

**Minutes – Special Meeting**

**HARBOR COMMISSION**

**December 15, 2009 2:00 p.m.**

**Mulvey Municipal Center – Multi Media Room**

**Attending:** John Rie, Chairman, Ron Stevenson, Keith Rich, Michael Farrell, William Angelini; Michael Polo

**Absent:** Joe Boccia

**Also Attending:** Noel Bishop, First Selectman; Jim Crawford, Selectman; John Hall, Selectman; Len Mierzejewski, Harbor Master; Jenny Contois, Director, Congressman Courtney’s Office; Jack Karalius, USACE; Gerri Lewis, Clerk; members of the public including marine trades, boards and commission members and the press.

**1. Call To Order:**

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Rie at 2:06 P.M.

Selectman Bishop welcomed all in attendance and noted Jim Crawford, Selectman, John Hall, Selectman, Jenny Contois, and members of the press.

Chairman Rie asked the commission members to introduce themselves.

**2. Pending Dock Applications:**

Chairman Rie asked the commission to vote on two previous dock applications. One at 830 Boston Post Road and another at 24 Mennunketesuck Road.

Upon a motion to approve the dock applications by Ron Stevenson and seconded by Michael Farrell, it was so voted unanimously.

Upon a motion for acceptance of the docks made by Michael Farrell and seconded by Ron Stevenson, it was so voted unanimously.

**3. Harbor Master Report:**

At this time Mr. Rie called upon Len Mierzejewski, Harbor Master . Mr. Mierzejewski gave a brief history of Westbrook and the marine industry. He noted that Westbrook’s harbor is the second largest in the state, with 10 marinas. Pilots Point is the 4<sup>th</sup> largest taxpayer in Westbrook. Mr. Mierzejewski noted that the Harbor Master’s job is to make the channel safe for navigation which bring us to why we are all here today. At this time, Mr. Mierzejewski introduced Jack Karalius of the USACE. He noted that he has been working with Mr. Karalius since 1993.

Mr. Karalius gave an update on dredging in Westbrook, and felt it wouldn't be ready until 10/2010. He noted that the window for dredging now is 10/10 – 1/11. RFP's would have to be advertised. He noted that there was not enough funds or time for 2010, and the earliest would be 10/2011. A question re stimulus funds was asked. Mr. Karalius reported that one project received funds in Massachusetts.

Mr. Bishop introduced Jenny Contois of Congressman Courtney's office. Ms. Contois was not familiar with a second round of stimulus funds of this type but would report back. She noted that the appropriation to Westbrook was \$689K. She also noted that Mr. Courtney handles dredging projects in Connecticut, of which there are several. She reported that the appropriation process begins in January every year. There are more projects than funds. The requests are prioritized and submitted in March and votes take place at the end of the year.

Mr. Karalius noted that Westbrook has to compete with many other harbors which are mostly commercial, whereas Westbrook is recreational.

At this time Mr. Mierzejewski invited Rives Potts of Pilots Point Marina to speak. Mr. Potts gave some early history of dredging of the channel. In the early '80's a permit was approved to allow the channel to be dredged to a depth of 8' + 1' and new width of 125' to accommodate the increasing number and size of the boats berthing and visiting Westbrook. A federal dredging project was carried out by King Dredging of the Great Lakes, using a hydraulic dredge. They dredged the river to the prescribed depth and width from the singing bridge out to the southern (outer) end of the entrance channel. The dredged material from the entrance channel was pumped onto the beach west of the channel (Grove Beach), and the material from the inner channel was pumped onto land provided by Pilots Point Marina between the two rivers. This made the Westbrook channel more navigable for the larger, deeper draft sailboats. Boats from all over the world and from all ports in Long Island Sound and the east coast for major restoration, refits, and routine maintenance. Pilots Point Marina hosted regattas for several years to attract racing yachts. They then invested in a Travelift to be able to haul the larger, deeper boats. A new building was erected in 1987 to allow the larger boats to be worked on inside, 12 months of the year.

All of this provided year round jobs for over 100 men and women. The trickle down effect was healthy for all of the local businesses and suppliers.

After the last federal dredging project of 1998, the channel became shallower and narrower. More than 30 year round jobs have been lost because of the shrinking and shallowing of the channel.

Mr. Potts questioned Mr. Karalius regarding the engineering costs, costs for equipment mobilization and demobilization of \$400K. The costs for insurance, bonding, and certifying equipment was discussed. Mr. Potts and several others felt that \$700K would be enough to dredge the channel. They felt that the USACE administrative costs were exorbitant. A discussion followed re Westbrook being their own contractor.

Ms. Contois noted that there is a Harbor Trust Fund. Congressman Courtney wrote a letter to ask if these funds could be used for dredging. She will follow up on this and report back.

Mr. Karalius noted that if a depth of 6' + 1' was all that was needed, the project cost could be cut down. Mr. Potts noted that this would be a second choice. Mr. Bishop asked Mr. Karalius if he could estimate a timeline so that all could work together. Mr. Karalius replied that timing is critical. The following would be needed asap:

- Environmental approval of contracts
- Advertise for 30 days
- All funding in place and ready for July 1<sup>st</sup>.

A discussion ensued regarding phased dredging. Mr. Karalius suggested a first step is to put something in writing on the last 2 or 3 dredge details. Then scale back the project and something in writing noting the exact points of location of the channel dredging.

Mr. Gavigan of the board of Finance noted that the BOF wanted to cooperate.

At this time, Chuck Beck, representative to the Maritime Commission from the CTDOT noted that it would be a good idea to downsize the project to fit the funding. He noted that USACE has rules and policies and that Westbrook needs to be aware of this.

Mr. Gavigan reported that the BOF could do a memorandum of Understanding guaranteeing the monies. He noted that this project will be on every BOF agenda going forward and he was aware of the importance and support of the USACE.

Mr. Rie noted that a special meeting would be scheduled before the next BOF meeting.

Mr. Bishop noted that this meeting was very productive. Ms. Contois noted that she would go ahead and still apply for appropriations. Mr. Beck would check on stimulus money. Mr. Gavigan noted that the BOF would have the ability to split these funds as work is being done. Administrative costs may be able to be budgeted in this year's budget if they have those numbers.

Harbor Commission  
December 15, 2009  
Page Four

Mr. Angelini asked what the turn around time would be after figures were provided. Mr. Karalius answered within a week.

Mr. Rie thanked everyone and asked for a motion to adjourn.

**3. Adjournment**

Upon a motion by Ron Stevenson and seconded by Michael Farrell, it was so **VOTED** unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:11 P.M.

Respectfully submitted:

Gerri Lewis, Clerk