

Michigan State Waterways Commission

Meeting Minutes

Location: Lansing, Michigan

Date: February 22, 2024

Roll Call

Present for the Waterways Commission:

- Commissioner, Candice Miller
- Commissioner, Craig Lehrke
- Commissioner, Fred Sitkins
- Commissioner, Scott Labonte

Others Present:

- Michelle Wieber, DNR, Recorder
- Vicki McGhee, DNR
- Jordan Byelich, DNR
- Linnae Dawson, DNR
- Curt Wemple, DNR
- Bobbi Audette, DNR
- Jason Fleming, DNR

Not Present:

- Commissioner, Elaine Isely
- Commissioner, Susan Stewart
- Commissioner, Erik Krueger
- Ron Olson, DNR
- Michael Desnoyer, DNR
- Maia Turek, DNR
- Nick Van Bloem, DNR

Meeting minutes

Opening Comments:

- Vice-Chair, Scott Labonte called the meeting to order at 9:08 a.m. on February 22, 2024.
- The meeting began with reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.
- Roll call was completed.

Public Appearance:

- No public appearances.

Written Correspondence:

- No written correspondence.

Action Items:

- MOTION: Vice-Chair, Scott Labonte asked for a motion for approval of the December 8, 2023, meeting minutes. The motion was put into place by Commissioner Craig Lehrke and was seconded by Commissioner Fred Sitkins. Motion carried unanimously, 4-0.
- MOTION: Vice-Chair, Scott Labonte asked for a motion for approval of the Resolution of Support for the Sterling State Park Bartnik Boating Access Site (BAS) Project Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant Application. The motion was put into place by Commissioner Fred Sitkins and was seconded by Commissioner Candice Miller. Motion carried unanimously, 4-0.
- MOTION: Vice-Chair, Scott Labonte asked for a motion for approval of the Resolution of Support for the Grayhaven BAS Project Michigan Natural Trust Fund Grant Application. The motion was put into place by Commissioner Craig Lehrke and seconded by Commissioner Fred Sitkins. Motion carried unanimously, 4-0.
- MOTION: Vice-Chair, Scott Labonte asked for a motion for approval of the Resolution of Support for the Whitefish Point State Harbor Project Michigan Natural Trust Fund Grant Application. The motion was put into place by Commissioner Candice Miller and seconded by Commissioner Craig Lehrke. Motion carried unanimously, 4-0.

Committee Reports:

- Linnae Dawson reported to the Commission that members of the Operations Subcommittee met to discuss variance request memos that were received. Port Sanilac Municipal Marina requested 4-6 additional seasonal boat slips. After discussion, the committee recommended approval of 2 additional seasonal boat slips, boat length must be 40 feet or larger only, for the 2025 season.

Harrisville Harbor requested 4 additional seasonal boat slips. After discussion, the committee recommended approval of 2 additional seasonal boat slips for the 2025 season.

- Boat slip rates have remained unchanged since 2013. In 2020, an adjustment was made to the sliding scale for categories, but the base cost remained. Linnae provided examples if the rate was to increase by 10 and 15 percent. An in-depth conversation on the rates, and how they have evolved over the years was led by Jason Fleming.

Informational Business:

General Updates

- Special Guest Speaker, Mike Terrell, District Supervisor, Metro District, DNR, presented updates on the waterways projects in the Metro district. Over 90 facilities are keeping the staff busy with studies, surveys, and construction. Upcoming work includes projects at Lexington State Harbor, Grayhaven State Harbor, and Harley Ensign Memorial BAS. Mike was happy to announce that the Clinton River Cutoff BAS is open for use after many construction delays.
- Special Guest Speaker, Christina Baugher, Aquatic Invasive Species Biologist, DNR, presented to the Commission. Christina shared a review of Parks and Recreation Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) Grants. Goal one was to prevent AIS through the boating pathway, which includes the development of a mobile boat wash program for DNR sites. Increasing engagement about decontamination and expanding outreach efforts support the goal as well. Goal two is to enhance protection from AIS. This would include reaching out to groups that have not been targeted with AIS outreach. Informational kiosks at state harbors are also something they are striving for. The Michigan Invasive Species Program was recently awarded a \$500,000 grant to enhance outreach and engagement for AIS prevention.

Financial Updates

- Financial information updates were provided to the Commissioners in the meeting packet by Martin Murphy, in Michael's absence. Any questions can be brought to the next meeting in which Michael is present at.

Operations Updates

- Linnae Dawson provided information in the meeting packet. Linnae also hit some highlights which include the PRD in-service is coming up where Linnae and Jordan Byelich will be presenting boating/harbor-related sessions together. East Tawas State Harbor is looking to fill a harbormaster vacancy. Green harbor updates – addition of solar and windmills will be implemented in future construction projects. The MiGrants program is very close to going live, this is a program waterways grants will be processed through, making it more streamlined and friendlier for the communities when submitting. The waterways grant deadline is April 1, 2024.

Boaters will now select the boat slip of their choice when making reservations for this boating season. All boating reservations are slip-specific, rather than assignment upon arrival. Straits State Harbor is to pilot a handheld device for fuel payment and slip reservation check-in. This will save time and will be more customer friendly.

Marketing Updates

- No updates to provide at this time.

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 projects at Clinton River Cutoff BAS where the project is substantially complete, and the site is open. Parking lot asphalt repair by contractor in some accessible spaces is needed to meet proper grades, anticipated to occur this spring. Port Austin State Harbor has a breakwall construction project under contract with an anticipated June 2024 completion. Pier reconstruction project has all Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) permits approved as of this week. The next step is to finalize bidding documents for construction start slated in 2024. Lastly, the Cheboygan Lock and Dam gates project is in process. Lock upgrades project bids have been received, with construction to follow. Both projects are to be completed in 2024.
- Curt Wemple informed the Commission there are ten Grant-in-Aid interested applicants, possibly 2 BIGP interested applicants, with 1 submission so far. Grant deadline is April 1, 2024, at 5 p.m.

Transmittals

- No transmittals to report.

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

- No non-agenda items were mentioned.

Adjournment

- The meeting adjourned at 11:12 a.m.

The next Michigan State Waterways Commission Meeting: April 26, 2024, in Lansing