**MEETING MINUTES: May 7, 2020**

A public meeting of the Salem Harbor Port Authority was convened at 5:05 pm via Zoom webconference.

**Members present**: Chairman Michael Rutstein, Bob McCarthy - Ward 1 Councilor, Meaghan LeClerc, Fred Atkins

**Members absent:** Mayor Kimberley Driscoll

**Others Present**: Capt. Bill McHugh – Harbormaster, Kathy Winn – Deputy Planner, Seth Lattrell – Port Authority Deputy/Planner, Senator Joan Lovely, Rinus Oosthoek/Jeff Swartz – Salem Chamber of Commerce, Hannah Mori – Sen. Lovely’s Office, Bob Blair – Easter Point Pilots.

Meeting called to order at 5:05pm.

Chairman Rutstein opened the meeting and outlined the format for the meeting, indicating that members of the public would remain muted until the public comment period, during which each participant will be unmuted by the host and given an opportunity to speak.

Mr. Lattrell provided a summary on the SEC grant and the harbor planning effort. The SEC grant was executed and final contract of grant award from the state was received. The Harbor Planning contract was executed by the City and sent to the consultant for signature. Proposals are in hand from GEI and Collins engineering to advance the work on the North Berth and Deepwater Berth and are being moved through the City purchasing dept. to initiate the work.

Mr. Lattrell provided an update on the Municipal Harbor Plan/DPA Master Plan. The City is coordinating with the State on review of the request for Notice to Proceed (NTP). The NTP filing had been slightly delayed as the state needed additional information and clarification on the approach, specifically the Crescent Lot and North River planning district, and was hesitant to initiate a public comment period during the COVID crisis. The most recent conversations have been positive, so the City anticipates filing soon. Once a filing date is confirmed the City will provide an updated schedule.

Mr. Rutstein asked for an update on the conveyance/wharfing agreement. Mr. Lattrell and Mr. McHugh both stated that they have not received an update recently. Mr. McHugh suggested that he and Mr. Lattrell will seek to approach the property owner directly on this rather than continuing to go through the attorneys.

Mr. Lattrell provided an update on the progress of establishing a website for the Port of Salem. Mr. Lattrell has met with 4 firms who provided a rough budget to inform future decisions. The initial rough estimates were similar in pricing, however Mr. Lattrell noted that staff sees a benefit to moving forward with Sperling Interactive who manages the website for Destination Salem rather than putting it out for formal RFP as there are distinct advantages to having similar branding and shared marketing, particularly for cruise activity. The Port Authority members expressed support, Councilor McCarthy made a motion to advance with Sperling Interactive, Ms. LeClerc seconded the motion, the motion was passed unanimously.

Mr. McHugh provided the Harbormaster’s report.

Mr. McHugh updated on the ongoing discussions with Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) regarding shoreside requirements and service for ports of entry. He submitted an email to CBPs Port Director requesting information on the design requirements for shoreside infrastructure, and also asked that Salem be treated similar to other ports in New England and be granted a waiver from full compliance while we advance our harbor plan and determine the ultimate upland use of the site. He received a response that materials are typically shared with a designer during the design process, not a municipality, so will continue to push for more clarity on these requirements.

The Harbormasters office received an inquiry from a lobsterman regarding availability at the commercial marina. Mr. McHugh noted that they do allow lobster boats during the winter, but there isn’t sufficient space in the summertime. He also noted that there was confusion regarding pricing, however he provided clarification to the individual.

Mr. McHugh noted that the Harbormasters office is making arrangements for the installation of a new peristaltic pump for vessel pumpout. It will be faster and more reliable than the existing vacuum pump, and may be used to supplement pumpout boat operations as operations change during the COVID crisis.

Mr. McHugh noted that he was made aware that the Coast Guard is in discussions with cruise ships for vessel mooring within local harbors for storage while they are out of operation. He noted that if a vessel did come to Salem Sound, it wouldn’t use Salem for crew changes, but would require that the Harbormaster plan for any emergency service needs. He did receive a request to use the deepwater berth as a lay berth, however he is not comfortable with that due to the condition of the berth.

Mr. McHugh provided a summary of recent updates to recreational and commercial boating guidelines during the COVID crisis and noted that future phases of reopening still need to be outlined. He will continue to monitor these changes as they will impact the City’s operations and the fall cruise ship activity. Councilor McCarthy asked how the Harbormaster plans to enforce certain aspects of the recent guidelines related to recreational boating and social distancing. Mr. McHugh indicated that he is still developing his protocol and that enforcement will be a challenge.

The meeting was opened to public comment.

Bob Blair, Eastern Point Pilots, provided updates on recent cruise ship communications he’s heard through the industry. He noted that it’s yet to be seen what the cruise activity will be for the fall, however there is the potential for an uptick in megayachts. He noted that he’s been in discussions with MassCEC and continues to push for an engineering study of the viability of the Port of Salem to support the wind industry. Lastly, Mr. Blair also noted that marketing efforts should extend beyond the website to direct outreach to the industry letting them know that the Port is open for business. Mr. Rutstein asked for an update on discussions with DEME. Mr. Blair responded that he has not spoken with DEME recently but has been in touch with GE. He noted that most contractors are waiting for the project developers to execute contracts before investing in port infrastructure, which is why we need to engage directly rather than waiting for the contractors to contact the City. To do so the City should continue to meet with MassCEC and should make a public statement that the port is seeking new business. Mr. McHugh noted that we need to be careful regarding the timing and should be careful not to put the cart before the horse. Current priority is understanding what we have, negotiating land ownership, and figuring out the harbor plan.

Meeting minutes from the April 2nd meeting were unanimously approved.

Salem Harbor Port Authority adjourned @ 5:54 pm.