

Minutes of the
Michigan State Waterways Commission
June 6, 2014

The regular meeting of the Michigan State Waterways Commission (MSWC) was called to order by Commissioner and Chair, Gary Marowske at 8:00 a.m., on Friday, June 6, 2014, at the Holiday Inn, 940 W. Savidge, Spring Lake, Michigan 49456.

The following Commissioners were present:

Commissioner James Hansen
Commissioner Alex Declercq
Commissioner Dennis Oldgrin
Commissioner/Chair Gary Marowske
Commissioner Ward Walstrom
Special Consultant RJ Petersen

The following Commissioner was not present:

Commissioner Nicki Polan

The following staff from the Department of Natural Resources were present:

Chief Ronald A. Olson
Scott Pratt
Jason Fleming
Bill Boik
Paul Petersen
Jordan Byelich
Jackie Blodgett
Darlene Moore

Special Guest Appearance:

Senator Arlan Meekhof

Chair Gary Marowske opened the Michigan State Waterway Commission meeting at 8:03 a.m., June 6, 2014.

I. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

II. PUBLIC APPEARANCE

A. Written Correspondence

There was no written correspondence.

B. Appearances (Non-agenda items)

Special Guest Appearance: Ronald Olson, Chief of Parks and Recreation introduced our special guest, Senator Arlan Meekhof, who represents the Grand Haven District and also mentioned, Sen. Meekhof was a sponsor of the Recreation Passport.

Senator Meekhof addressed the audience with a warm welcome and thank you to the Commissioners and DNR staff for visiting the Grand Haven area. He was quick to get to the topic of the “Gas Tax,” which is a very important topic for the DNR and Waterways Committee. It is the language of the gas tax legislation that will be drafted and approved by the House of Representatives and the State Senate that holds a key piece of funding for the Waterways Commission. He indicated that because it is an election year, it is extremely difficult to get legislators on board to agree to any type of tax increase for the possibility of campaign backlash if they were to support a tax increase. There are only three days left in the legislative session before the summer break and this will be the most highly debated item.

Commissioner Dennis Nickels offered Senator Meekhof support from the Waterways Commission and relayed the importance of the connection between the gas tax, better roads and the public getting to and from waterway destinations and recreation. He referred back to the legislation now in place that dedicates the Waterways Commission 2% of the gas tax for Waterways use. The concern of the Commission is that the Waterways do not lose any portion of that and they prefer to have that amount increased. Commissioner Alex Declercq asked the Senator what the “bottom” dollar amount was, so that if the price of gas falls, will that mean a loss of money to the Waterways. Senator Meekhof responded that the issue of a bottom line amount has been addressed in the current legislation that legislators are working on but could not state what that number was. Senator Meekhof concluded his discussion that this matter may not be resolved until session reconvenes in September.

Public Comment:

Public comment was given by *Jefferson Henry of Ludington* and *James Breeden, White House Council on Environmental Quality*.

III. ACTION ITEMS

- A. Approval of the April 25, 2014 Minutes.

MOTION: Chair Gary Marowske asked for a motion to move to approve the minutes from the April 25, 2014 Michigan State Waterways Commission meeting. The motion was put into place by Commissioner Ward Walstrom and was seconded by Commissioner Dennis Grinold. It carried unanimously, 6-0.

- B.** Resolutions to support the Great Lakes Resolutions: HR 305 and HCR 22 Concurrent Resolutions to Urge Complete Hydrologic Separation of the Great Lakes and Mississippi River Basins. The Waterways Commission resolutions of support were not drafted and ready at the time of this meeting. The resolutions were available in the agenda packet for the committee to review. There was a short discussion on what the resolutions were about and Commissioner Dennis Nickels explained the importance of the resolutions and the impact on the Great Lakes. Commission Gary Marowske asked for a vote of support from the Commissioners on HR 305 and HCR 22. Commissioner Alex Declercq put the motion forward, Commissioner Dennis Nickels seconded. It carried unanimously, 6-0.

Public Comment:

Chair Gary Marowske announced there were two late additions for public comment. They were given three (3) minutes to speak.

Public comment was given by *Jefferson Henry of Muskegon, representing Ray's Marine* and *James Breeden, White House Council on Environmental Quality*.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

Dredging Projects: Paul Petersen, Waterways Grants Program Manager indicated that since last April there has been the completion of several dredging projects. Kawkawlin River and Union Bay memos addressed and discussed why these two projects were added. Paul indicated that the physical completion number was 35 and the number of final "completed" projects, 21 (where the bills have been submitted to the finance office) are 21, bringing the number to 35.

Kawkawkin River is a dredge project along Lake Huron that was added by way of legislative general fund appropriation. Union Bay near the Porcupine Mountains State Park, it is a boating access site that has a very shallow point at the end of the ramp/launch. It is an important access point for people to the Great Lakes.

Eagle Lake – Jordan Byelich, Waterways Development Program Manager. The DNR is working on acquisition of another property at Eagle Lake located just north of the land the DNR attempted to purchase previously. This location is

feasible for development of a boating access site. The DNR submitted an application for a preliminary plan review through the Township, however, the attorney for the Eagle Lake Improvement Association submitted an appeal in early 2014. A Zoning Board of Appeals meeting followed on February 25, 2014. Those behind the appeal contended a new Boating Access Site (BAS) did not meet the definition of a “park” per the Township Zoning Ordinance. The Zoning Board of Appeals voted 4-3 that it did meet the criteria for a park. On March 19, 2014, the same attorney filed a formal appeal in Cass County Circuit Court naming the Ontwa Zoning Board of Appeals and the DNR in the appeal. June 16, 2014 is the scheduled hearing date. While the legal process continues, the DNR has moved forward with their internal process of a survey and design work.

Paul Petersen, Waterways Grants Program Manager updated the status on the approved eight (8) grants for this year that were approved at the last Waterways meeting and where those applications are at. All eight agreements have been written and sent to the communities. Some of those agreements have already been sent back to us for our signature. All of the other grant applicants that did not receive grants have been sent letters as well as those that were seeking larger amounts of funding.

Ron Olson, Chief of the DNR advised that the Waterways Commission is an advisory group and recommended the direction of the eight projects that were approved and brought forward to the Commission by the DNR.

Jordan Byelich, Waterways Grants Program Manager showed a slide presentation of Lake Superior on Memorial Day weekend, 2014. Included were photos of boaters and beachgoers on and along Lake Superior where considerable ice was still present due to the long and cold winter.

Operations – Jason Fleming, Resource Management Chief. Jason provided an update on the current reservation system and numbers. While the reservations are 11% down from last year, they are up by 16% from 2 years ago. Part of this may be in part from transitioning to a new reservation system. Jason also stated that communication about when the reservation system states that the location/date is booked and it may not be so we need to let people know that just because the system shows full that they should still and can check with the local harbormaster for local availability. Some changes to the system are to visually see rates of your stay in the beginning of the reservation process and not finding out the actual cost of their reservation until they get to the check-out portion of the process. Ron Olson explained that camping numbers may be down due to weather warming so late in season and that in the beginning of the year people anticipated “normal” season temps and that reservations were made and then when the season did not warm up, those early reservations were cancelled.

Jason said that there will be talking points put out prior to Bill and Paul's presentations throughout Michigan at the Grants Workshops. We should make sure the Commissioners are aware of these talking points so we are keeping the same communication from all sides going out into the public is the same message.

Jackie Blodgett, Chief of Program Services provided a spreadsheet on the financials. Jackie went over the comparisons for several categories last year to this year. Start of this fiscal year was October 1, 2013 and goes through October 1, 2014.

Committee Reports –

Ward Walstrom from the Marketing subcommittee said tomorrow starts Boating Week with the Governor fishing at Milliken State Park in the Detroit River. Michigan Boating Week goes from June 7-14, 2014. Ward stated that more marinas were getting involved this year doing "demo days."

Alex Declercq from the Finance subcommittee spoke on the 5 year assessment. The big push for the Finance committee for the next six months will be to work on the 5 year model of research what we believe our actual maintenance and replacement needs are. These numbers will allow the committee to get a good understanding of what costs are going to be to maintain the system into the future.

Ways and Means subcommittee – Dennis Nickels spoke about the importance of the 5 year plan as well and being able to obtain information and data to help the communities to be ready for the future and having realistic expectations and goals.

Facilities subcommittee – Jim Hansen said the Facilities committee is excited about the educational workshops that Bill Boik and Paul Petersen will be offering to the public to help them apply for grants. He hopes it will encourage more communities to apply for grants and be comfortable with the process and who to go to for help. Jim spoke about the importance of the 5 years plan and how we will be able to downsize or "right size" and have a better handle on infrastructure needs. We will be able to set some priorities and be fiscally responsible.

Grant In Aid Workshop - Bill Boik, Programs and Grants Unit Manager said that he would like a Commissioner to attend each of the workshops. Gary Marowske said that he would attend the workshop in Bad Axe, Michigan. Bill detailed what the presentations will offer to the public. He discussed the 5 year plan and how the harbors sustainability should be in sync with the communities. Paul Petersen will do the "how to apply" process from beginning to end and who to contact, what challenges to avoid and grant review checklists to make sure they are on track with this process. Bill mentioned that it would be important for the Harbormaster and City Manager to be in attendance at the workshops. He talked about the press release, email blast and that we are also doing a direct mail to announce the workshops and dates.

Meeting adjourned.

The next Waterways meeting is in Harbor Springs, Michigan.