

Michigan State Waterways Commission Meeting Minutes

Location: Virtual meeting

Date: June 17, 2021

Roll Call

Present for the Waterways Commission:

- Commissioner, Chair, Barb Brooks, Boyne City, MI
- Commissioner, Vice-Chair, Mary Rising, Fenton, MI
- Commissioner, Secretary, Pat Egan, Marquette, MI
- Commissioner, Elaine Isely, Grand Rapids, MI
- Commissioner, Fred Sitkins, Suttons Bay, MI

Others Present:

- Ron Olson, DNR
- Vicki McGhee, DNR
- Jordan Byelich, DNR
- Paul Petersen, DNR
- Michael Desnoyer, DNR
- Michelle Wieber, DNR, Recorder

Absent:

- Commissioner, Mark Yonan
- Commissioner, Pete Beauregard
- Maia Turek
- Linnae Dawson

Meeting minutes

Opening Comments:

- Chair, Barb Brooks called the meeting to order at 9:07 a.m., June 17, 2021. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this meeting was held virtually.
- The meeting began with reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.
- Chair, Brooks introduced new Commissioner, Fred Sitkins. Fred has been appointed to serve the vacancy left by the late Dennis Nickels. Fred was raised in Wyandotte, is married with two sons, and now resides in Suttons Bay. A former teacher, now employed as the Director of the Inland Seas Education Association, Fred is an avid boater on the Great Lakes

and enjoys being on the water. Fred is excited for this new role and is proud to represent on the Michigan State Waterways Commission.

Public Appearance:

- Chuck May, Portage Lake Harbor Commission, reminded the Michigan State Waterways Commission to join in celebration of project completion on the Portage Channel, which also coincides with the 150th year of Channel operation, July 17.

Action Items:

- MOTION: Chair, Barb Brooks asked for a motion for approval of the minutes from the April 30, 2021, Michigan State Waterways Commission meeting. The approval came with one edit to be incorporated. The motion was put into place by Vice-Chair Mary Rising and was seconded by Commissioner Pat Egan. Motion carried unanimously, 4-0. New Commissioner, Fred Sitkins did not participate in the vote since he was not present at the April meeting.
- MOTION: Chair, Barb Brooks asked for a motion for approval to support the creation of a resolution to request funds for waterways use, based on the June 10, 2021, announcement by Governor Whitmer of nearly \$250 million in investments to modernize state parks and trails, to enhance tourism and boost local economics. Commissioners Mary Rising, Pat Egan, and Pete Beauregard will work together to draft the resolution. The motion was put into place by Vice-Chair Mary Rising, and was seconded by Commissioner Pat Egan. Motion carried unanimously, 5-0.

Committee Reports:

- Marketing update was provided by Vicki McGhee on behalf of Maia Turek. Provided in the Commissioners meeting packet were documents pertaining to the celebration of the waterways 75th anniversary. Goals of the plan include highlighting the value of access to Michigan's fresh waters – inland and Great Lake, establishing a vision for boating in Michigan in the next 25 years, and lastly, to define and convey the Michigan boating experience to help welcome and attract new boaters. Vicki also mentioned a boating safety campaign that the DNR Law Enforcement Division is collaborating with McDonalds on. Goals include, encourage safe boating practices in Michigan, increase positive relationships between Conservation Officers and boaters who are recreating responsibly, and lastly, to increase awareness about the role Conservation Officers have in disseminating recreational safety programs in Michigan.

General Updates

- Ron Olson covered Governor Whitmer's announcement for state park infrastructure plan which will benefit parks and trails, and how boating access sites within the parks could be incorporated. Reports from parks and harbors coming in are saying how the beaches are back and water levels are more manageable compared to last year.

- Vicki McGhee discussed the priority retreat actions. A document was provided in the meeting packet in which updates were made and will be recorded during future meetings.

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. Gas tax was down compared to last year, boat registrations are up compared to last year. Overall total revenue is up nearly \$2 million compared to last year. Ending fund balance is coming in at a \$10.5 million projection for 2021.

Operations Updates

- Linnae Dawson was absent from the meeting but provided an update by way of documents presented in the meeting packet. The documents show harbor YTD Net Nights and Reservations up significantly through May 31, 2021. Other updates include highlights on State facilities: Hammond Bay State Harbor will have limited services, including no fuel. Mackinac Island State Harbor will operate with full electrical. Port Austin State Harbor will operate with more dockage and seasonal slips compared to last year, and Lime Island State Harbor has limited broadside dockage, as construction is expected to begin in 2022.

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. The wave study and west side dock removal has been completed at Port Austin State Harbor. Lexington State Harbor has active projects – Boating Access Site (BAS) redevelopment and paving is under construction, and the marina harbormaster building redevelopment and expansion is in final stages of design/permitting. Jordan also mentioned the FY22 State Waterways Capital Outlay projects are being reviewed with recommendations coming after and will be presented to the Commission at their August meeting.
- Paul Petersen mentioned the grant process is busy, with approximately half of the grants have been written.

Transmittals

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

- Vice-Chair, Mary Rising received comments from the harbormaster in Northport, who said the grant they recently received was very helpful, and the community was very thankful for it.
- Vice-Chair, Mary Rising mentioned that perhaps Commissioner Pete Beauregard could provide an update at the next meeting regarding boat registrations, MBIA.
- Meeting guest, Mark Breederland mentioned the useful site of michiganpumpouts.com has gone live.

Adjournment

- The meeting adjourned at 11:09 a.m.

The next Michigan State Waterways Commission Meeting: August 25, 2021