

Michigan State Waterways Commission Meeting Minutes

Location: Virtual meeting

Date: April 30, 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, Pete Beauregard, St. Clair Shores, MI
- Commissioner, Elaine Isely, Grand Rapids, MI
- Commissioner, Mark Yonan, Grand Blanc, MI

Others Present:

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

Guest Speaker:

- Jennie Kahn-Jacques, Performance Improvement & Measurement Champion, Executive Office, DNR
- Scott Cook, Saginaw Bay Region, Regional Field Planner, DNR

Public Attendees:

- Chuck May
- Lou Schillinger

Meeting minutes

Opening Comments:

- Chair, Barb Brooks called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m., April 30, 2021. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this meeting was held virtually.
- The meeting began with reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Appearance:

- Chuck May, Portage Lake Harbor Commission, extended an invite to 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. Mr. May also expressed his thanks and gratitude towards the Commission for their role in the project.
- Lou Schillinger, local citizen to Port Austin and former Chair of the Port Austin Harbor Commission, spoke on the recent high-water and T-dock damage that occurred in 2019 at Port Austin State Harbor. Mr. Schillinger, along with the community would like to see repairs complete and a return to normalcy as soon as possible.

Action Items:

- MOTION: Chair, Barb Brooks asked for a motion for approval of the minutes from the February 4, 2021 Michigan State Waterways Commission meeting. The motion was put into place by Commissioner Elaine Isely and was seconded by Vice-Chair Mary Rising. Motion carried unanimously, 6-0.
- MOTION: Chair, Barb Brooks asked for a motion for approval in support of resolution number 04-2021-1, Resolution to Approve the Grant Awards for Waterways Funding. The motion was put into place by Vice-Chair, Mary Rising and was seconded by Commissioner Mark Yonan. Motion carried unanimously, 6-0.
- MOTION: Chair Barb Brooks requested to abstain from voting based on transparency, as Ms. Brooks is associated with a facility that was approved for a grant award. This vote reflects the Commissioners voting and approving all projects, except for Chair Barb Brooks. Chair Barb Brooks asked for a motion for approval in support of resolution number 04-2021-1, Resolution to Approve the Grant Awards for Waterways Funding. The motion was put into place by Commissioner Pat Egan and was seconded by Commissioner Elaine Isely. Motion carried unanimously, 5-0.

Committee Reports:

No updates to report on.

Guest Speaker:

- Jennie Kahn-Jacques, Performance Improvement & Measurement Champion, Executive Office, DNR. Jennie described to the Commission the Lean Process Improvement process and how it will focus on the Capital Outlay program within Waterways. Ms. Kahn-Jacques went on to explain how this process, which is made up of a team that included DNR staff and non-DNR representatives, will best utilize our resources and establish priorities.

- Scott Cook, Saginaw Bay Region, Regional Field Planner, DNR. Scott provided a detailed PowerPoint presentation on updates at Port Austin State Harbor. A wave study and harbor configuration study were recently completed. A discussion with the project team has yet to occur, as the information brought was very new. The harbormaster building recently received a new roof, with HVAC updates to be made, as well as dock reconfiguration.

General Updates

- Ron Olson informed the Commission that the State budget process was presented, and preliminary feedback for the 2022 waterways budget remains as presented. This process will be resolved late summer and a later update will be given. A virtual retreat took place in late March with the Commissioners, where goals were identified and discussed, and strategies mapped out. The subcommittees will put plans into place and begin work on those goals.
- Vicki McGhee provided a recap of a recent webinar that focused on the recent record-high water levels seen around the Great Lakes. The Webinar was presented by Andy Dixon, of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Lake Superior is six inches lower than this time last year and is projected to drop five inches by summer. Lakes Michigan and Huron are nine inches lower than last year and predicted to decrease by 11 inches this summer. Lake St. Clair is projected to be 12 inches lower by this summer compared to last year. The past six months has shown a more typical pattern, river volumes are still up from soil saturation.
- Maia Turek informed the Commission of a two-year partnership with Geico Insurance Company, where WIFI will be provided to eight new harbor locations, and 75 percent of the cost will be paid by Geico. Geico will also be producing and paying for boating guides that will be distributed in late May to many of our harbors.

Financial Updates

- Financial information updates were provided to the Commissioners in the meeting packet. Michael Desnoyer provided further details that reflect up to March 31, 2021. Total gas tax revenue collected was \$6.9 million, which is \$1.1 million less than FY20. Boat registration revenue through March is \$2.9 million, up from \$1 million for FY20. State Harbor reservations saw an increase of nearly \$100,000. In all, total revenue is up one million from 2020. Expenditures are down \$700,000 from 2020. FY21 revenue and expenditure projections will be available at the June 17, 2021 meeting.

Operations Updates

- Linnae Dawson updated the Commission on operational items. Graphs were provided in the meeting packet, representing state harbor year-to-date (YTD) net nights and YTD reservations from October-March, in which both are up compared to last year. Preparations for a busy season are underway. Linnae mentioned that Hammond Bay State

Harbor will reopen after being closed last season, however staff will be limited, and fuel will be unavailable. Mackinac Island State Harbor will have electric available this year thanks to the receding water levels. The annual Harbor Meeting will take place virtually this spring after cancelations due to COVID-19.

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 harbors. Lexington State Harbor is in Phase 1 of a multi-phase construction process. Work on redeveloping the Boating Access Site (BAS) is active and will include new pavement and a pier extension. The Clinton River Cutoff BAS provides access to Lake St. Clair but collects muck and debris each spring and requires multiple dredges each year. Due to the high use of this facility, the actual launch lanes will be relocated to an area where debris collections will not be as great. The design phase is nearly completed, with an anticipated construction start date in mid-August, with total completion anticipated by late May 2022. Drone shots to take place in July and August where still shots and video footage will be captured over state harbors and Grant-in-Aid harbors. These shots will provide updated photos for the DNR website as well as the digital harbor guide.
- Paul Peterson spoke of the Grant-in-Aid harbors. Grants were awarded to 23 communities. Each April 1 is the deadline for communities to apply for funding assistance.

Transmittals

- The spring ferry letters were signed by Ron Olson and Barb Brooks for deployment to Starline and Shepler's Mackinac Island ferry services.

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, Barb Brooks inquired about the lack of interest after open bids, regarding the restaurant site at Presque Isle State Harbor, which will likely be put up for sale. Barb will provide an update at the June 17 meeting.
- Due to the ongoing COVID restrictions, the June 17 meeting was confirmed to be held virtually. For this meeting, Chair, Barb Brooks has requested the Commissioners, at minimum, utilize the camera function on their devices.
- Commissioner Mary Rising made the request to revisit the discussion regarding boat registration fees. Commissioner Pete Beauregard stated that discussions with Michigan Boating Industries Association took place on April 20, and they would like to move forward,

but stated timing issues caused by election cycles. Some disconnect now, but fully supported by the industry, law enforcement. Pete confirmed an update would occur soon.

Adjournment

- The meeting adjourned at 12:09 p.m.

The next Michigan State Waterways Commission Meeting: June 17, 2021