Bow fishing requires after hour access; looking to amend land use orders to open sites to better serve those who bow fish.

### **Financial Updates**

- Financial information updates were provided to the Commissioners in the meeting packet. Michael Desnoyer provided further details including updates to revenue and expenditures.

### **Operations Updates**

- Linnae Dawson provided an Operations update to the Commissioners. Net nights and reservation nights are both trending up for the 2022 season. Hammond Bay State Harbor is seeing seasonal demand after being closed in 2020 and limited amenities in 2021. Mackinaw City is looking to partner with the DNR on potential rehab and enhancements in the downtown area. Presque Isle State Harbor is looking to repurpose the space that a former restaurant occupied, as the building is not sound.

### **Marketing Updates**

- Maia Turek provided Marketing Updates to the Commission. Maia noted the signage manual is getting an overhaul. Geico is funding Wi-Fi, which was stalled last year due to computer chip shortages. There are 18 harbors on the list to receive it this year. The 75<sup>th</sup> Waterways Program anniversary tagline will be, “Launching boating adventures since 1947.” Further updates regarding events and highlights at the next meeting. The boat recycle project is continuing by establishing a pilot program to recycle boats dumped on state and federal lands. The starting goal is to remove 50 abandoned boats from these lands.

### **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 State projects. A boating access site (BAS) study and design is being done for potential development of a new BAS at

Grayhaven State Harbor. The Clinton River Cutoff BAS is slated to undergo a complete relocation of the launch area and site redevelopment/expansion. The project is out for bid with construction anticipated to begin in the late spring. Lexington State Harbor harbormaster building improvement is now fully under construction.

- Paul Petersen provided a quick update to the Commission regarding Grant-in-Aid projects. Paul stated there are 8 more grants to respond to yet for the 2021 season, which has a deadline of April 1, 2022.

### **Transmittals**

- Commissioner Pat Egan provided an article regarding electric boating.

### **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**

- Chair Barb Brooks commented that the next meeting will also be a virtual meeting.
- Chair Barb Brooks expressed great interest in the June meeting to be held in-person.
- Chair Barb Brooks mentioned a meeting a couple years back when guest Brad Garmon, Director, Michigan Outdoor Recreation Industries Office, spoke to the Commission. Inviting Brad back to a future meeting for updates was suggested.

### **Adjournment**

- The meeting adjourned at 12:17 p.m.

The next Michigan State Waterways Commission Meeting: April 29, 2022.