

**CITY OF NORWALK  
STATE OF THE HARBOR MEETING  
DECEMBER 16, 2015**

**ATTENDANCE:**

Harbor Management Commission Members:

Jose Cebrian, Chair; Tony Mobilia, Dr. John Pinto, William Gardella,  
Michael Griffin, Harbormaster; Pete Johnson, Shellfish Commission;  
Geoff Steadman, Consultant;

Norwalk Police Department Marine Unit: Officer Rich Dellalo;

Norwalk Fire Department Marine Unit: Captain Jon Maggio

Marcy Balint, Department of Environmental Energy Protection

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Cebrian called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. and led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman's Comments

Mr. Cebrian welcomed everyone and thanked all for coming out to the annual meeting. He spoke on the value and significance of the Harbor to not only recreation but essential to Norwalk commerce, trade, and water-dependent businesses.

He gave an overview of the mission of the Harbor Management Commission and thanked the members for all they do to keep the Harbor safe and viable. He introduced members of the Commission and others in attendance, as follows:

Jose Cebrian, Chair; Tony Mobilia, Vice Chairman;. William Gardella;  
Dr. John Pinto, President of the Connecticut Harbor Master Association;  
Michael Griffin, Norwalk Harbor Master; Geoff Steadman, Consultant;  
Marcy Balint, DEEP.

Presentation of the David S. Dunavan Award.

Dr. Pinto reported that Terry Backer passed away on Tuesday morning, losing his long battle with brain cancer. Mr. Backer served as the Soundkeeper, dedicated to protecting and preserving Long Island Sound, and was a former recipient of the David S. Dunavan Award in 2010. Dr. Pinto then called for a moment of silence in memory of Terry Backer.

Dr. Pinto gave an overview of the David S. Dunavan Award that was established to recognize an individual for stewardship efforts for work done with protection of the Norwalk Harbor and impacts to benefit of Long Island Sound. He announced that this year's recipient is Norm Bloom and he read the plaque inscription and dedication.

Mr. Bloom was unable to attend and the plaque was accepted by Mr. Johnson of the Shellfish Commission on behalf of Mr. Bloom.

Mr. Cebrian said that the Fire and Police and Marine Units perform a significant amount of work responding to calls on the water and assisting the Harbor Master with boater safety. Mr. Cebrian said that Sgt. Lapak was unable to attend due to illness and stated that Officer Dellalo would provide a report.

Norwalk Police Department Marine Unit: Officer Rich Dellalo

Officer Dellalo reported that the Police Marine Unit has seen an increase in call volume for assistance with the boating season extending from earlier in the spring to later in the fall, and Norwalk's growth as a mixed use harbor. Going into 2016, the unit is planning more enforcement, patrol and an increase in public interaction in areas of safety, education and safety classes.

Norwalk Fire Department Marine Unit: Captain Jon Maggio

Capt. Jon Maggio then spoke about his experience with the Marine Unit. He said that the Marine Unit was located in the Region 1 area and the Marine units have expanded their role in recent months. The unit has been a role model to other municipalities. Now that the Coast Guard is focuses on Homeland Security, the local marine units have provided coverage to not only Norwalk but also the surrounding communities.

Captain Maggio then spoke about the increased amount of traffic on the river and commended Harbor Master Griffin on his ability to prevent incidents from occurring. He added that one of the reasons that the river traffic has increased is because Norwalk has an excellent harbor.

Captain Maggio highlighted training programs and drill exercises:

In Oct 2015 CT Region 1 Marine Group held a 4 hour field drill participants including area Fire Dept Marine Units-Norwalk Fire, Stamford Fire, Fairfield Fire, Bridgeport Fire, Stratford Fire; USCG Sector Long Island Sound Staff, and USCG Station boat & crew, USCG Sector Long Island Sound Command Center. Norwalk's aquarium's vessel "Spirit of the Sound" supported the marine distress drill. Also Bridgeport EMD activated their VEOCI capability, and USCG used HSIN Adobe Connect for exercise support.

With the great communication between the Fire Department and the Police Department, the marine units function well. He thanked all those marina owners who had helped in keeping the marine unit vessels in operation.

### Harbor Master Mike Griffin

Mr. Griffin thanked the Commissioners and Marine Unit for their dedication to the Norwalk Harbor. He added that as Harbor Master, I salute the course of action taken by our four rowing clubs agreement on a dedicated course to be followed by both rowers and coach boats operating in the restricted bridge areas and navigating in the harbor. As always, the Norwalk Harbor Management Commission will be the lead agency in protecting the interests of the boating public and the commercial water dependent users during the planning and execution of this project and will monitor all steps for any possible impact on our harbor.

**Consultant** – Mr. Steadman noted that his report would be on topics listed in the Newsletter that can be found on the table with other harbor documents.

The Harbor Management Plan requires that applications for construction in and around Norwalk Harbor are planned to include best management practices for storm water management. Recently, the NHMC completed the first statistical analysis of water quality data from the Norwalk River and harbor with assistance from the Connecticut Bureau of Aquaculture. A working” mathematical model was developed and demonstrated a key relationship between elevated bacterial counts in the harbor and storm water runoff from the most developed part of the watershed.

A recent environmental Report Card gave Norwalk Harbor a C+ rating and highlighted water pollution as an on-going concern. The irony of this announcement is that good water quality has always been a fundamental goal of the Norwalk Harbor Management Commission (NHMC) and Norwalk Harbor Management Plan. In fact, Norwalk has led the way to address pollution issues. The city, acting through the Mayor’s Water Quality Committee, NHMC, Shellfish Commission Health Department, Department of Public Works, and other agencies, have successfully developed numerous initiatives ‘ maintain and improve water quality in the harbor.

### Mooring Committee

Mr. Denis Santella, Chair for the Mooring Committee of the HMC reported that the Online Mooring System continues to show substantial compliance and improvement throughout the year. He added that the Committee continues to address issues and make improvements as required.

There are 212 mooring permits in the system, for the areas located in Norwalk Harbor East Basin, South Anchorage, Peach Island, Belle Island, Ram Bay Island, Sheffield Harbor, Bells Bay, and Copsps Island Bay. The Managed Fields consist of: 88 moorings for Norwalk Yacht Club; 61 moorings for Sprit Island; and 84 moorings for Rowayton Yacht Club

The Mooring Committee has prepared a draft of proposed Amendments to the Rules and Regulations for Mooring and Anchoring Vessels in Norwalk Harbor and will seek approval by the Common Council in the near future.

In the coming season, the Mooring Committee plans to improve areas within the Online Mooring System to make it more user friendly. If a mooring holder has questions, suggestions or would like to make the Committee aware of issues, they have experienced using the System, please email us at [nhmcmooring@gmail.com](mailto:nhmcmooring@gmail.com)

### Harbor Safety

The existing speed buoys in the harbor will be refurbished, upgraded and replaced where required for the 2016 boating season.

The NHMC presented to the Norwalk Marine Police, a Water Rescue Training Dummy, known as Oscar, to enhance Harbor Safety Training for use in man overboard drills and also will be shared with Fire Rescue, EMS Rescue, Coast Guard Auxiliary, local Oyster and Claming boats and certified passenger boats such as the Maritime Spirit and Toth Quest, as well as other agencies, determined by the Norwalk Marine Police.

### Bridges Committee Report

Mr. Mobilia provided his report as follows:

The Metro-North WALK Bridge in Norwalk has been ailing for many years. Last year, the 119-year-old bridge malfunctioned twice, stranding hundreds of rail riders and causing delays and headaches along the New Haven Line. As a former commuter, I have personally felt the pain of delays the bridge has caused, but there is another side to this story. Hundreds of people, commuters or otherwise, may have been affected directly or indirectly. Under federal law and Coast Guard Rule, the bridge also must be opened for marine traffic.

The commercial water dependent businesses north of the bridge depend on bridge openings for barge deliveries of construction materials. If that is interrupted, deliveries will shift to trucks, increasing road traffic and leading to higher prices for materials plus increased road taxes. The private marinas and a marine repair and storage yard also depend on the bridge openings for their businesses. In October 2014, Gov. Dannel Malloy announced the Federal Transit Administration is expected to support the Walk Bridge replacement project in federal fiscal years 2016-2018 with approximately \$146 million. The state will provide a matching requirement of \$36.5 million for a total of \$182.5 million. An additional \$68 million of state bond funds are programmed. In November 2014, the federal government awarded the CT Department of Transportation \$161 million for the project. Combined with existing state funds, the award brought funding to \$277 million. The project is expected to cost more.

In a meeting held August 27, 2015, ConnDOT reviewed the status with the Norwalk Harbor Management Commission's Bridge Committee and explained that as the bridge construction planning process is underway, there is a need to conduct other work on the rail line, including expansion of the Dock Yard in South Norwalk and work on the tracks to the east (called by Metro-North the "Interlocking Project"). These projects are necessary to maintain efficient movement of trains once the work starts.

Because of the development surrounding the bridge, the project presents some unique challenges. Properties in the vicinity of the bridge were identified as possible staging areas for construction and would probably have to be appropriated. However, nothing has been finalized. As work gets underway, a temporary, fixed bridge is planned to allow trains to pass over the river. Even though the temporary bridge will have a higher vertical clearance than the old bridge, most vessels will not be able to pass under it, and something will have to be done to accommodate them. Representatives of HNTB Corp., designing the new bridge, stated that they are still in a very early phase of the project. When 60% of the design is reached, ConnDOT will begin to obtain permits from state and federal authorities notably the CT DEEP and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The schedule calls for this phase to be completed by February 2016 and all permits to be obtained by February 2017. According to the current schedule, the construction part of the project would start in February 2017 and be completed in July 2021.

The Harbor Management Plan calls for review of proposals concerning the WALK Bridge. The Plan includes provisions to maintain safe and efficient navigation and the viability of water-dependent facilities, and provisions to protect environmental quality while maintaining, repairing, and replacing the bridge. The present bridge must be replaced. But the question is how the construction challenges in a confined area will be met. And at what cost to us all...Stay tuned.

#### I-95 Yankee Doodle Repair/replacement.

Mr. Mobilia explained that in view of other work being done this is the time to have the Yankee Doodle repairs addressed. He explained that there was chemical run off capped and disposed in the area. There was discussion of the involvement by the DEEP.

#### Public Comments

#### Mr. Cebrian explained that there would be a two minute time limit for public comments.

Mr. Paul Servino asked about the placement of buoys and the limited effectiveness of #10-#12. Harbor Master spoke on the history of speed limit enforcement along the inner harbor and shared his concerns on the buoy placement. He explained that the DEEP is the permitting agency and placement is based on GPS mapped navigation co-ordinants. There was an exchange of comments from the member of the public and Harbor Master.

It was noted that comments and dialogue is necessary for support and suggested that the comments be put in writing to the Commission to be forwarded on to the DEEP for action.

Captain Maggio asked the DEEP if the department could have some influence on recommendations to (Conn)DOT for the Yankee Doodle Bridge replacement to capture contamination, or some kind of separation system. He added that it could be the first of its kind, an environmentally friendly system.

Marcy Balint, senior coastal planner with the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Office of Long Island Sound Programs replied that they are totally open to that. She added that they don't know what the solutions are exactly to that and what they can exactly do. maybe there are other bridges in Connecticut that have had a similar issue."

Mr. Griffin added that environmental issues aside, the open drains added to the cost of recent dredging of the harbor. The material dredged from beneath the Yankee Doodle Bridge was too contaminated to be disposed of in Long Island Sound and had to be buried in a specially created Confined Aquatic Disposal cell inside the harbor, according to Griffin.

Mr. Steadman added that the NHMC is reviewing plans by the Connecticut DOT to replace and repair, respectively. The railroad and I-95 bridges over the Norwalk River. Historically, the DOT has given little attention to the pollution impacts of storm water runoff from highway bridges. Changing this attitude requires support from the same groups and public officials who provided comments on the recent Norwalk Harbor Report Card.

Mr. Steadman explained that there was 20 miles of water quality data collected and there was also a large body of data from the Bureau of Aquaculture. The data team looked at the data collected for one year, and the group will now be working on identifying the source of the bacteria.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Marilyn Knox;  
Telesco Secretarial Services