

Town Council agrees to allow fishing at East Ferry pier

By Dotti Farrington

Town Councilors agreed by consensus Feb. 26 to allow fishing this year at the East Ferry Pier. The same rules and provisions as last year will apply, when conditions were judged to be fair and workable after at least three decades of seasonal struggles about problems at the town-owned facility.

Councilors arrived at the agreement last month after getting data and interpreting it to mean that problems at the pier represented insufficient room for all users.

Over the years, boaters and Harbor Management Commissioners tended to blame fishermen for a variety of problems at the pier. Last month, commissioners and councilors concluded that many problems resulted from too little pier space, and some of the space was not suitable for the assigned use. It was noted that some spaces were too high or too low, and water too shallow for some intended uses.

Commissioners last month asked councilors to approve a plan to add 160- feet of pier space to help solve the problems. Commissioners said they have no funds for the pier addition, for which they had no estimated cost.

During discussions in past years, commissioners unfairly claimed the town was expecting them to raise funds for expenses not related to marine uses. This year, they are asking for the town to pay for the marine-related pier addition that seemingly should be covered by marine fee income.

In a separate proposal, commissioners asked for a new mooring and outhaul fee schedule that does not provide for the pier addition, even though the fees were less in comparisons with most fees elsewhere. Commissioners said it would not be appropriate to raise fees just because they are higher elsewhere and because they would not be able to spend the additional money.

The council said it wanted to take a guided field trip to view the East Ferry pier system before deciding about adding pier space. No date was set for the field trip. The council also asked commissioners to revise the fee schedule to make fee increase percentages the same within the local schedule, without comparison to schedules elsewhere.

Council President David Long called for review of the pier rules at the next council meeting, March 12. "This has been going on forever. No matter which way we tweak it, there still are issues," Long commented. The councilors also have budget sessions set for March 13, 15 and 20; and a regular meeting, mainly for water and sewer items, March 19.

According to Harbor Chairman Michael de Angeli, the 167 foot wood pile pier was built with federal funds in 1974 for "public outdoor recreation," which has been interpreted to mean fishermen, strollers and transient recreational boaters. The town added 140 feet of pier in the 1980s, with no limits on types of users; and a touch and go dock in the early 1990s with town, state and commercial money

for shoreline access, and pump out and commercial uses.

Although the wood pile pier is intended for public recreation, policy provides priority to commercial fishing boats that are supposed to use the town pier. Latest figures are 196 feet of commercial boats and one 64 foot research boat needing a total of 290 feet of dock space, de Angeli reported. Also needing space but not clearly classified or assigned are commercial boats available for hire for recreation; and some non-fishing commercial boats, he reported.

The harbor chairman mentioned as a problem that fishermen use the touch and go dock, which is meant exclusively for boaters. He said the fishermen's use of space designated for mooring holders was an issue. Commissioners pro-

posed more pier space to provide exclusive space for fisherman and for boaters because they believe separating the two groups of users will eliminate problems.

"There also have been safety, sanitary, trash and conduct issues," de Angeli stated. Last year, councilors rejected the commissioners' request to ban nighttime fishing because of such problems in previous years. Instead, the councilors ordered police patrols to oversee night time fishing; ordered the restrooms at the Community Center, across the street from the piers, to be open 24 hours a day, seven days a week; and arranged for more litter barrels and litter removal. They said last month that those arrangements seemed to eliminate many problems.

20% hike proposed in town mooring, outhaul rates

By Sam Bari

The Harbor Management Commission voted 5-0 last week to recommend to the Town Council that they raise mooring and out-haul rates by 20 percent.

The commissioners agreed on the new across-the-board increase schedule at a special budget meeting held at the police station on Friday.

Specifically, the recommendations were for resident mooring rates to increase from \$2.50 per foot to \$3.35 per foot, commercial moorings from \$5.60 to \$6.70, and non-resident moorings from \$5.60

to \$6.70. Club moorings were the exception—their rates will double from \$500 to \$1,000. West Ferry and Ft. Getty out-hauls will go from \$350-\$400 to \$420 for those with a fishing license and \$480 for those without a license. Beach permits will be raised from \$50 to \$60, while late fees and wait list fees will remain the same. Beach permits for boats with beams over 11-feet will be increased from \$20 to \$24 per foot.

The commissioners also voted 5-0 to accept the budget for fiscal year 2007-08. Recommendations for both mooring rate increases

and the budget will be presented to the Town Council as agenda items at the second Town Council meeting in March.

The Town Council rejected the commission's first recommendations for mooring rate increases presented at their meeting on Feb. 20. The council advised the commission to distribute the proposed fee increases more evenly and return with a revised proposal as soon as possible. The most vocal complaints were from out-haul permit holders who felt that the original increase from \$350 to \$525 for those with a commercial

fishing license and \$420 to \$600 for those without a commercial license was unfair. The council sided with the out-haul permit holders even though the out-haul fees had not been increased in several years while mooring rates had gone up.

Several out-haul permit holders attended the meeting at the police station last Friday to hear what the new recommendations would be. They appeared to be satisfied with the new rate schedule, saying that the increases should be the same percentage for everybody.

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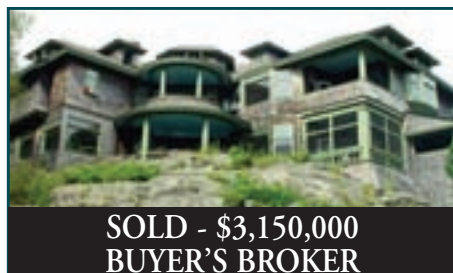
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