

Harbor Commission decides to eliminate subcommittees

By Sam Bari

The Harbor Management Commission decided at its Jan. 14 meeting to do away with subcommittees and rule on harbor business, projects and regulations as a commission.

The consensus was that the town would be better served if harbor issues were resolved with input from seven commission members, three liaisons from other town management and advisory groups, and members of the harbor staff.

Harbor Commission Chairman Michael de Angeli posed the question and the commissioners discussed the pros and cons of the subcommittee system at length. The commissioners found valid reasons to support both sides of the argument.

However, in the end, the commissioners collectively decided that subcommittees were small advisory groups that researched problems and came back to the commission with recommendations based on the input from the

few.

The commissioners voted 6-1 to dissolve the subcommittee system, with the provision that if a situation warranted the use of a temporary subcommittee, one would be formed to handle a particular issue. De Angeli said he thought it was a good idea to at least try to work as a commission to get things done. Commissioner Robert Bowen cast the dissenting vote.

In other business, Executive Director Thomas Tighe reported that 144 moorings were checked and confirmed. "We are sending a letter to all mooring permit holders telling them that they must have their inspection papers in order before their permits will be renewed," the chief said. The grace period is until June 15, after which late fees can be imposed.

The chief also said that he was working with Harbor Commission Financial Officer Christopher Brown to prepare the operational budget, which he said would be ready for presentation by next

week.

Town Council liaison Julio DiGiando reported that people attending the Ft. Wetherill workshop Jan. 12 felt that the old highway barn property should be put to use for something that is water related.

He also said that according to the audit presented to the town council at its last meeting, the Harbor Commission enterprise fund started the year with \$381,881 in paid assets and ended the year with an additional \$104,945. "So the commission has a total of \$486,826 in paid assets," he said.

Commissioner Bowen said that the monies gathered were the result of intentional accrual and that the funds would probably be drained by the curbs and rails, wood pile pier and other waterfront improvement projects.

Budget Committee Chairman Chris Brown confirmed that he and Chief Tighe were working out the operational side of the budget and that he needed the auditors report to complete the task. DiGian-

do supplied him with the required material.

Brown mentioned that a record should be kept of projects that are earmarked for the retained earnings. Bowen said that the money is to be used for waterfront improvement projects.

"It's not like we're just sitting on a pile of money," Bowen said. "The curbs and rails project alone is \$220,000." He added that more than \$450,000 of the money is already committed.

Commissioner Andrew Kallfelz said, "It's a PR issue. People ask what we're doing with all this money that's in the retained earnings line."

Bowen said that it should be listed that the money is being used for a project that is in the works and the balance is earmarked for projects that are about to begin. "We had to save that money for these projects," Bowen said. "It's not as

if it were just sitting around."

Bowen, who is the facilities committee chairman, said that the Dec. 17 facilities committee meeting was used to discuss the status of the curbs and rails project, the wood pile pier touch and go dock, the seawall repairs, and the Ft. Getty boat ramp dredging permits.

He said that the RT Engineering Group contracted as advisors on the various projects is coming back with cost estimates on the Ft. Getty dredging, and the town is working out the cost estimates for the current plans for the touch and go dock attached to the wood pile pier.

The commissioners welcomed new Harbor Commission member Wendy Waller, who was appointed to a three-year term. Waller is an attorney and is the in-house counsel for Save the Bay.

Block Island ferry boat captain helps with 'Miracle on the Hudson' rescue

By Jeff McDonough

Athena, a high-speed catamaran that serves Galilee and Block Island in the summer months, was among the vessels that rescued passengers from the U.S. Airways jet that crashed into the Hudson River last week.



Carl Lucas

Thirty-five-year-old Capt. Carl Lucas of South Kingstown was in charge of Athena. He is the husband of Katie Lucas, who is the bookkeeper at the

Jamestown Press.

Flight 1549 was taking off on Jan. 15 when its crew reported bird strikes and the jet lost power in both engines. The pilot glided

the crippled Airbus to a watery landing on the frigid Hudson River. A quick response from the ferry and other work boats on the river resulted in the rescue of all 155 people aboard the plane.

Capt. Lucas said the Athena was dockside and he had just started the engines to make the afternoon ferry runs when he looked out the window and saw the plane floating down the river as its passengers climbed out onto the wings. Lucas said the Athena crew tossed off its dock lines and they headed right over.

"The actual sight was pretty surreal," Capt. Lucas recalled. "I was expecting the worst coming up to the scene."

Lucas said that as the Athena approached the plane, they came upon a life raft filled with 16 passengers and three of the flight

crew, including the pilot. Lucas said passengers were "soaking wet and freezing cold." Some had small cuts and other injuries.

He said his crew helped the jet passengers aboard the ferry and had them huddle around space heaters to warm themselves.

Lucas asked if everyone had gotten out of the plane and the pilot said he had gone through the plane twice.

Lucas said it all happened "very quickly and perfectly."

"It was just like doing a drill," he added.

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