

Harbor Commission

Workshop Minutes Harbor Coordination Meeting Emergency Services

Tuesday, April 16, 2013
4:30 p.m., Council Chambers



City of South Haven

1. Call to Order by Arnold at 4:30 p.m.

Present: Jeffers, Pyle, Silverman (arrived 4:39 p.m.), Stephens, Strong, Sullivan, Arnold
Absent: None

Also present: Ben Plachta, U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary; David Perrin, U.S. Coast Guard; Mike Hostetler, Van Buren County Sheriff's Department, Marine Division; Tony Marsala, Fire Marshal – South Haven Area Emergency Services.

2. The Harbor Commission will hold a workshop coordinating emergency services in the harbor.

VandenBosch updated the commission and guests on dredging issues, noting that the city got approval from the Department of Natural Resources Waterways Division for a grant to dredge the entire channel. Dredging will be starting Monday, April 22; marinas will be dredged to 8' below low water datum, turning basin 8 feet below low water datum, except for the Friends Good Will channel which will be dredged to 11 feet. VandenBosch hopes the dredging will be completed in a month and a half. Private marinas may get a permit and have their marina dredged and deposit their dredge spoil at the city dredge spoil site. If you know of someone with a slip or marina they need dredged, have them contact Paul VandenBosch.

The group discussed whether all public dredging would be done before private dredging. There was also discussion of where the city limits are on the river.

Plachta questioned whether there will be a dredging assessment this year, to which VandenBosch responded that there is no assessment this year.

Plachta questioned the depth of dredging; VandenBosch said if the dredgers hit clay they will not be able to go deeper since they are using hydraulic dredging.

Agency Roles in South Haven Harbor Emergency Response Coordination

VandenBosch asked when the fire boat will be available. Marsala said depending on distance, water conditions, etc. it will be available when there is an emergency. Silverman asked whether the fire boat would be kept on the water; Marsala said to keep the fire boat on the water, there would have to be a lift with a house on it, the pontoons are made of Kevlar which the ultraviolet rays would destroy. VandenBosch suggested talking to Marsala about the possibility of a slip in Black River Park, the lift and cover would need to be funded some other way.

Sullivan asked the length of response time. Marsala said at least ten minutes. Discussion ensued regarding the boat being stored and that the fire department has several vehicles that can tow it.

VandenBosch said he has heard that the dredger is contracted to do the Van Buren County slips. Per Mike Hostetler the Marine Division has twenty-one foot and twenty-eight foot boats which they keep here. After questions regarding the type of thing the Sheriff's Department looks for when patrolling, Mike Hostetler stated that the scope of a day's work is based on observation. Plachta asked if there have been any cutbacks to which Hostetler responded that the budget is not released until partway through the season; for now their department will carry on as if the budget has passed as is and if it gets cut they will have to cut hours. The department is hoping to have a jet-ski as well as boats for additional enforcement this summer. Hostetler noted that the Sheriff's Department will be in South Haven for all the festivals as usual.

VandenBosch noted that the Coast Guard helicopter was patrolling today. Perrin stated that the helicopter was based in Traverse City, but the Muskegon station will be opening in a couple of weeks.

Fire, Collision, Drowning Direct Fueling Fuel Spill Response

VandenBosch said he was not aware of there being any boat fires during the past year. Strong wondered whether there is a writable offense; Mike Hostetler from the Sheriff's Department stated deputies would not be able to do anything if boats are tied up. Once the boat is tied, per Marsala, it becomes a city ordinance. City officials or fire marshal can write a ticket because it falls under International Fire Code. Marsala noted that we work from the education standpoint, noting that the prohibition against refueling anywhere except an approved fueling station is strongly worded in the International fire code.

Regarding oil spills, Coast Guard Perrin works closely with the National Response Center (NRC); just call the Coast Guard. There is dedicated staff of the Coast Guard out of Grand Haven that work on oil spills. Sheriff Mike noted call 911 and the call will be dispatched to the correct entities.

Sullivan asked what extent of oil sheen would qualify for a call to the National Response Center. Perrin stated that it is better to be safe than sorry; if you feel it could be a concern call and we will send someone from the National Response Center.

Silverman noted that last year the commission identified that the city has no materials to absorb oil. VandenBosch stated that he did purchase some and believes the material is stored at the South Marina. Silverman asked if anyone knows how to contact someone to get access to the absorbent material in case of a situation. Sullivan asked if the two fueling sites are required to have that type of material. The group discussed varying requirements for facilities and noted some facilities do have such on hand. VandenBosch will locate the boom materials and let the commission and marina staff know where it is.

Discussion of the letter written by Chief Ron Wise; Sheriff's Deputy Hostetler noted that the letter authorizes but does not require the Sheriff's Department and the City Police Department to write tickets regarding lack of boom materials.

Other Issues

None at this time.

3. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 5:08 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

Marsha Ransom
Recording Secretary