

Danvers River Committee
Thursday April 21, 2022
Meeting Minutes

The Danvers River Committee held a public meeting on Thursday April 21, 2022, at the Endicott Park Visitors Center (Conference Room) at 6:04pm.

Member(s) present: Dan DeLorenzo
Matthew Byrne
Bill Fouhey
Louie George
Robert Hemeon
Michael McCarthy
Tom Perry

Member(s) absent: Gardner Trask, Selectman Liaison
Bob Moore

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

Media Present: None

Dan DeLorenzo called the meeting to order at 6:03pm.

Secretary's Report:

The committee was asked to accept the minutes of the March 17, 2022 meeting.

Motion: Made by Matt Byrne, seconded by Louie George, to accept the minutes of the March 1, 2022 meeting; All in favor: 7:0.

New Business:

Chris Sanborn gave the committee a quick update on permit renewals. He stated they have issued 625 waterway permits to date. He noted it was one of the best return rates in a one-month time frame that he can remember. People are onboard with boating despite the gas price increases. Chris told the committee that only four boaters did not return to the town marina, noting this is an unusually low number. He informed the group that there are currently 41 boaters on the waiting list for the marina. They haven't seen numbers like this on the waitlist in 15+ years.

Chris told the committee that the 19-foot patrol boat is in the water for the season, however, the 25-footer is not, as it is undergoing repairs to the fire pump. Repairs are currently being performed, hopefully it's not damaged beyond repair. It was winterized the same as always but

with salt-water corrosion occurs quickly. The boat will be launched in next week or 2 without pump while being repaired if need be.

Louie G asked how the numbers are at private Marinas. Dan DeLorenzo said same as town marina, very busy, and very little turnover.

Chris spoke to the committee regarding the increase in applications for construction of docks & piers. Chris said he met with David Fields & Georgia Pendergast from the Land Use and Community Services Department, and they have future meetings scheduled to determine how the town will address plans for construction of docks and piers, establishing guidelines, rules and by laws regulating these types of construction. Chris S. distributed guidelines for city of Gloucester and said Town of Danvers may do something similar. Working off the guidelines of other communities such as surrounding communities and the Cape and Islands. Chris said the town would look for the River Committee and Select Board for approval for the guidelines and regulations. He noted there are interesting and good guidelines out there to reference. For instance, some of these communities offer neighbors to apply together to add their footage to a shared dock or pier of longer length. He stated they are in the exploratory phases of establishing these guidelines now.

Louie G. asked if part of the planning process would be Chris, David & Georgia reaching out to other communities directly. Chris S. said yes, he and Georgia already have some meetings scheduled.

Tom P. asked about the legality to establishing these guidelines. Chris said any recommendations would be brought before a public forum with public comment welcomed.

Dan D, said he is interested in learning more about chapter 91, Conservation Commission and how it all relates to projects. Chris said they want the town to regulate these projects, but the Army Corp of Engineers is involved so there are blurred lines; but if a master plan is put in place that may help guide the public.

Louie G. commented on status of those to be grandfathered in. Mike McCarthy said regarding docks/piers, you keep the 91A ruling and you can repair to original design, you have right to improve unless making a change to the original plan/footprint and if so then would need to go through the process again. Dan D. said he anticipates this will be a hot topic moving forward and guidelines are necessary. Chris will keep the River Committee posted regarding this.

Chris asked the committee to support the town's application for a MVP grant to stabilize the Crane River Marina shoreline. Steve King's office had drafted a letter of support to include in the application packet.

Bob H asked how long a vegetation option will last and what in past caused the erosion of the previous vegetation solution. Chris said they expect to learn more as study moves forward.

Motion: Motion, made by Mike McCarthy, seconded by Bill Fouhey, to submit a letter from the River Committee supporting the town's pursuit of the MVP Preparedness Grant, All in favor 7:0

Chris spoke with the committee regarding Permit Fees. He said it is early in the process but wanted to have a preliminary conversation with the committee regarding the waterway's fees.

He noted the town is looking at a dredging project that is more intense than '07/'08 project. This dredge will go out as far as the Salem-Beverly line. This project will be done with assistance of a State Grant which is split 50/50 with the town. The previous grant for the last dredging project was a 75/25 split. The upcoming project is estimated to be approximately over \$3 million. The town will need to fund a large portion of the engineering/design phase and project.

Chris stated all slip/rack (waterway's) fees are earmarked in a fund for dredging. That fund will likely be depleted with the debt from our last dredging project, but the fund is starting to save approximately \$29K-\$33K a year in new fees. Chris said they also want to look at the marina dockage fees as those have not been increased since 2017. He will get the committee comps to other community's fees but wanted to begin the conversation now to discuss the matter over the next few months.

Dan DeLorenzo asked what year they hope to perform the dredging. Chris S. said he has not received a definitive date from the town, but he would like to see the permitting phase start in the next two years to keep in a 15-20 year window for dredging. Committee agreed a 15-year plan would be better and noted we are at the 15-year mark now.

Dan D. said the state would like local marinas to be involved in this process at same time as municipalities and asked Chris to possibly reach out to the local marinas. Dan D. asked about Federal Waters in the channel and if the government would fund any of the dredging for those areas. Chris said, unfortunately there is no federal funds available as the federal government has been looking to abandon those ATONS for years now.

Bob H. asked about the ramp fees in comparison to other communities. Chris said ramp fees are standard throughout the state, noting Danvers' ramp fees generate \$8k a year. These ramp fee rates are set by the state as most of the ramp are operated and funded under state agreements. Chris said he will do comps from other communities for other fees for the next meeting. He noted at last check Danvers fees are in line with other community's waterway fees. He noted Danvers mooring fees were higher as we assess the waterways fees as well as mooring fee. He said we can compare those fees to private marinas but need to take amenities into consideration. We need to determine the percentage difference for the fees and the percentage difference should remain constant throughout the years.

Louie G. feels that the ramp fees have not increased much over the past 30 + years. Chris S. noted we also access boat excise. It was suggested that perhaps we assess an extra \$1 a foot each year, then after dredging go back. Louie G. asked if we could solicit volunteer donations.

Matt B. asked how many boats Danvers are commercial. Chris S. just a handful. Matt asked if most are recreational. Chris said yes. That years ago, we set commercial waterways permit fee rates the same as a resident rate, we did that to encourage commercial vessels because at the time grant funding was geared more to harbors with commercial fishing vessels.

Sean Hagerty, resident/boater, said an increase in fees is cheaper than new props for boats, he would pay an extra fee, if temporary, and thought most boaters would likely pay a temporary fee increase for four or five years to assist with dredging.

Mike McCarthy said Danvers fees are a bargain, particularly at the marina & the town of Danvers also offers a senior discount which attracts boaters.

Chris S. said even if they were to consider doubling the waterways fee that additional income still wouldn't bring us to where we need to be financially for the dredging project but would bring us closer.

Tom P. asked if the town could take loans for this project. Chris S. said yes, they have in the past. Tom said wouldn't it look better to have more money when applying for the grant. Dan D. said we need to take into consideration paying loans, the town will need funds to do so.

Matt B. noted boating is expensive, gas, repairs, and maintenance. He said boaters may not balk at an increase now in good economic times but if the economy turns, we may turn boaters away.

Matt B. asked what the typical vessel length is in town. Chris said ranges from 13'-30', with the average being 23'.

Dan D. said now is a good time to get comps from other communities regarding fees and move forward from there.

Tom P. asked moorings, specifically about older/grandfathered-in moorings with two moorings and a float. He wanted to know what the drawback is to that. Chris said it is a navigational hazard.

Old Business:

Chris noted that there was nothing new to report regarding Harbormaster Training. He reminded the committee that Josh is currently training and others will start training in July.

He updated the group regarding Budget/Warrant Articles. There is a warrant to transferred funds from the sale of the old harbormaster boat from free cash to the Waterways Improvement Revolving Account. He had also submitted a request for \$25k for maintenance dredging but that it had been set at at \$20k. It is believed to have been an error in submission but since it was approved at \$20k that is what they will get in this budget. They are hoping to increase this to keep it at \$25k as it has been \$25K in the past. Matt B. and Louie G. asked if this could be addressed at Town meeting or Finance Committee. There is also a request for \$45k for B dock replacement/repairs at town Marina. That project will be done after the season and will be in place for next season.

Louie G. asked if all River Committee members will be re-appointed at the May annual town meeting. Chris S. said yes.

Motion: Motion made by Mike McCarthy, seconded by Bob Hemeon, to adjourn the meeting of April 21, 2022. All in favor: 7:0

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