

Discrepancy derails Harbor Commission budget hearing

By Iain Wilson

Dozens of islanders turned out for a special meeting of the Jamestown Harbor Commission last Wednesday to review harbor and budget fees for the 2010 season. The meeting was a public hearing held in response to a potential rise in fees, and no vote was planned.

But confusion arose during a presentation on the Harbor Commission budget, which contained a large surplus – something Commission Chair Michael DeAngeli likened to “having a large savings account.”

According to DeAngeli, a few years back, the Jamestown Harbor Commission bought a new harbormaster’s boat but somehow, the money remained in the commission’s budget. The boat was purchased during the 2006-2007 fiscal year, and it is listed as a financial asset even though it is not liquid money.

This led to a surplus of approximately \$60,000 showing in the retained earnings part of the budget.

After the commission’s discussion – and several comments from community members – DeAngeli recommended that the group reconvene in two weeks to further discuss the budget.

A 2010 harbor rate comparison done between several neighboring communities and Jamestown was also discussed during the meeting, and shows that the town’s resident fees stack up favorably. In Jamestown, residents would pay \$3.35 per foot for a

mooring, compared to \$6.50 per foot in Westport, Mass. In Tiverton, residents pay \$80 for up to 30 feet and \$6 for every foot longer.

A dinghy dock in Jamestown will cost \$240, although that rate may change after the commission votes.

After discussion on the budget concluded during Wednesday’s meeting, the commission turned to a memo from Town Clerk Arlene Petit.

Petit suggested that the commission review its term limits and group representatives. To ensure an unbiased and non-partisan commission, each member is given a particular sector to represent.

DeAngeli is a non-riparian recreational boating member, and Commission Vice Chair Andrew Kallfelz is listed as a commercial operator, although he is not really a commercial operator. New member Larry Eichler is a commercial operator, so the commission expects to sort out these conflicts during its next meeting.

Kallfelz also moved to forward the Fandotech contract for online mooring to the Town Council. The motion was approved unanimously.

Kallfelz explained to the commission and other community members that the commission’s requests had been added in the detail it desired. A \$5 fee for Fandotech’s services will be levied on those with mooring permits.

The commission also briefly discussed a policy that could have major ramifications for Jamestown’s boaters – the Coastal Resource Management Council’s plan to limit the grandfathering of mooring permits.

The Harbor Commission will hold a special meeting with the Town Council on Feb. 10 to discuss the potential change in policy.

Last Monday, Harbor Clerk Kim Devlin presented a preliminary budget for 2010.

Maintenance to docks and harbors jumped from \$10,000 to \$17,000, primarily for a projected increase in cost for removal, storage and re-installation of the floating docks when the wood pile pier repairs are completed, which includes two additional touch-and-go docks. The budget for consultant fees was also bumped from \$20,000 in 2009 to \$40,000 in 2010.

Devlin explained that the Harbor Commission’s budget is separated into two sections – operating expenses and infrastructure expenses.

Infrastructure expenses are generally funded by boat owner association leases at Ft. Wetherill, Dutch Harbor and Conanicut Marine. In the preliminary budget, all leases combined account for a proposed 2010 infrastructure budget of \$94,028.

The Harbor Commission will next meet on Wednesday, Feb. 10, at 7 p.m. at Town Hall.



What cold weather?

Jamestown resident Eli Lis didn't mind the frigid temperatures when he stopped to gather sea clams recently at Mackerel Cove.

Photo by Vic Richardson

TOWN MEETINGS

Thursday, Feb. 4

7 p.m., Lawn School Library, the School Committee meets for a budget workshop.

Wednesday, Feb. 10

7 p.m., Town Hall, the Harbor Commission meets.

Tuesday, Feb. 16

7 p.m., Town Hall, the Town Council meets.

Wednesday, Feb. 17

7:30 p.m., Town Hall, the Planning Commission meets.

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