

Five Mile River Commission
December 12, 2019 Meeting Minutes
Rowayton Library, Farrell Room, Norwalk, CT

Commission members in attendance:

Matt Marion Chairman
Commissioner Wim Jessup
Commissioner John deRegt

Harbor Superintendent David Snyder
Assistant Harbor Superintendent Steve Bartush

Guest John Arredondo

Absent: Commissioner Dirk Leasure

The Five Mile River Commission meeting commenced at 7:30 with a unanimous vote by the Commissioners present to ratify their prior email approval of the October 24, 2019 meeting minutes, which were filed electronically with the town of Darien and City of Norwalk within the statutory period.

Chairman Marion opened the meeting by inviting the attending guest, John Arredondo, to speak. Mr. Arredondo, who has a waterfront home with a dock on the Rowayton side of the Five Mile River, shared information regarding the Five Mile River and recent dredging projects. Specifically, he referenced a recent U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (ACE) depth survey of the river and an article about the funding of commercial and a few non-commercial dredging projects in Connecticut, both in support of accelerated dredging of the river. He also encouraged the Commission to request that ACE initiate toxicity testing of the river bottom as a precursor to dredging.

The Commission thanked Mr. Arredondo for his comments and, in particular, for his willingness to research the subject fairly. Chairman Marion noted that the Commission closely reviews the depth and configuration of the federal channel annually with a view to determining the optimal timing to dredge. Factors include overall river depth, the location of shallow spots in the channel, the apparent rate of shoaling, and the distribution of moorings, as well as practical considerations such as the amount of accrued dredging funds available to the Commission, among other things. The Commission noted its intention of taking spring soundings of the river to update ACE's data. Harbor Superintendent Snyder advised that sounding equipment was available and that a 3-day project would be scheduled for early in 2020 boating season. Thus, the Commission anticipated completing its annual review next spring. Mr. Arredondo then left the meeting and the FMRC continued onto scheduled topics.

Chairman Marion next opened the discussion to the administrative process required to increase harbor use fees. The Commission agreed to conduct a revenue analysis based on varying fee increases, and to identify the steps necessary to complete changes to the Commission's authority.

Then, the Commission discussed the general topic of public access to the river and the need to preserve that access (sightlines, promenades, dinghy access, etc.) as the number of marinas declines. It noted available options, including the Town Dock and Pinkney Park, and discussed potential ways to facilitate additional access, and agreed that riverfront businesses and other stakeholders should be engaged to participate in the conversation.

Next in response to a question from the Harbor Superintendent, the Commissioners confirmed that jet ski storage/usage on the Five Mile River would fall under standing harbor rules regarding the filing of applications, payment of fees, adherence to speed limits, as well as channel access and overall safe operation of small watercraft. Finally, the Commission discussed a dock application covering 135 Rowayton Avenue and agreed to circulate draft comments and finalize their decision.

Harbor Superintendent Snyder shared and reported YTD expense and income reports. The Harbor Superintendent then reported on unregistered moorings and informed the Commission that all such orphan moorings have been tagged and their owners contacted by email/voicemail (when known). The Harbor Superintendent also indicated that he will invite two approved marine service providers, Edwards Marine and Boatworks, to attend the Commission's February 20th, 2020 meeting to discuss the planned realignment of mooring strings and the removal of unregistered moorings. Further, Harbor Superintendent Snyder advised the Commission that Boatworks had been awarded certain Commission-related work to be performed during the spring of 2020, including the servicing of transient moorings, channel markers, and kayak trail markers, based on its response to the Commission's RFQ. In conclusion, Harbor Superintendent Snyder discussed his mooring realignment recommendations, which he illustrated on mooring maps prepared for the Commission's review.

The Commission's next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 16, 2020, at 7:30 pm, at Rowayton Community Center, 33 Highland Avenue, Rowayton Connecticut.

Respectively submitted,

Five Mile River Commission
and Harbor Superintendent