

# Michigan State Waterways Commission Meeting Minutes

Location: Virtual meeting

Date: October 7, 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, Fred Sitkins, Suttons Bay, MI

### Others Present:

- Ron Olson, DNR, Ann Arbor, MI
- Maia Turek, DNR, Traverse City, MI
- Jordan Byelich, DNR, Lansing, MI
- Paul Petersen, DNR, Holt, MI
- Michelle Wieber, DNR, Recorder, LeRoy, MI
- Vicki McGhee, DNR, Lansing, MI
- Michael Desnoyer, DNR, Lansing, MI
- Linnae Dawson, DNR, Elmira, MI
- Scott Pratt, DNR, Novi, MI

### Guest Speakers

- Mike Terrell, DNR, Westland, MI
- Keith Cheli, DNR, Cheboygan, MI

### Absent:

- Commissioner, Mark Yonan
- Commissioner, Elaine Isely
- Commissioner, Chris Shepler

## Meeting minutes

### Opening Comments:

- Chair, Barb Brooks called the meeting to order at 9:09 a.m., October 7, 2021. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this meeting was held virtually.
- The meeting began with reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **Public Appearance:**

- Written correspondence was submitted for the meeting packet by Myke Jacobs, avid Michigan boater. Mr. Jacobs sent an email to express his concern regarding excessive wake at Mackinac Island State Harbor. He stated he has contacted multiple agencies trying to get the Mackinac Island ferries to decrease their wake, as his vessel sustained damage while docked at Mackinac Island State Harbor.
- Brad Moffatt, resident of Petoskey, joined the meeting with interest in the conversation regarding agenda item, Little Lake State Harbor declassification. Mr. Moffatt also wanted to inform the Commissioners the idea of having a dredging machine built by Michigan Technological University students.
- Mark Breederland of Michigan Sea Grants informed the Commissioners of a recent grant. The Michigan Boating Pumpout Grant Program is open to public and private marinas that are open to the public. Marinas can use grants to fund up to 75% of eligible project costs; the marina must provide the remaining 25% match. Funds can be used for new pumpout and dump stations or upgrade their existing facilities. Facilities can also use funds to construct or renovate pumpouts and dump stations and to implement public outreach and education programs. This grant helps reduce pollution from vessel discharges by encouraging safe disposal of recreational boater sewage. Grant submissions are due November 5.

### **Action Items:**

- MOTION: Chair, Barb Brooks asked for a motion for approval of the minutes from the August 25, 2021, Michigan State Waterways Commission meeting. The motion was put into place by Commissioner Pat Egan and was seconded by Commissioner Fred Sitkins. Motion carried unanimously, 4-0.
- MOTION: Chair, Barb Brooks asked for a motion for approval of the recommended 2022 meeting locations. The motion was put into place by Commissioner Fred Sitkins and was seconded by Commissioner Pat Egan. Motion carried unanimously, 4-0.

### **Committee Reports:**

- The Operations Subcommittee met September 24th and reviewed a seasonal slip request from Grand Haven Municipal Marina. The request was to add 9 seasonal slips, and the Commission approved 5 additional slips for the 2022 boating season.

### **General Updates**

- Ron Olson announced the FY22 state budget has been adopted and signed. Special grant was issued for Long Lake Boating Access Site in Alpena County. The FY23 budget cycle is being developed now. The nearly \$250 million in investments to modernize state parks and trails, to enhance tourism and boost local economics is pending, has not been taken to the legislature yet, but is expected soon.
- It was a good year for boating – slip usage, reservations, harbor nights all saw an increase.
- MSWC by-laws were edited to incorporate virtual 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. Revenue for gas tax, boater registrations, and State Harbor reservations were all up over last year. Spending was reported to be below projection.

### **Operations Updates**

- Linnae Dawson provided an Operations update to the Commissioners. Harbor Year-to-Date Net Nights and Reservations up significantly for the 2021 season, with over 35,000 harbor reservations (October 1, 2020, through August 31, 2021). Linnae will have final year-end numbers to report at the next meeting. Linnae also mentioned field locations are closing for the season, vendor contracts for bid have been received, reviewing proposals now, for CAMIS.

### **Marketing Updates**

- Maia Turek spoke on updates regarding the 75<sup>th</sup> Waterways Program anniversary, gearing up to highlight boating and its value of access to Michigan's waters. Part of the highlight will focus on boat recycling, establishing a pilot program to recycle boats dumped on state and federal lands. The starting goal is to remove 50 abandoned boats from these lands.

### **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. Port Austin State Harbor completed a wave study and assessment of docks and breakwall options. Part of the process also includes feedback from EGLE on impacts to bottomlands. Marketing analysis was also completed to determine recommended quantities for seasonal and transient slips. Information from the marketing analysis is going to be presented to the federal government as a federal grant helped pay for the construction of the transient docks.
- Jordan shared drone video footage of harbors in Mackinaw City, Escanaba, Gladstone, Manistique, and Milliken State Harbor.

- Jordan presented footage of a training video to instruct the construction of a launch ramp. Additional footage capturing an actual installation in the water is also being planned.
- Jordan, along with Mike Terrell, Metro District Supervisor, DNR, reviewed Detroit River facilities. Grayhaven State Harbor, a leased facility, has challenges with safety and security. At this time the DNR is working on acquiring consultant services to begin a design for a new BAS at Grayhaven. Mike mentioned the Clinton River Cutoff Boating Access Site (BAS) is slated to have \$2.5 million worth of improvements completed and is waiting on permits. Harley Ensign BAS has projects on hold due to high water levels, although the design phase has been completed. Decker's Landing BAS is open for the first time in 2 years due to high water levels. Projects have been completed at Wolverine Lake and Union Lake BAS, which are not on the Detroit River, but in the nearby region.
- Keith Cheli, Regional Field Planner, DNR, informed the Commission that it has been recommended to declassify Little Lake State Harbor. This could potentially mean the site would be classified only as a BAS, rather than a State Harbor. Some factors for the recommended change include the near-constant need for dredging due an inadequate breakwall and frequent channel siltation, little draw/tourism to the immediate area, and the fact that this location receives no transient boater use. Further discussion is required to make a final determination.
- Paul Petersen provided a quick update to the Commission regarding Grant-in-Aid projects. The Michigan State Waterways Development Program Project Report was included in the meeting packet. Two BigP proposals have been submitted, to be revealed early summer of 2022. Paul also mentioned there are 4 more grant agreements to write.

### **Transmittals**

- Governor Whitmer sent a letter, welcoming the newly appointed Commissioner Chris Shepler, along with welcoming re-appointed Commissioners Barb Brooks and Fred Sitkins to another term.
- Each fall, after the tourist season has ended, letters are distributed to the Mackinac Island ferry companies for their efforts in ferrying safely around Mackinac Island 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.

### **Non-Agenda Items**

- Commissioner Pat Egan mentioned the need, and work to be done on adopting a resolution regarding the budget process.
- Retreat Action items to be included on the next agenda as a standing item.

- Commissioner Pat Egan requested staff members to put together a funding package. This would go to subcommittees and seek response from Michigan Boating Industries Association.
- Commissioner Fred Sitkins supports an increase to boater registration fees, as Commissioner Mary Rising shared concern with a decrease in gas tax funding as electric vehicles become more popular.
- The Novi Boat Show will be held March 10-13, 2022.

### **Adjournment**

- The meeting adjourned at 12:07 p.m.

The next Michigan State Waterways Commission Meeting: December 2, 2021

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