

Protect Pentwater Channel Citizens Committee
Wednesday, January 17, 2024
Park Place and via Zoom

Attendees: Via Zoom – Amy LaBarge, Jenny Sheehan, Tave Reser, Katie Anderson; In person- Dave Bluhm, Chris Conroy, Laude Hartum, Chris Brown, Bruce Koorndyk, Manny Valdez, Patrick Hooyman, Michael Haack,

AGENDA

Dave Bluhm opened at 10am

1. Review/approval Nov. 2, 2023 meeting minutes - *Approved*

2. Review current USACE lake level report, updated USACE reporting. – *David shared USACE projections. Dec 2024 water levels are the same as Dec 2024. El Nino Snowfalls may allow higher than normal spring water levels (per projection). Status of windblown sand – deposits into the channel can be seen from the walkway but soundings will not be done until April by the USACE to compare with fall sounding- (they are also curious how long lasting the full dredge of August 2023 will be and the impact of winter storms). Channel soundings will also be done by local resource (Patterson Marine – LaHaye/Roseman) in the spring. Dave has also reached out to Mark Shotwell a local drone owners to conduct a series of flybys to document sand shift & shoaling changes at the mouth of the channel. The goal would be to try and get some indication of shoaling in early/mid March ahead of actual channel soundings.*

- 3. Update on grants and other opportunities**
 - a. Section 111 study grant –*Grant funding hopefully in 2024-25 budget to study what impact the revetments have had on water flow, and if study reveals impact, then secure 2025 appropriations funding for repairs or redesign. Chris Brown will follow up with Liz Wilkinson (USACE Grand Haven of Detroit District) to see if*

anything has come from a June call between Liz, her chief Maria Strum, and Congressman John Moolenaar. Personnel updates shared by Chris Brown: Kelli Lively (sp?) is new aide for Senator Peters. Maria Strum is retiring from USACE in February and will be replaced by Nick Zager. **Get a Pentwater Visit invite to Nick either directly or via Maria before she retires.**

b. Michigan resilient coast grant - update on grant application, other State Park improvement activities. See attached update from Lynne Cavazos. Manny share that a study for a new sidewalk redesign to prevent sand from speeding down the sidewalk into the channel is looking good. Manny explained that Cities Initiative (501c3) may be the applicant & fund the grant. Michael Haack asked if we should also consider creating our own 501c3 to process fundraising efforts but group agreed that the Community Foundation of Oceana County is managing the Protect Pentwater Harbor Fund and fundraising expenses and reimbursements can be processed through this fund.

c. Section 408 opportunities – Harbor Maint Trust Fund – no update

d. Creative sand removal options from USACE and local contractors – As noted back in August 2022 by Dave Roseman “credit for bird-dogging the blowing sand belongs to the late [architect] Tom Sturr, working as part of the Harbor Research Committee. See attached Fleis & VanderBrink report and current beach sand control measures.

e. Update on Village Recreation Plan – Katie’s sound was not working but sent an update via chat – next steps include Community workshops to gather input. On schedule for end of year deadline. An approved 5 Year Community Parks & Recreation Plan will open additional grant opportunities from the Michigan DNR. **Next Parks & Rec Board meeting is January 29th @ 4pm at Park Place. Open to the public.**

Michigan Sea Grants under DNR offering a relevant webinar:

On **January 24** at 10am EST, the **Planning for Sustainable Small Harbors: Project Overview and Useful Tools** webinar

https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_v7gfuUoJSeq8l84USlfqwx#/registration

4. Discuss lighted buoy off end of north channel - permit application, maintenance, cost, liability – *Chief Laude Hartrum gave an update on discussions with the US Coast Guard Aids to Navigation group. USCG is very responsive to light outages. Last spring USCG came out to put new batteries on the south light. We asked Laude to find out what the USCG maintenance schedule is for Pentwater Harbor. USCG will not put a buoy off mermaid rocks but not opposed to us fundraising and putting one out ourselves. Liability, Maintenance should be considered before we take action. All Aids to Navigation permits go through the DNR first since we are an inland waterway. Pentwater Police added NO WAKE signs in 2023 at all boat launches. USACE is responsible for painting the NO WAKE signs along the channel, and needed to protect the seawalls along the channel.. There is nothing preventing us from fundraising NO WAKE banners on our own. Laude warned that as soon as we take on maintenance ourselves, federal funds will disappear on the assumption that locals will continue to take care of maintenance. The committee decided to hold off on any action toward a lighted buoy but felt that other maintenance items discussed should be a priority.*

a. North pier light operation – see above.

b. Harbor of Refuge... New item – Chris Brown reported that Harbor of Refuge is a state designation and to our surprise and despite USACE fact sheet, Pentwater Harbor is NOT currently a Harbor of Refuge. Chris Brown is going through the DNR application process. Let's stay focused on this to understand the process, eligibility requirements, timeline for designation, etc. We need this for Aids to Navigation funding.

5. Local/State/Federal Politicians and USACE

a.. Funding for 2024 dredging and attenuator cleaning - **NO FUNDS or Plans currently**

b. Former Gov. Blanchard “One Page” summary status – *Has been delivered but no feedback; chaos in DC; we need to get back with Jim to aid in getting a meeting in Pentwater with our federal representatives as discussed above.*

6. Small Harbors Coalition update and activities - potential for spring meeting with Moolenaar and Huizenga. – *Lots of discussion on Pentwater taking the lead to advocate for coalition to gain high level traction to lobby our legislators, and a separately advocate for ourselves. Two separate but essential tactics. Set a June/July meeting date – send invites from a Coalition program perspective to: 9 shallow harbor coalition representatives, Moolenaar, Huizenga, Peters, their staffs, Recreational Boating industry representatives (Michigan 2nd largest boat sales in US), Pure Michigan/MEDC – Michigan tourism is dependent on open harbors. Define our Strategic Plan – Advance the cause of shallow recreational harbors and attack the lack of federal funding. Dave and Chris C. Will draft a letter requesting a meeting to be sent to Moolenaar and Huizenga and copied to leadership of all 9 shallow harbor communities.*

A) advocate for shallow harbors

B) Secure federal funds via budget process

C) Get 9 harbors to agree to support

D) Maintenance dredges earlier in the year annually are more than sufficient and can spread the available funds more efficiently.

Most harbors don't need a full dredge annually.

E) Bring in Guy Meadows – Michigan Tech sand and wave action expert

Encouraged all members to reach out to these politicians and Gary Peters either by phone or letter, or both to advocate for our harbor. Dave will prepare talking points for that conversation and letter and Chris Brown will provide staffer contacts for our local/state reps.

7. Local fundraising for maintenance dredge.

a. Spring 2024 fish boil fundraiser. Need champions, organizers. – *Partnering with Pentwater Sportfishing Association is necessary and critical to insure enough fish for event and to help spread the word. Fall may be a better timeframe, or conduct adjacent to a*

PSA fishing tournament when fishermen/women can donate fish for fish fry. If not Village marina, use Channel Lane Park.. Michael Haack, charter fisherman and Bruce Koorndyk , PSA rep will initiate discussions with these groups. Make this a big event and invite our elected state and federal representatives.

“ HARBORFEST” Solicit support /volunteers from sailing community too!!

8. Wind blown sand control - Sand fencing installation and effectiveness of installed fencing. – Discussion regarding the experimental location and application of the new screening currently on the channel railing.

9. Other

a. Local/Private sand removal options and local dredging equipment activities.- *no update*

b. Spring drone survey – *See above*

c. Channel Website and Facebook page activities – *updated with USACE copies of As built drawings for north and south revetments; meeting minutes too.*

d. Other media activities - Detroit News Series – *no update; no contact made by reporter.*

10. Next Meeting – Friday March 8th at 10am – Park Place (or Wednesday March 6... confirming Park Place availability).

Chris Conroy
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