



OBSERVER CORPS REPORT

HARBORS AND WATERS BOARD -December 4, 2023

In person only; no recording

LWVM Observer – Kathy Breslin

All members present: Gary Gregory, John Daub, Ken Breen, Jay Michaud. Alternates present: Rick Cuzner, Peter Dragonis. Alternates absent: Chris Hood

State Street restrooms:

Marblehead resident, Phil Blaisdell, asked the board for approval of his proposal for opening and operating the State Street restrooms year-round by a citizens group of volunteers. He asked for their endorsement before bringing the proposal to the Select Board.

Currently the Harbors and Waters Department is responsible for maintenance of the restrooms which are located on property which they manage, the State Street Landing. In 1996, Town Meeting passed a Select Board sponsored article to operate the restrooms year-round, which required the use of heating. Initially the restrooms were maintained by the Rec and Parks Dept but then shifted to Harbors and Waters after the heating equipment had not been maintained, failed, pipes burst, and the heating was not replaced. As a result, the restrooms were not open during the winter for more than the past 20 years. The Harbors and Waters Board stated that they do not want to maintain them anymore and neither does the Rec and Parks Dept.

Mr. Blaisdell's proposal offers volunteer maintenance of the restrooms, with heating, water, sewer, electricity, structural maintenance, repairs, cleaning and paper products covered by the Town. Mr. Blaisdell's group has obtained a bid for installation of an 85% ECM 1S Multipos gas furnace for \$7,500, after soliciting multiple estimates for both gas and electric heating. The aim was to keep the amount below \$10,000. The electric option was considerably higher than \$10,000.

There was a long discussion about this topic. Mr. Gregory stated that the point of an enterprise fund is for capital maintenance and that the boaters don't use the restrooms. He stated that he is not in favor of operating the restrooms year-round. Mr. Daub suggested approving the proposal if there is no expense to the enterprise fund and that it is "our" opinion that it will get vandalized as soon as the squid season opens. Mr. Cuzner stated that the brick building is not insulated, so it was not "green" to heat it.

The Board ultimately voted unanimously in favor of Mr. Blaisdell's proposal, providing there is no expense to the Harbors and Waters enterprise fund.

Barbara Warren update for the Municipal Shipyard Resiliency Improvements Project

Barbara Warren, executive director of Salem Sound Coast Watch, gave a presentation for the Municipal Shipyard Resiliency Improvements project addressing the Municipal Shipyard properties, which includes Hammond Park, Cliff Street boatyard, and Parkers boatyard. Grants from the Coastal Zone Management (CZM) funded seawall assessment in 2020.

We are now amid a 2022-2024 grant period for estimating costs. The goals are to mitigate long term risks from sea level rise and storm surge. Deeper and more flooding is now occasional and predicted to increase. Public access is limited and disconnected. Resilient Massachusetts guidelines are for a return period of 50 years.

Improving seawalls improves resilience. All seawalls will be constructed of granite. The Cliff Street boatyard has the lowest elevation and has a stone wall. Hammond Park is next lowest, also with a stone wall. Parkers is next lowest with a stone wall. Seawall improvement does not affect the concrete walls which are already high enough.

The level of the boatyards will need to be raised by 2 to 2-1/2 ft. Buildings on these properties are scheduled to be removed, including the Parker's shed, the old pump house at Hammond Park, and the Quonset hut and storage shed at Cliff Street boatyard. The Cliff Street boatyard will be repaved. The project does not include replacing these buildings.

There will be new storm water drainage improvements. Floating wave attenuating docks will be placed along with increased dock space for commercial fishermen. There will be a timber boardwalk from Hammond Park to Parker's Boatyard. There will be a bridge with ADA accessible ramps from Hammond Park to Commercial Street. There will be a new stone dust path around Hammond Park and a sidewalk along Commercial Street.

Permitting for the project is expected to go into 2024-2025. Funding for the proposed plan has already covered 75% of the design and cost estimates so far. We cannot apply for construction grants until permitting is completed. The total cost is estimated to be \$13.5 million. The Town's share is about 25%. The MMLD and the Harbors and Waters Enterprise Fund will be sharing in the cost.

Construction is estimated to take from 12-16 months and will need to be completed in coordination with the commercial fishermen's seasonal work and the Marblehead Yacht Club's seasonal hours. When the Commercial Street docks need to close, the State Street docks will be used in the interim.

The 10-year lease for the boatyards (Parker's boatyard and Cliff Street boatyard) with Marblehead Trading Company expires in 2024. A new lease for Parker's boatyard will have to allow giving up the lower level as well as buildings and space. The new leases will be made public.

Harbormaster Souza will arrange a meeting with Barbara and the fishermen for their input this month. Barbara will also meet with representatives of the Marblehead Yacht Club, who will also be impacted by the project.

FY25 Budget updates and status

There still has been no response from the Town Finance Department regarding certifying cash. They have not yet closed out FY 23. There has been a lot of work catching up from work left over because of the lack of town finance personnel over an extended period of time. The negotiated salaries and insurance costs haven't been determined yet. The budget needs to be voted on by February.

Harbormaster report

The Harbormaster is no longer requiring boat owners to produce their boat registrations. It will be assessed on an as needed basis.