



SALEM HARBOR PORT AUTHORITY

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MEETING MINUTES: April 7, 2022

A public meeting of the Salem Harbor Port Authority was convened at 5:00 pm via Zoom web conference.

Members present: Michael Rutstein (Chairman), Councilor Bob McCarthy - Ward 2, Fred Atkins, Kathy Winn

Members absent: Mayor Kimberley Driscoll

Others Present: Capt. Bill McHugh – Harbormaster, Seth Lattrell – Port Authority Deputy/Planner, David Kucharsky - Director of Traffic and Parking, Noah Flaherty – Hawthorne Cove Marina, Kate Fox – Destination Salem, Conrad Prosniewski – At-Large Councilor, Jeanne Sullivan and Bob Lawler – Boston Harbor Cruises, Christine Petryszyn – Recording Clerk

Call to Order

Chairman Rutstein called the meeting to order at 5:05 pm and outlined the format for the meeting, indicating that members of the public may provide comments during the period of the meeting designated for public comment.

New Member Introduction

Chairman Rutstein welcomed new member Kathy Winn, retired Deputy Director for the City of Salem Planning Department.

Blaney Street Parking Management

As part of a larger effort to better manage waterfront parking, Mr. Kucharsky discussed creating a zone that would require resident permits or a payment system during specific times of the year and day in the Blaney Street neighborhood. He presented proposed signage that would be used for that effort, which is a first step to assist ferry users and vendors with parking challenges in the area.

Members discussed the wording of the sign and possible changes to improve its clarity for the public and for enforcement. Mr. Lattrell suggested reviewing similar signs the City uses. Captain McHugh described some of the parking issues in the area during peak season. He reported that commercial excursions are turning customers away because there is no parking.

Councilor McCarthy explained that the hours indicated on the sign are intended to give flexibility in the morning for Boston commuters, with the hope of making it easier for residents, ferry users, and others that use the wharf parking.

Ms. Winn noted that the ferry vendors conduct almost all transactions online, so they could provide a permit as part of that transaction.

Mr. Kucharsky indicated he is seeking approval from the members so that they can have the signs fabricated and installed.

Chairman Rutstein made a motion that the sign be approved, with the caveat that the text be reviewed before production.

Mr. Flaherty noted that he understands the needs of the City and the issues, but that this has historically been a public lot which his customers have used. While he will work to fill his lot first, he indicated concern about finding other parking options. He reported that the demand they are unable to meet is seasonally, Friday through Sunday.

Captain McHugh agreed with Mr. Flaherty about the parking challenges. He said the use of the area has grown significantly in recent years. He added that the City-owned ferry, and its customers, are suffering due to lack of parking.

Ms. Fox requested advance notice of the new signs being installed so that they can publish the information on their website and instruct people on parking.

Councilor McCarthy made a motion to approve signage but subject to modifications of the sign. He suggested the sign read "Permit Parking Only - May 1st through November 1st." He recommended the members work with Mr. Kucharsky to revise the sign and circulate for review.

Councilor Prosniewski noted that he never expected that the lot would be at full capacity. He recognized that there is no easy solution, but there is concern about public usage. Captain McHugh reported that the ferry has had to turn customers away and that people have missed their reservations due to a lack of parking. He said it is frustrating for the ferry operators. He noted that the ferry is owned by the City, and that the lot was designed to support the City's marine operation and funded by seaport bonds. Mr. Kucharsky noted there are many competing interests here, but hopes the signage is a first step in helping people understand the intent of the lot. He added that they will work with users. On the enforcement front, they will start with warnings and reminders before issues tickets.

The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Ferry Marketing and Operations – Boston Harbor Cruises

Ms. Sullivan and Mr. Lawler presented an update on the marketing and operations of Boston Harbor Cruises (BHC) for Salem Harbor. They are looking forward to building back and being part of the community and supporting its businesses. They reported that operations are 75% of what they were pre-COVID, based on 2019 numbers. Rates have not been raised, despite the increase in fuel costs. For now, the current schedule will remain in place. They have been working to improve alert notifications. There is also interest in studying water taxi service throughout the harbor.

Ms. Sullivan reported that they are working on a multi-faceted marketing plan. This includes targeting passengers that come through Long Wharf Boston. They have a dedicated website for Salem, but also market Salem on their main website which receives nearly 18 million visits per year. Ms. Sullivan discussed their national social media presence, which includes the Salem ferry. BHC is a member of the Salem Chamber of Commerce.

Ms. Sullivan also discussed The Landing. She noted that the restaurant generally attracts local residents, and they are looking forward to a wonderful season with many events.

Chairman Rutstein thanked Ms. Sullivan and Mr. Lawler. Mr. Lawler discussed the challenges of hiring talent and want to encourage residents to apply for positions. They are looking to rebuild what was lost over the past two years.

Ms. Winn inquired about hiring more managers and supervisors, and menu expansion. Mr. Lawler indicated that they are working to do both. Though there are infrastructure limitations, they are looking at partnerships with vendors to expand their offerings.

Staff/Authority Updates

Harbor Plan

Mr. Lattrell reported that they Harbor Plan is moving forward. They would like to submit the plan so that it can be approved by the State as soon as the state has the authority to do so.

Offshore Wind

Mr. Lattrell reported that there is a lot of work happening behind the scenes. He noted that as the P&S was about to be signed, the power plant filed Chapter 11, so they are trying to understand the impacts to Lot 2. AECOM has been engaged by Crowley as their design engineer. Mr. Lattrell noted on the funding side, a notice of intent for an investment challenge was issued. The \$90 million set aside for offshore wind is now \$50 million. Proposals are due over the summer, with decisions likely in the fall. The City was awarded an \$80,000 grant amendment for technical support from Seaport Economic Council. The funding will be used to engage legal services with Hinkley Allen, specifically Jay Gonzalez.

Harbor Master Report

Harbormaster McHugh provided the Harbormasters report. He reported that supply chain issues have slowed down progress of the North Berth passenger transfer system. They want to get the accessibility correct, and they anticipate completion soon. He reported that on April 26th there will be a large yacht marketing session at Winter Island in Gloucester. While there is no berth availability right now, they are looking to bring businesses that will be supported by bringing large yachts. Mr. McHugh noted they are looking to expand water taxi service to better connect the harbor. Work at Willows Pier is going well.

Mr. Atkins inquired about previous discussions of engines needing work. Mr. McHugh said they are working with BHC and getting ready to put out bids for gear overhaul.

Public Comment

The meeting was opened for public comment. There were no comments.

Approval of Minutes

Meeting minutes from the January 6 and February 3 meetings were unanimously approved by all members present.

Adjournment

Salem Harbor Port Authority adjourned at 6:15 pm.