



SHELLFISH COMMISSION
TOWN HALL – 110 MYRTLE AVENUE
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WESTPORT™

**MINUTES
WESTPORT SHELLFISH COMMISSION
DECEMBER 2, 2020**

ATTENDANCE

Commission Members:

Heather Williams, Chair
Matt Dembski, Alternate
Dick Harris
Clarinda Higgins, Alternate
Jamie Walsh

Ex-Officios:

Alicia Mozian, Conservation Director
Cpl. Brendan Fearon, Westport Marine Police

Staff:

Susan Voris, Admin. Asst. II

Guests:

Matthew Murray, 27 Old Mill Road

The December 2, 2020 meeting of the Westport Shellfish Commission was called to order at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom by Chairman, Heather Williams.

This is to certify that these minutes and resolutions were filed with the Westport Town Clerk within 7 days of the December 2, 2020 meeting of the Westport Shellfish Commission pursuant to Section 1-225 of the Freedom of Information Act.

Alicia Mozian
Conservation Director

The Commission has collected **\$13,770.00** since December 26, 2019 when we began issuing the 2020 recreational shellfishing permits.

9 senior permits were issued to people who are 85 and older for free.

Closures:

Month	Days Open	Days Closed	Total Days
January	31	0	31
February	29	0	29
March	31	0	31
April	17	13	30
May	5	26	31
June	30	0	30
July	31	0	31
August	31	0	31
September	30	0	30
October	21	10	31
November	24	6	30
December			
	280	55	335

Notes:

Closure Events

4/13/20 - > 1.5"

4/27/20 - transplant - water temp 45 degrees

10/16/20 - >1.78"

10/30/20 - >1.5"

Of note, we issued one Seed Oyster Permit in the last week.

6. Other Business

a. Ms. Mozian noted she received an e-mail that she had forwarded to the Commission from Matthew Murray of 27 Old Mill Road regard the taking of Blue Crabs in the Mill Pond. She reviewed Mr. Murray's e-mail and listed his concerns including:

- There were groups of about 15 people during the summer into October during the evening into the early morning hours crabbing with 5 gallon buckets. Their use of LED headlamps would shine into their house, waking them up. This prevents the enjoyment of their home. They are concerned with the overfishing of the crabs due to the number of people that are out on the Pond and the lack of limits on the harvest.

Ms. Mozian noted she confirmed with the Bureau of Aquaculture that the harvesting of Blue Crabs is not under the jurisdiction of the Shellfish Commission. She reached out to the Town Attorney and the DEEP Marine Fisheries Division to see if there is anything that can be done. She received a response earlier in the day from an individual from the CT Dept. of Marine

Fisheries that did confirm that there are no harvest limits and noted that Blue Crabs are a highly productive species. When questioned as to whether the Town could impose harvest limits or time limits for harvest that individual wanted to check with others in his department prior to commenting. She stated she has not yet heard back from the Town Attorney as to whether the Town can impose stricter limits than that of the State. However, she assumes if it were legal to move forward, it would have to be through adoption of a Town Ordinance through the RTM.

Cpl. Fearon stated he has been patrolling. He has spoken with DEEP Enforcement and they say they cannot do anything. This issue is complicated in that the harvesting is on private property owned by Jeff Northrup. Also, the Police cannot infringe on the rights of the crabbers if they are not breaking the laws. They do inspect for compliance with the size. They can enforce the parking regulations and noise ordinance.

Matthew Murray stated he believes ticketing within the Old Mill lot should be enforced. He is concerned with the number of people in the Pond at one time. He advocated for time restrictions.

Cpl. Fearon stated crabbing is treated like fishing. Crabbing is mostly done with a light because crabs react to light. Also, the head lamps are used by people for their own safety. He added he removed a half dozen handmade traps from the pond. He explained there are 3 full-time Marine Officers and they work 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. So those with expertise are not the ones responding to calls. However, it is his intention to make sure training is expanded to those on the night shift. He asked if there is a specific time the crabbers are out.

Mr. Murray stated they usually start between 8 and 9 p.m. with the majority of the crabbers out by 11 p.m.

Cpl. Fearon noted there were multiple parking tickets issued this summer. He plans to put up more signage including multi-lingual.

Ms. Williams disagreed with DEEP's assessment on impact to the resource. The Blue Crabs feed animals higher up on the food chain like the Herons. Therefore, a diminished Blue Crab population affects other animals.

Cpl. Fearon will reach out to DEEP Police. He will also speak with the Coast Guard Marine Fisheries division but the Mill Pond is not a navigable water. He noted more information is needed and the Commission should continue this discussion to a future agenda.

Mr. Dembski noted that if crabbing is taking place past November 1st, then the Westport Police and DEEP Police can enforce those regulations.

Ms. Higgins asked if the head lamps could be considered a public nuisance.

Ms. Mozian suggested that the light is not stationary and did not think so.

Cpl. Fearon suggested that Mr. Northrup may be part of the solution since the activity is taking part on his oyster beds. He added that if a RTM Ordinance were contemplated, then everyone around the pond should be engaged.

The Commission discussed what could be done now, which is more signage and enforcing traffic laws.

- b.** Ms. Mozian shared recent e-mails she received from interested citizens related to fish kills in the Saugatuck River and possible explanation relating to temperature changes.

The Commission added more thoughts. Several noted they have seen more prolific Bunker fish populations.

- c. Mr. Harris relayed information related to the highly invasive Mitten Crabs, which may start to show up in our waters. He stated he would forward this to the members. He advised that if the Mitten Crabs are captured, do not throw them back. Note where you caught them and report.

The November 4, 2020 meeting of the Westport Shellfish Commission adjourned at 7:49 p.m.

Motion:	Williams	Second:	Walsh
Ayes:	Williams Walsh, Dembski, Harris, Higgins		
Nays:	None	Abstentions:	None
		Vote:	5:0:0