

Michigan State Waterways Commission

Meeting Minutes

Location: New Buffalo, Michigan

Date: October 6, 2023

Roll Call

Present for the Waterways Commission:

- Commissioner, Susan Stewart
- Commissioner, Elaine Isely
- Commissioner, Mary Rising
- Commissioner, Craig Lehrke
- Commissioner, Fred Sitkins

Others Present:

- Michelle Wieber, DNR, Recorder
- Jordan Byelich, DNR
- Linnae Dawson, DNR
- Maia Turek, DNR
- Ron Olson, DNR

Not Present:

- Commissioner, Candice Miller
- Commissioner, Scott Labonte
- Vicki McGhee, DNR
- Nick Van Bloem, DNR
- Michael Desnoyer, DNR

Meeting minutes

Opening Comments:

- Chair, Mary Rising called for the meeting to order at 10:31 a.m., October 6, 2023.
- The meeting began with reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Appearance:

- Kristin D'Amico, Parks Director, City of New Buffalo, and Mike Morpheu, Abonmarche were in attendance. No public comments.

Written Correspondence:

- There were two written correspondences that were included in the meeting packet. Mr. and Mrs. Poleski shared their experience regarding a memorable stay at Straits State Harbor. Ms. Wendy Dixon sent an inquiry regarding the Cheboygan Lock and Dam's pending repairs.

Action Items:

- MOTION: Chair, Mary Rising asked for a motion for approval to amend the agenda and add item, Resolution to Recommend Updating Recreational Boating and Pontoon Registration Fees. The motion was put into place by Commissioner Susan Stewart and was seconded by Commissioner Fred Sitkins. Motion was carried unanimously, 5-0.
- MOTION: Chair, Mary Rising asked for a motion for approval of the August 17, 2023, meeting minutes. The motion was put into place by Commissioner Fred Sitkins and was seconded by Commissioner Elaine Isely. Motion carried unanimously, 5-0.
- MOTION: Chair, Mary Rising asked for a motion to approve the Resolution of Support to Honor Commissioner, Mary Rising. A plaque was presented to Mary by Ron Olson, thanking Mary for her service on the Michigan State Waterways Commission. The motion was put into place by Commissioner Susan Stewart and was seconded by Commissioner Fred Sitkins. Motion carried unanimously, 5-0.
- The Commissioners attempted to re-work the Subcommittee assignments to even out the number of Commissioners on each one. It was decided that this will take place at the December meeting, when all Commissioners are in attendance.

Committee Reports:

- The Subcommittees did not meet prior to this meeting, there is nothing to report at this time.

Informational Business:

General Updates

- Ron Olson reported to the Commission that a new Director of the DNR has been announced, M. Scott Bowen. Through the end of August, harbor nights are down compared to 2022, but steady compared to pre-COVID years. The Waterways Grant Coordinator position was recently filled, Curt Wemple started in his new role on October 2. Harbor survey results came in at 91% overall satisfaction.

Financial Updates

- Financial information updates were provided to the Commissioners in the meeting packet. Michael Desnoyer was absent from the meeting, but previously stated he would be happy to answer any questions regarding the submitted information at the December meeting.

Operations Updates

- Linnae Dawson provided information in the meeting packet. This included a memo with the 2024 harbor slip rates for transient and seasonal boaters. The rates did not change from 2023. Net nights and reservations at the harbors are slightly down from 2023, but steady when compared to pre-COVID dates. Harbors are starting to close for the season. The fall harbor meeting was held virtually on September 25 with a nice turnout with the most common challenge being Canada goose. Grant agreement language has been reviewed and updated to be more precise. The updated copy will be shared at the December meeting. Funding was received to place Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) signage at Boating Access Sites (BAS). For 2024 boating slip reservations, all will be slip-specific, rather than slip assignment upon arrival. Linnae attended an electric boat demo in Elk Rapids, said it was very interesting and great fun. Upgrades have been noticed around the harbor, such as lighting updates and new mowing machinery. Lastly, Linnae mentioned the annual Michigan Boating Industries Association (MBIA) meeting will be held in Lansing November 29 and 30.

Marketing Updates

- Maia Turek started off by stressing how important it has been to have the newly placed monofilament tubes at BAS, harbors, and fishing piers around the state. The tubes were assembled by volunteers through Michigan Cares for Tourism. Pictures were shared of tubes filled with fishing line, which when collected will be recycled by Berkley. Berkley is a fishing supply company that first introduced monofilament line. Maia also spoke on fiberglass boat recycling and funding models where survey results were shared in the meeting packet.

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 Eagle Harbor State Harbor, Clinton River Cutoff BAS, and Grayhaven BAS. The Michigan State Waterways Commission visited Eagle Harbor State Harbor in August. Redevelopment with new piers, seawall, building and sidewalk improvements was nearly finished during the tour and has since been completed. The ramp has been poured, and sidewalk and curbing pouring is complete at Clinton River Cutoff BAS. All dredge spoils have been removed. Asphalt milling will start the week of October 9 with paving in mid-October. Completion is projected for late October. A new BAS development is planned at Grayhaven State Harbor. Staff are working with DNR real estate to get a land deed registered with the county, as this was not accomplished when the land was established under DNR. The next steps will refine the design and to prepare for public input. Lastly, the DNR recently met with the City of Detroit to review this project and Detroit River BAS opportunities along the northern half of the Detroit River.

Transmittals

- Meeting and possible tour locations proposed by the DNR for 2024 were submitted to the Commission, and all agreed with what was presented.
- The fall ferry letters went out, thanking Shepler's and Mackinac Island Ferry Company for keeping the wake around the harbor to a minimum at Mackinac Island.

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, Mary Rising thanked the community for hosting the Commission in New Buffalo, as well as accompanying the Commission on the tours.

Adjournment

- The meeting adjourned at 11:37 a.m.

The next Michigan State Waterways Commission Meeting: December 8, 2023, in Lansing