

Michigan State Waterways Commission Meeting Minutes

Location: Virtual meeting

Date: December 4, 2020

Roll call

Present for the Waterways Commission:

- Commissioner, Chair, Barb Brooks
- Commissioner, Vice-Chair, Mary Rising
- Commissioner, Secretary, Pat Egan
- Commissioner, Pete Beauregard
- Commissioner, Elaine Isely
- Commissioner, Mark Yonan

Others Present:

- Ron Olson, DNR
- Jackie Blodgett, DNR
- Maia Turek, DNR
- Vicki McGhee, DNR
- Jordan Byelich, DNR
- Paul Petersen, DNR
- Linnae Dawson, DNR
- Michael Desnoyer, DNR
- Michelle Wieber, DNR, Recorder

Public Attendees:

- Lou Schillinger
- Jim Christensen
- David Lerner
- Gabe Wymer
- Joelle Regovich
- Char Seise
- Jim Rossow
- Pat McGinnis

- Greg Wycamp
- Andrew Saxton

Meeting minutes

Opening Comments:

- Acting Chair, Mary Rising called the meeting to order at 10:47 a.m., December 4, 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this meeting was held virtually.
- The meeting began with reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.
- A moment of silence was held in memory of former Michigan State Waterways Commission Chairman, Dennis Nickels.

Public Appearance:

- Lou Schillinger, Chair, Port Austin Harbor Commission, voiced his concerns to the Commission regarding high-water damage, as well as economic damage due to docks in need of repair which occurred at Port Austin State Harbor. A wave study is being conducted, with a completion goal of late December. This will assist in gathering data to prepare the best plans for dock placement in the spring.

Action Items:

- The Commission gave a warm welcome to the newly appointed Commissioner, Mark Yonan. Mark is a Senior Vice President and Senior Financial Advisor, having joined Merrill Lynch in 1992. Mark proudly served our country for nearly 14 years with the United States Marine Corps. In addition to the Michigan State Waterways Commission, Mark serves on the Board of Directors for the Bishop International Airport Authority, the Flint Cultural Center Corporation, and serves as Chair on the Crim Fitness Foundation. Marks passions outside of the office include long-distance running- having completed 24 marathons, and sailing the Great Lakes on his sailboat, Semper Fidelis. Mark resides in Grand Blanc and has three adult sons and two grandchildren.
- MOTION: Each December, officer elections take place. Barb Brooks was nominated to assume the vacant Chair position. The motion was put into place by Acting Chair, Mary Rising and seconded by Commissioner Barb Brooks. Motion carried unanimously 6-0.
- MOTION: Mary Rising was nominated to assume the vacant Vice-Chair position. The motion was put into place by Acting Chair, Mary Rising and seconded by Commissioner Pat Egan. Motion carried unanimously 6-0.
- MOTION: Pat Egan was nominated to assume the Secretary position. The motion was put into place by Commissioner Barb Brooks and seconded by Commissioner Elaine Isely. Motion carried unanimously 5-0.
- The Commissioners agreed upon the Michigan State Waterways Commission subcommittee assignments.

- MOTION: Acting Chair, Mary Rising asked for a motion for approval of the minutes from the October 2, 2020 Michigan State Waterways Commission meeting. The motion was put into place by Commissioner Mark Yonan and was seconded by Commissioner Pat Egan. Motion carried unanimously, 6-0.
- MOTION: Acting Chair, Mary Rising asked for a motion for approval in support of Resolution number 12-2020-02, Revised FY2021 Waterways Capital Outlay Funding Plan. The motion was put into place by Commissioner Elaine Isely and was seconded by Commissioner Pat Egan. Motion carried unanimously, 6-0.

Committee Reports:

Marketing

- Maia Turek provided updates for the Marketing Subcommittee. Maia shared information regarding the donor platform, MobileCause. Beginning in Spring 2021, boaters who like to tip for the help they receive at the docks and such, can donate by texting the word, boat, to 80888. State of Michigan employees are exempt from receiving monetary tips. Geico is interested in providing a boating ad again, these are expected to be deployed in May 2021. Maia also reported the success of the Photo Ambassador program. Applications are being reviewed for the upcoming year's ambassadors. Once selected, the photo ambassador will share photos, drone footage, and videography, on Instagram. The DNR will have use of any photos posted, crediting the photo ambassador.

Operations

- Linnae Dawson presented variance request letters received from the Communities of Grand Haven, Bay City, Suttons Bay, and Ludington. Discussions included seasonal rates, new fees, and increasing seasonal dockage slips.

Facilities

- Vicki McGhee commented that additional Capital Outlay funding was available. An additional \$1.4 million of FY21 funding was discussed for facility improvement projects including Cheboygan Lock and Dam, Eagle Harbor State Harbor, Grindstone City BAS, and Quanicassee River BAS.

General Updates

- Vicki McGhee announced the DNR submitted COVID-19 plans, which were approved and adopted. Staff will not return from working remotely before March 1, 2021. It is anticipated parks, marinas, etc., will operate business as usual, with regular opening dates for the 2021 season. Vicki mentioned the DNR has welcomed new hire, Griselda Trevino, as the new Equity, Inclusion and Diversity Coordinator. The DNR is rolling out a new online tool, an accessibility checklist. This tool will ensure facilities are meeting established guidelines and present better communication. The Michigan State Waterways Commission is planning a

retreat in early 2021. This will be a facilitated event in which the most pressing goals for 2021 are mapped out.

Financial Updates

- Financial information updates were provided to the Commissioners in the meeting packet. Michael Desnoyer provided further details including updates as of September 30, although the fiscal year-end report is not final (very little expected to change). FY19 gas tax revenue reports actual amount of \$17.4 million, as \$16.9 million was projected. Boating registration actual revenue of \$4.4 million, as \$5 million was projected. Overall actual revenue of \$25.8 million, as \$29.9 million was projected. Expenditures showed an actual of \$17.8 million, as \$16 million was projected.

Operations Updates

- Linnae Dawson updated the Commission of operational items. Linnae proudly announced that Commissioner Pete Beauregard was inducted into the Michigan Boating Industries Association (MBIA) Class of 2020 Hall of Fame. For 2020, there were 44,000 new boaters. Half of Michiganders were in the water this year, which had an economic impact of \$7.8 billion. Record numbers in boating this year came from the aspects of boat sales and harbor reservations. Per the harbor survey that ran from June-October, with over 1,400 responses, it was indicated that 96% would visit again, 94% would recommend to a friend, and 89% thought the quality of the harbor was of high importance. Net nights and year-to-date reservations were both up significantly.

Other

- The 2021 meeting schedule was announced. February 4, April 30, June 17, August 25, October 7, and December 2. Virtual meetings will be held until it is safe to resume in-person meetings.
- Commissioner Mary Rising provided a quick year in review to the Commission – the Commission said good-bye to Commissioners Jim Hansen and Nicki Polan and welcomed new Commissioners Elaine Isely and Pat Egan. Record high-water levels was a priority focus throughout the year. Emergency grants were given to communities who needed emergency repair due to the high-water levels. Many harbors and marinas were forced to full or partial closures.

Project Report

- The Michigan State Waterways Development Program Project Report was included in each commissioner's meeting packet for their information. Many projects will have a delayed completion, as the COVID-19 pandemic has caused significant delays.
- Jordan Byelich gave a quick high-water update on facilities such as, Lake Macatawa BAS, Harley Ensign Memorial BAS and Port Austin state harbor.

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.

Adjournment

- The meeting adjourned at 1:17 p.m.
- The next Michigan State Waterways Commission Meeting: February 4, 2021