

**MINUTES
MARITIME AQUARIUM AUTHORITY
CONFERENCE CALL MEETING
APRIL 11, 2013**

ATTENDANCE: Donna King, Chair; Mayor Moccia, Elizabeth Gibbs, John Igneri, David Watts, Andy Conroy, Amy Bien.

STAFF: Jennifer Herring, President; Donna Vinci

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 p.m. by the Chair.

**DISCUSSION AND RATIFICATION OF RESOLUTION OF THE MARITIME
AUTHORITY LEASE**

Mayor Moccia said he would recuse himself from discussion and vote on this item because he will be a signatory on this lease.

Discussion took place on the fact that the resolution, if approved by the Authority, will go to the Land Use & Building Management Committee, chaired by Fred Bondi. It would then, if approved by that body, be forwarded to the Common Council for final approval. The Chair said that she and Ms. Herring wanted to be present when this went before Land Use & Building Management.

**** MR. IGNERI MOVED TO RATIFY THE RESOLUTION REGARDING THE MARITIME AUTHORITY LEASE.**

*Resolution of the Maritime Aquarium Authority
April 11, 2013*

Whereas: The Maritime Aquarium is among the most important assets in the City of Norwalk; welcoming approximately 500,000 visitors a year and providing approximately \$25,000,000 in economic impact annually; and

Whereas: The Maritime Aquarium provides significant contributions to Norwalk's schools and youth, including:

- *Schools – The Maritime Aquarium partners with the Norwalk Public Schools to offer educational enhancement to students across a number of dimensions. All Norwalk students are admitted free on field trips; every 4th and 6th grader has science programs through a private grant (over 1,600 students); the whole school partnerships with Jefferson and Brookside are closing the achievement gap in science (over 1100 students);*

and the new Dead Reckoners afterschool program for high-needs high school students has begun, and

- *Youth – The Maritime Aquarium is an active partner with Norwalk ACTS, the Norwalk Housing Authority, and the Norwalk Collaborative for Youth Success. A science-based work readiness and college prep after school program began in fall 2012 which will eventually serve 100 youth a year; and*

Whereas The Maritime Aquarium enhances the reputation of our City and its surrounding region, presenting Norwalk as unique among cities its size in having a significant aquarium. For many out-of-towners, The Maritime Aquarium is a major factor in their awareness of Norwalk; and

Whereas The Maritime Aquarium adds to the quality of life in its immediate neighborhood and in our region. Anchoring a redeveloped neighborhood the Aquarium keeps positive activity on the streets, formerly run-down and neglected, thus counteracting objectionable activity. The Maritime Aquarium offers a family experience that enhances the quality of life and makes Norwalk an attractive place to live and visit; and

Whereas The Maritime Aquarium has a positive impact on the local and State economy; it is the largest tourist attraction in southwestern Connecticut and second-largest in the State of Connecticut providing a significant positive impact on the economy, generating revenues for the City and drawing people to the surrounding restaurants and other attractions; its presence helps attract corporations to Norwalk, it anchors the hippest neighborhood in Connecticut, which has attracted creative small businesses and offers young knowledge-workers a general positive well being for their livelihood and working environments they cannot find elsewhere; and

Whereas The Maritime Aquarium has provided a significant economic return on the investment. The City of Norwalk's investment in creating the Aquarium 25 years ago, which costs about \$1.5 million a year, has generated a return of \$25 million a year in economic impact. The Maritime Aquarium employs 44 Norwalk residents. The Maritime Aquarium anchors a redevelopment effort that has preserved historic buildings and community character which offer a hospitable environment for residents and visitors; and

Whereas Long Island Sound stewardship is positively impacted by the conservation ethic incorporated into The Maritime Aquarium's

mission, which is devoted to inspiring people to appreciate and protect Long Island Sound. Its exhibits and education programs focus on developing future stewards of Connecticut's most valuable natural resource; and

Whereas Only through effective and frugal management—which in recent years has often necessitated financial cuts—does The Maritime Aquarium manage each year to meet the financial responsibilities necessary to operate an attractive, safe facility and to offer its education programs. It has several million dollars of capital replacement pending. Acknowledging operational, maintenance and capital requirements have not heretofore nor will these requirements in the future allow for either payment of rent or repayment of existing bonds. The City of Norwalk built the Maritime Garage primarily to provide parking for Aquarium visitors. The continuing availability of 469 parking spaces at peak visitation times is essential to the Aquarium, for example during President's week, spring vacation week, July and August; and

Whereas Its contractual relationship with the City of Norwalk must now be modified to reflect actuality in order to maintain The Maritime Aquarium's positive influence on its neighborhood, the City of Norwalk and the State of Connecticut,

Now therefore be it resolved that the Maritime Aquarium Authority supports and seeks agreement with the City of Norwalk to establish a new or revised lease which incorporates the following:

- Effective July 1, 2013 through end of the lease on July 29, 2031, a new lease or revision of the existing lease that allows The Maritime Aquarium to occupy the City-owned buildings at \$1.00 per year*
- Removal of any bond repayment requirement*
- Best efforts will be made to provide parking in The Maritime Garage when needed by visitors, including at peak visitation times such as President's week, spring break and July and August, and that current staff, volunteers and board members park without charge.*

The Chair said that the only change to the resolution that was originally sent out is the last sentence relating to the parking garage.

Mr. Conroy said that when the lease is reviewed with the Law Department and changes are agreed to, the Authority needs to review those changes. Discussion took place on a revised lease being e-mailed and whether a special meeting would be necessary.

**** MOTION PASSED WITH ONE ABSTENTION (MAYOR MOCCIA)
** MR. CONROY MOVED TO ADJOURN**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cheryl Telesco Blois
Telesco Secretarial Services