

Town of Wareham

Marine Resources Commission

Meeting date: May 10, 2017

Attendees: Larry Bearse, Warren Hall, Jr., Don Jepson, Jim Smith, Dick Wheeler

The meeting opened at 7:00 PM

The minutes for the April MRC meeting were read and approved.

The harbormaster e-mailed in advance of the meeting that he would not be in attendance. In the e-mail he sent, Garry provided updates regarding the projects he has in process. He advised that they are working on getting the channel markers and town moorings in place and that the launch service will begin June 1st. He expects to have the upwellers in place by June 1st as well. He indicated that the harbormaster's department will become the Department of Natural Resources on June 22nd. Soon he will be posting for a new position, the Natural Resources Officer, whose additional duties will include that of assistant animal control officer. Garry indicated that he will be following up on Wareham's request to the Army Corps of Engineers to dredge the Wareham River.

It was suggested and agreed that a letter should be sent to the selectmen asking whether they had followed-up on their request to the Army Corps of Engineers regarding their request to dredge the Wareham River channel..

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 P.M.

I attest these are the true MRC minutes of the meeting held May 10, 2017.



Donald H. Jepson, Chairman

Please cc: Board of Selectmen, Harbormaster Office.

Town of Wareham.

Marine Resources Commission

29 June 2017

Mr. Peter Teitelbaum, Chairman
Town of Wareham Selectmen

The Wareham Marine Resources Commission met on June 13. At that meeting we discussed your request that we stagger the appointments of two members (Warren Hall, Jr. and William Smith) whose terms expire at the end of June. At that meeting both members announced that they did not want to continue as members of the Wareham Marine Resources Commission. The members indicated that the reason they did not want to continue to be members of the Marine Resources Commission was their frustration that the selectmen had never acknowledged nor given feedback regarding any of the advice the commission had provided, especially the planned removal of navigation aids and dredging of the Wareham River channel.

In order to fully appreciate why all MRC members are so frustrated, I think it best to share some background. At the March 9, 2016, MRC meeting, harbormaster Garry Buckminster provided information about his meeting with the Coast Guard and stressed that it was of the highest priority that the town pursue an application to dredge the Wareham River channel. He indicated that the Coast Guard inferred that without the channel being dredged, they might recommend the Wareham River no longer be designated a Federal Navigation Channel. Garry's primary concern was that removal of the Federal Navigation Channel classification would shift dredging cost to the town, which would be astronomical. Garry shared with the MRC members a support package submitted by the towns of Saco and Biddeford Maine which he thought should serve as a template for the town of Wareham in submitting a dredging request to the Army Corps of Engineers. In reviewing the Saco/Biddeford support package, Garry shared that he did not feel qualified to complete some of the calculations that were in the support package the towns submitted to ACOE.

The selectmen at their March 15, 2016 meeting voted to authorize the chairman to send a letter to the Army Corps of Engineers regarding dredging the Wareham River Narrows channel.

As was agreed at the March 9th Marine Resources Commission meeting, a draft advice letter was submitted to the members for their approval. The two page advice letter was approved by the members and dropped off at the selectmen's office the third week in March. Reference in the letter was made to the Saco/Biddeford support package, which was dropped off as well.

The major advice given to the selectmen was that, due to the urgency and complexity of the ACOE dredging process, we felt the project required the town utilize a qualified consultant who could provide expertise and devote sufficient attention and time to working with the Army Corps of Engineers to get priority for dredging. We were of the opinion that, with all of the harbormaster's workload, the application process was beyond the existing resources of the harbormaster.

For the next 5 months, the Marine Resources Commission kept following up to find out if a letter had been sent to the ACOE by the selectmen. Those inquiries can be viewed in the MRC meeting minutes,

which were faithfully dropped off each month at the selectmen's office. Six months after the selectmen chairman's letter was to be written we were finally told that no letter had been written.

On January 10th, 2017 (11 months after the original vote), the selectmen again voted to authorize a letter be sent by the selectmen to the Army Corps of Engineers. A selectmen's letter dated January 25th was sent to the Army Corps of Engineers in support of the Harbormaster's letter requesting assistance in performing maintenance dredging of the Wareham River channel. No support package like the Saco/Biddeford package was submitted with the harbormaster's and the selectmen's letters.

At the April 2017 MRC meeting Garry was asked whether he had heard back from ACOE. Garry indicated no acknowledgment of the application had been received and that he needed to follow up. Garry was not in attendance at the May MRC meeting. Prior to the meeting he e-mailed that he would not be able to attend. In his e-mail he provided information regarding the many undertakings he was involved in to get ready for the summer boating season (placement of channel markers, moorings, and upwellers; getting the launch service ready; installing floats at Tempest Knob boat ramp, etc.) He also indicated he would be following up with ACOE that week. At the May 2017 MRC meeting, the members felt compelled to send a request to the selectmen chairman to inquire if the selectmen had followed up on their dredging request to the ACOE. No response was received to that request. We assume the inquiry was passed to Garry as he copied chairman Teitelbaum on his e-mail dated 30 May. In his e-mail Garry indicated he would let us know as soon as he heard back from the ACOE. Garry acknowledged he was being bounced among various persons at ACOE. On June 1 Garry e-mailed that he had made contact with the ACOE and that they would be sending a survey boat later this summer and a justification package to him for completion. Garry was unable to attend the June MRC meeting due to surgery.

I share the above information and background because I hope it will convey to you why all MRC members are frustrated and why we recommended that someone other than the harbormaster be tasked with managing the dredging request process with the ACOE. Now with the reorganizing of the harbor master department into the Department of Natural Resources, with more additional duties to include attention to routine seasonal duties and other tasks, our original recommendation, advice, and concern appear even more warranted. The lack of response from the selectmen and the fact that the selectmen's liaison, despite having been invited, has never appeared at any of our meetings, nor made contact with MRC members, adds to the members' frustration.

With the loss of two members who have been very conscientious and who have faithfully attended most meetings, it is doubtful that the Marine Resources Commission will continue to exist.

Respectfully submitted: Donald H. Jepson, Chairman

Members present 6/14/2017 Warren Hall, Jr., William Smith, Lawrence Bearse, Richard Wheeler, Donald Jepson (writing for the commission)

cc: Garry Buckminster, Harbormaster

CC: HARBOR MASTER

TO: Wareham Board of Selectmen
FROM: Marine Resources Commission
SUBJ: Wareham Dredging Project
DATE: March 14, 2016
ATTACHMENT (1)

Please be advised that the Commission met for the monthly meeting on 3/9/2016. The on going issue concerning restoration and maintenance dredging of the Wareham River as well as the related Navigational markers (buoys) was brought forth By Harbor Master Gary Buckminster. The importance of the dredging project cannot be overstated.

The commission is in unanimous agreement in support of these efforts as presented and wishes to present the following for consideration and encourages the Selectmen to act expediently and with concerted effort.

1. Dredging (U.S. Army COE) : Buoys (USCG) are two separate but related issues.
2. ACOE currently has 50 navigation projects in Ma. Wareham River is one of those projects. Onset Bay is another.
3. According to the COE The earliest channel work was conducted in 1876. Channel depth 10 feet. Additional work done in 1896 for 1.8 miles to a depth of 9 feet. In 1917 depth was increased to 12 feet from the entrance to further up river. Condition surveys (Depth) were conducted on 4/12/2012 and on 9/23/2013. No known COE work has been done since the findings were published.
4. The channel has silted and filled in substantially resulting in reduced depth. (hazardous navigation)
5. Approval for federal funding continues to be in serious decline
6. The dredging permitting process is very cumbersome, extremely time consuming and involves a substantial number of agencies and bureaucracies at many levels.
7. Rejection of or denial of permitting is VERY likely given the continual push for cost cutting at the federal and state level.
8. The COE will argue that there is little commercial activity to justify. We should counter with the fact that without adequate channel depth and maintenance we cannot encourage, attract or continue limited or enhanced commercial activity.
9. The maintenance and dredging of the Wareham River has been neglected for many years. It is an historical and documented fact that the COE has been involved in the creation of the dredged channel. For various reason (or not) the maintenance of the channel depth has not been undertaken. Admittedly, the level and types of river commerce has changed over time. A primary driving force of commerce relies upon a

"controlled depth". The importance of this covers a wide spectrum including but not limited to: Boat yards, building, repair and servicing. Yachting and boating facilities, fuel docks, marine stores. Fishing, shell fishing and propagation, dock building and repair, moorings inspection and maintenance to name a few. Additional benefit is likely to affect down town business from increased boating traffic visiting the Narrows area. An area which has seen much recent construction activity undertaken by the town.

Marine Safety concerns governing many of the above may need to be addressed in the need to conduct search and rescue operations as well as the safe movement of vessels and Equipment. Restoration to a controlled channel depth will result in a greatly enhanced flushing of the river contributing to a healthier environment and natural areas for shell fishing and farming.

10. Dredging and maintenance come at a huge cost. The cost of which was never envisioned by the town. The reason being that the project has always been in the hands of and under the control of the COE. We are not aware of any notice or request for that responsibility to change

In the event that the COE decides to legally "abandon" the Warcham River Project it is extremely doubtful that it will EVER be resurrected resulting in continued degradation directly affecting perhaps the most precious and important resource belonging to the town. We can't let this happen.

It is imperative that any application for dredging include "Controlled depth maintenance" otherwise it will likely be done as a one time effort so that subsequent dredging costs will be the obligation of the town to finance. The sum of which will be cost prohibitive.

Due to the urgency and complexity of this issue and time and effort required to attend the project which lies beyond the existing resources of the Harbormaster we recommend that a consultant or other qualified person be hired or engaged to undertake it. If successful the placement of bouys / nav aids will likely fall into place.

To support this recommendation we direct your attention to attachment (1). This was presented (3/9/16) to the commission by Harbormaster Buckminster who obtained it from sources involved with a similar situation regarding the dredging of the Saco River. The work required is readily apparent and can be seen and appreciated. Hopefully a "template" of sorts for the type of effort needed here. As part and parcel of the effort the proposed project manager should work closely with the harbormasters office, report to the commission as requested and be given access to info and records as needed and appropriate. Supporting documentation should be obtained from town agencies, commissions, committees, departments, and business interests. We desperately need all players to buy into this project and must reach out to our legislators and reps to get on board through the "political" process.

Respectfully submitted:


Commission Chair

Members present 3/9/16: William Smith, Warren Hall Jr., Richard Wheeler, Donald Jepson, Lawrence Bearse (writing for the commission)