

**Nantucket and Madaket Harbors Action Plan Update
Committee**

Monday, March 4, 2024 at 1 p.m.

Meeting trailer, 131 Pleasant St., Nantucket, MA 02554

***NMHAPUC meetings are video-recorded and
available at Nantucket Government TV on YouTube**

Members present: Phil Smith, Samantha Denette, Seth Engelbourg, Peter Brace, Steve Leinbach, Emily Molden, Dave Fronzuto, Roberto Santamaria, Linda Williams

Members Absent: Jesse Bell

Natural Resources Dept (NRD): Tara Riley, Jeff Carlson

Urban Harbors Institute (UHI): Jack Wiggin, Kim Starbuck, Alan Bartels, Dack Stuart, Shannon Hogan

Others:

1. WELCOME

(Jeff Carlson/Tara Riley/Linda Williams/Peter Brace)

CALL TO ORDER

In the absence of NMHAPUC chair Linda Williams, Mr. Smith as vice chair called the meeting to order at 1 p.m. and did roll call.

a. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mr. Smith called for a motion to approve the agenda. Mr. Leinbach made a motion to approve the agenda. Mr. Engelbourg seconded that motion. The NMHAPUC voted 7-0 to approve the agenda.

b. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Draft minutes of Feb. 12, 2024 and Draft minutes of Aug. 7, 2023

Mr. Smith called for a motion to approve both sets of minutes. Mr. Engelbourg made approve both sets of minutes. Ms. Denette

seconded that motion. The NMHAPUC voted 7-0 to approve both sets of minutes.

2. Discuss issues and recommendations

a. Commercial and recreational fishing (continued)

Ms. Hogan resumed the discussion on organizing and adjusting mooring fields. Mr. Engelbourg asked if shellfish bed closures were seasonal. Ms. Riley said yes and explained the increased potential risk of contamination by boat sewage holding accidentally spilling into the harbor.

Ms. Hogan moved on to Item 4, greater enforcement of commercial and recreational shellfishing. Mr. Ffronzuto said there is a benefit to having seasonal shellfish wardens in the summer and winter. Mr. Carlson said the current shellfish warden is within the Natural Resources Department (NRD). Mr. Fronzuto said that the Town used to have several assistant shellfish wardens. Mr. Smith asked if seasonal shellfish wardens were needed during the summer. Mr. Carlson said there are ways to get individual shellfishers to track and report what they catch. Mr. Smith asked how the commercial bay scallop harvest is tracked. Mr. Carlson explained how the fisherman daily catch report system works. He added that there has to be a quicker, more accurate method, but he said the end of the season estimate is usually fairly accurate. Ms. Riley said she agreed that seasonal shellfish wardens would definitely be a good thing. She added that with fewer people commercially scalloping, it should be easier to gather catch data. She added that what's missing is harvest data from the 1,200 or so recreational fishers.

Ms. Williams joined the meeting at approximately 1:17 p.m. Mr. Fronzuot said the wording for seasonal shellfish wardens should be part-time instead. Mr. Smith asked if water quality testing in the mooring field in Nantucket Harbor during the summer. Ms. Riley confirmed that the NRD does this.

Ms. Hogan asked if a high school junior or senior could do this job. Mr. Fronzuto said the person has to really know the fishery. Ms. Williams said maybe retired people could be tapped for this on a volunteer basis with some sort of tax credit as an incentive. Mr. Engelbourg said he rarely sees the shellfish warden when he's recreationally shellfishing. He added he might be able to do this job on the weekends and that other younger people might want to do it. He added that at the point of contact of license sales there needs a much better educational requirement before licenses are issued.

Ms. Williams took over as chair of the meeting from Mr. Smith at approximately 1:30 p.m.

Ms. Hogan read out Item 5, which is on reviewing and updating the Town's current shellfish regulations.

Mr. Fronzuto said that the Harbor & Shellfish Advisory Board (HSAB) is about to begin the process of reviewing the Town's shellfish regulations that included proposing any amendments that might it might need to make to the Select Board. Mr. Leinbach said commercial and recreational finfishing is regulated by the state, not the Town.

Mr. Brace joined the meeting at 1:32 p.m.

Ms. Denette asked to add a more on-the-fly, reactionary fisheries management approach to the shellfish regulations so that catch limits could be temporarily changed to adapt to each season's evolving catch. She suggested possibly doing a fisheries management plan. Mr. Fronzuto reiterated that the HSAB will be reviewing and updating the Town's shellfish regulations starting this month. He added that he hoped increasing catch limits could be an easy fix. Mr. Carlson indicated that it might need a regulation change. Mr. Engelbourg said he'd support a more flexible fisheries management structure. Ms. Riley agreed with Ms. Denette and said that there also needs to be more emphasis on habitat protection and enhancement.

Ms. Hogan introduced Item 6, essentially eelgrass habitat enhancement. Mr. Fronzuto, commenting on the last item, said he

agreed that flexibility is the key operative word. Ms. Riley emphasized that the worry about not having enough eelgrass means the creation of an eelgrass management plan would be wise. Ms. Molden said maybe more time is needed during this planning process to consider what an eelgrass management plan would look like.

Mr. Brace asked how such a plan would be done while the committee is working on the NMHAPU. Ms. Molden said she'd look to Ms. Riley for guidance. Ms. Williams asked if the eelgrass issue should be its own item. Ms. Starbuck said she could just all of this eelgrass information into the Natural Resource section where most of the eelgrass recommendations already exists. The NMHAPUC agreed with this.

Ms. Hogan moved on to Item 7, greater transparency for licensing and permitting done through the police department. She recommended that an online permitting system be adopted. Ms. Williams said the permitting should be done by the Marine Department. Mr. Carlson explained that when the Marine Department was absorbed by the Police Department, it was determined easier to have one location for permits to be sold. Mr. Williams there's not much relevant educational information handed out at the Police Department. Mr. Fronzuto said the NRD should sell all shellfish permits. Mr. Carlson said the NRD has provided the Police Department some educational information to distribute and post. Ms. Williams said Town staff who work on the water should issuing shellfish permits and handing out the relevant information. Mr. Leinbach noted that the Marine Department sells mooring permits at the Town Pier, so it makes sense that shellfish permits be sold at the same location. Mr. Carlson suggested that recreational shellfish licenses be sold at outlets like Brant Point Marine. Mr. Brace recalled that recreational shellfish permits used to be both a paper license with the species you could harvest, how much and when, and where to get them, along with the button. Ms. Denette said that she could get NSA members to be at harbor access points to hand out information during recreational scallop

season. Mr. Fronzuto said experienced part-time shellfish wardens could solve a lot of these issues. Mr. Brace recalled that Ms. Riley would kayak among the recreational scallopers seeing what they were getting and answering questions.

Ms. Hogan introduced Item 8 on dealing with green crabs. Ms. Williams asked how green crabs got to the island. Ms. Molden said the crabs have been in Nantucket waters for decades and likely arrived in the bilge of ships. Mr. Brace reported that several scallopers are permitted to trap green crabs, which they then drop off at Toscana Corp that works them into their composting product. Ms. Riley said green crabs are used as bait by Nantucket's three conch (whelk snail) fishermen.

Ms. Hogan moved on to Item 9, safeguarding the Brant Point Shellfish Hatchery from sea level rise, possibly having an additional hatchery on the island and also adding more dock space at the existing hatchery.

Ms. Riley said this was her item because some days, the hatchery is inaccessible by vehicle because of flooding on Easton Street, a problem she anticipates increasing over time. Mr. Brace asked if she had any alternative locations in mind. Ms. Riley said there is a small building on Jackson Point in Madaket. Mr. Brace said a hatchery building located on the shoreline is always going to be vulnerable.

Mr. Santamaria joined the meeting at 2:12 p.m.

Mr. Fronzuto said the current hatchery building is an historic structure that can't be moved. Mr. Engelbourg liked the idea of another hatchery building out in Madaket and that the Smith's Point neighborhood is already in the flood plain and in danger of flooding. Mr. Fronzuto said the Town owns land next to Millie's cottage and the bridge on Hither Creek where a second hatchery building might be located.

Ms. Hogan explained Item 10, which is increasing access to shellfishing areas from shore. Ms. Riley said the existing access points need to be more clearly defined. Mr. Brace said that there are a lot of public access points along the harbor shoreline for

getting to shellfish digging spots. Mr. Engelbourg said parking is an issue at a lot of these access point and that soft-shell clam beds are difficult to access by vehicle.

Ms. Hogan got going on Item 11, lack of public information on where to harvest shellfish. Ms. Williams said when recreational shellfish permits are issued, there should information handed out on where to harvest each species. Mr. Smith said maps could easily be printed out by the Town. Ms. Williams agreed.

Mr. Engelbourg said a twelfth item needed to be added. This would be for identifying and promoting alternative shellfish species such as blood ark clams, whelk snails and seaweeds. He said that the Town should be proactive in developing new fisheries for commercial and recreational fishers. Ms. Riley agreed with Mr. Engelbourg and said that the hatchery is growing sugar kelp and raising blood ark clams and stout razor clams. She said she is working with hatcheries in the region to develop more alternative fisheries

b. Water quality

No discussion.

3. Next steps (All)

a. Next committee meeting

March 18, 2024

ADJOURN

Ms. Williams called for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Smith made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Molden seconded that motion. The NMHAPUC voted 8-0 at 2:30 p.m. to adjourn the meeting.

YOUTUBE MEETING LINK

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_ZRryWtGqDk&list=PL49sKqpy7VAhtfTnajKC38HEDIJx7asi0&index=22

Future Meetings:

March 18 and April 1

Respectfully Submitted,
Peter B. Brace, Secretary