

Danvers River Committee
Thursday November 18, 2021
Meeting Minutes

The Danvers River Committee held a public meeting on Thursday, November 18, 2021 at the Endicott Park Visitors Center (Conference Room) at 6:00pm.

Member(s) present: Bob Moore
Matthew Byrne
Bill Fouhey
Louie George
Tom Perry

Member(s) absent: Dan DeLorenzo, Chair
Bill Nicholson, Vice Chair
Robert Hemeon
Mike McCarthy
Matt Duggan, Selectman Liaison
Gardner Trask, Selectman Liaison

Staff Present: Christopher Sanborn, Director of Natural Resources
Carolann Powers, Secretary

Media Present: None

Other:

Matt Byrne called the meeting to order at 6:07 pm.

Secretary's Report:

The committee was asked to accept the minutes of the September 16, 2021 meeting.

Motion: Made by Bill Fouhey, seconded by Tom Perry to accept the minutes of the September 16, 2021 meeting; All in favor 5:0.

New Business:

Chris shared the news of Bill Nicholson's resignation from the River Committee. Bill wished to thank the Town and Harbormaster's Office for the opportunity to be part of this committee and others for many years.

The Harbormaster's Department is in the process of winterizing for season.

Louie George asked how the new patrol boat is working out. Chris said the new 25-foot boat has been great. It is a little bigger than previous the boat and the outboard motors

are also different from previous boat; he noted this new boat draws 3'-3.5' of water which is different from previous boat, so there is a slight learning curve but overall the boat has been a great asset to the department.

Matt B. asked if all permit fees had been paid for this past boating season. Chris said yes, they are not chasing anyone, all fees are paid.

Chris Sanborn informed the committee of newly required Harbormaster/Police training for all of his staff. Chris said this required training process is a little overwhelming for all. This required training is part of Police Reform enacted in 2020. Chris explained to the committee that in Danvers, Harbormaster staff are classified as Special Police Officers. Many other communities do not require this, but he said Danvers does this the right way. Because they are classified as Special Police Officers, they are required to complete this training. Chris noted his department has begun this requirement.

Chris said that this bill, that was signed into law, requires that police, including all Harbormaster staff, must attend an additional 220 hours of training. This is in addition to their required in-house training hours and other Harbormaster training. That means these training hours are in addition to the 350 hours of police training they have already had. He noted everybody on staff has to complete this training. The training is costly and time consuming. This training includes a wide variety of subject matters including online law, firearms etc.... The training is done in phases alphabetically by staff last name, A-H must complete training by June 30, 2022, I-P by June 2023, Q- Z by June 2024.

Chris stated that this training will have a budgetary impact on the department. The Waterways Improvement Fund will need to be utilized to assist financially for this training. In addition, he noted the budgetary impact will affect hiring/recruitment for his department. Chris said in the upcoming budget he is requesting a pay increase for the Assistant Harbormasters positions as they are currently paid only \$18.08/hour which is not appropriate for their position (it equates to the pay rate for other industry part time jobs such as the Fast Food and Retail industries etc....). He is requesting an increase to \$24.32/hour, noting these are part time non-benefitted positions. Chris said even with this increase in the hourly rate it will still be hard to hire and retain employees as the Police Reform training required for part time Harbormaster employees may be prohibitive, it is the same requirement as a full-time police officer; essentially, they could consider becoming a full-time police officer at much higher rate of pay with this training.

Bill Fouhey asked if any appeals have been requested in regard to this new training requirement, particularly for Special Police Officers, as Danvers Harbormaster staff is classified. Chris said some Western MA police departments have appealed the requirement process as they are small, part-time departments who find it to be a burden. Bill asked if Harbormaster staff really need to do the full police training as they are not in cruisers and don't carry weapons. Chris noted at this time they do need to complete the full training.

Bob Perry asked if fire boat training and certification are required to operate the fire apparatus on the patrol boat for Harbormaster staff. Chris S. said no certification is required but the department does participate in regular training with the Danvers Fire Department.

Louie G. asked how many current Harbormaster staff need to participate in the required police training this year. Chris said 3 members.

Matt B. asked if there is any legislative relief in regard to the burden of this required police training for the Harbormaster's Department. Chris said the only relief is that training is free, no course fee, but we do have to pay the staff for attending and participating in the training.

Tom Perry asked if the funds needed for this training will affect the money set aside for dredging, pump out boat services etc.... Chris said no this would be from different funds.

Chris stated it is currently budget planning time. He told the committee they are planning to budget \$13,200 for the annual operating budget. If that ever drained, they would tap into revolving fund money. There are no proposed increase requests at this time for the operating budget.

Bill Fouhey asked if they need to submit for training fees with this budget. Chris said because it is a revolving fund there is more flexibility, so they do not need to submit for that with budget.

Chris informed that committee that there will be an increase in the Deputy Harbormaster salary to \$28.18/hour, on a step and scale pay structure. In addition, the Assistant Harbormaster positions are proposed to increase to \$24.32/hour putting them on a step and scale pay structure. This pay structure will allow these employees to potentially increase their hourly rate within their step and scale each year.

Bill F. asked in any employee benefits are included in this funding. Chris said no that all of these positions are classified as part-time so there are no benefits.

Chris said they will be requesting 2 warrants in the upcoming budget. One is the annual \$20k request to the dredging revolving account (the current balance of the account is approximately \$120K-\$140K), he noted in a year or so we should be able to start the permitting process for next dredging cycle. He mentioned that the town recently received \$8 million in AARPA grant money for infrastructure repairs. These projects will likely take priority which could push out the start of dredging process to 4 years.

Bill F. asked if the matter of keeping Danvers waterways navigable could fall under the new law just passed for infrastructure. Chris said it does include all port improvement but is intended more for commercial ports and the Army Corp has classified Danvers as a Recreational Port, so Danvers is not eligible for Federal Funding.

Lou G. asked how Salem and Beverly Harbors were classified. Chris said Salem is classified as Commercial and Beverly is not. It was mentioned that if perhaps Danvers is considered an aid harbor to Salem that Danvers could potentially receive some funding from new infrastructure bill. Chris said he was not sure how these funds would be distributed but that direction would come down from the state level.

Chris noted that they need to replace B dock at Crane River Marina at a cost of \$40k; this is an increase \$20k from the last docks purchased in FY '18/'19.

Old Business:

Matt B. asked about the status of the gangway relocation for accessibility to the Crane River Marina. Chris said that project is considered to be tied in with the bank stabilization project. He said unfortunately that project has stalled but we hope to move past the roadblocks with Coastal Zone Management and move forward. Chris said it was asked if, and considered if, the town could use some of the AARPA grant funds for the bank stabilization project, but since the town can't get past these roadblocks the funds will be applied to other viable improvement projects.

Lou G. said Jeanne Argento, resident of River St., Town Meeting Member and kayaker asked him to look into the status of the possible installation of some type of kayak storage in the Danvers Riverfront area. She also inquired as to where things stood with potential kayak storage in particular at Sandy Beach. In addition, she inquired about the status of the mud flats at Sandy beach at low tide.

Chris said the mud flats are unavoidable and due to that it essentially rules out Sandy Beach as a safe option for kayak storage and launching. He noted there is an annual appropriation in the budget to replenish the sand at Sandy Beach each year which contributes to the mud flats, erosion into the river and the need to dredge. Short of dredging there's really no way to solve the mud flat problem that would not require permitting. Chris also stated he has concerns with security at Sandy Beach as well as far as kayak storage goes.

In regard to kayak storage, Chris had hoped to have an Eagle Scout Candidate perform this project, however, there has not been an appropriate candidate to do so. Without that option he could consider having his department assemble something basic with wood, create a frame type structure, but that may not be an ideal solution. He noted there are metal kayak racks that can be purchased and potentially used on the docks at Popes Landing or elsewhere. They cost approximately \$600, but each rack only holds 3 kayaks. This option would be functional and esthetically pleasing but the town would likely need to charge a usage fee to offset the cost of supplying the racks.

Tom Perry said he thinks the town should charge for kayak access/launch. Louie G. said if we were to charge it should be less than a motorized boat.

Matt asked if kayak storage on the additional docks at Crane River Marina could be an option. Crane River Marina could be a better option than walking through the mud flats at Sandy Beach.

Chris noted that Popes Landing could be an ideal spot with the boat ramp, but kayakers would take up space in the lot and access from other paying day boaters using the ramp.

The committee discussed other kayak launch options such as mats/pads in the water, but Chris said the D.E.P. has strict rules against what can or can't sit on sand/mud so that would not be an option here.

It was concluded that Popes Landing and/or the Crane River Marina are the most realistic potential locations for kayak access and storage as access at Sandy Beach is prohibitive.

Chris said he will reach out to the Mass Office of Fishing and Boater Access to have them come out and give the town ideas of what may work for kayak launch and storage at these potential locations and will inquire with them to see if any funding may be available. He noted this agency was involved in the funding and re-design of the Ipswich River Canoe Launch in Danvers.

Bill F. asked if the Salem Sound Coastwatch could be a resource in regard to this matter. Chris said no, not likely, as they manage more environmental matters, but would be glad to reach out to them inquire.

Motion: Motion made by Bill Fouhey, seconded by Louie George, to adjourn the meeting of November 18, 2021. All in favor: 5:0

cc: Steve Bartha, Town Manager
David Mountain, Recreation Director