



SHELLFISH COMMISSION
TOWN HALL – 110 MYRTLE AVENUE
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MINUTES
WESTPORT SHELLFISH COMMISSION
FEBRUARY 7, 2024

ATTENDANCE

Commission Members:

Jamie Walsh, Chair
Barry Lytton, Vice-Chair
Dick Harris
Clarinda Higgins, Alternate
Heather Williams, Alternate

Ex-Officios:

Colin Kelly, Conservation Director

Staff:

Susan Voris, Admin. Asst. III

Guests:

Nikki Spiller, Director of HarborWatch
Hunter Peterson
Jeff Northrup, Sr.

The February 7, 2024 meeting of the Westport Shellfish Commission was called to order at 6:30 p.m. in Room 309 of the Westport Town Hall, 110 Myrtle Ave., Westport, Connecticut, by Chair, Jamie Walsh.

This is to certify that these minutes and resolutions were filed with the Westport Town Clerk within 7 days of the February 7, 2024 meeting of the Westport Shellfish Commission pursuant to Section 1-225 of the Freedom of Information Act.

Colin Kelly
Conservation Director

1. New Business

- a. Review of water quality sampling in New Creek and other waterbodies testing with Nikki Spiller of HarborWatch. Discussion of continued support for testing in New Creek.

Nikki Spiller, Director of HarborWatch, came to the Commission to review the water quality sampling in New Creek. There were 5 monitoring location and 10 sampling days. She reviewed the sample results. HarborWatch does have some previous testing for comparison but nothing since 2018. She noted there is value in continued testing now that there is a baseline and give more opportunities for track down. She asked the Commission for support to continue testing of New Creek.

Ms. Higgins asked if there is any value in adding testing for nitrogen, phosphorus and nutrient testing.

Mr. Walsh did a straw poll of continued support for \$7,500 for water quality testing of New Creek. All indicated they were in favor.

Mr. Walsh asked for opinion of increasing the scope of testing to include nitrogen, phosphorus and nutrient testing.

Ms. Spiller indicated that it would cost more as the HarborWatch lab sends these tests out and are not necessarily indicated at this time. If they are needed to help with track down in the future, it would be something to discuss.

Mr. Harris agreed.

Motion to approve \$7,500 continued sampling of New Creek for water quality.

Motion:	Higgins	Second:	Harris
Ayes:	Higgins, Harris, Lytton, Walsh, Williams		
Nayes:	None	Abstentions:	None
		Vote:	5:0:0

- b. Discussion with Hunter Peterson about proposed business.

Hunter Peterson introduced himself. He is a lifelong Westport resident and has 10 years as a charter deck hand. He stated that he has had numerous individuals come up to him as he is both crabbing and clamming and asking about what he is doing. He wants to provide the service of teaching others to clam within the recreational area. All individuals would be required to have their own permits.

Ms. Voris shared information that she received to inquiries about such a business from the Bureau of Aquaculture, Aspetuck Health Department and Brendan Fearon, Marine Police Unit.

Mr. Peterson did note that this would be a shore-based operation.

Ms. Voris noted that the Commission's regulations do not exclude this sort of activity.

Mr. Lytton noted that this business proposal could increase the interest in the recreational shellfishing program.

Members asked how he would get word out about his business and also made some suggestions.

Mr. Kelly requested an update on how things are going at mid-season and at the end of the summer season just for informational purposes.

2. Approval of the December 6, 2023 minutes.

The December 6, 2023 minutes were approved as submitted.

Motion:

3. Treasurers Report

Mr. Walsh read the checking account balance into the record ending January 31, 2024.

4. Police Report

Corporal Fearon was not in attendance and nothing new was reported to staff.

5. Recreational Shellfish Report

Ms. Voris reported there have been approximately 80 permits sold so far this year. She stated this is a little slower than in past years but she believes this is because of the extremely rainy season and people may be waiting to see what this year's season looks like.

a. Annual Meeting Report

Ms. Voris reviewed the Annual Meeting Report for 2023.

The Commission has issued **502 annual recreational permits** as of December 31, 2023. There were **364** renewals and **138** new permits. (72.5%/ 27.5%)

Adult Resident Permits issued –	257	(\$ 7,650.00)
Senior Resident Permits issued –	216	(\$ 3,195.00)
Adult Non-resident Permits issued –	16	(\$ 960.00)
Senior Non-resident Permits issued –	9	(\$ 270.00)
Daily Permits issued -	16	(\$ 240.00)

The Commission has collected **\$12,495.00** since December 20, 2022 when we began issuing the 2023 recreational shellfishing permits.

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

Month	Days Open	Days Closed	Total Days
January	25	6	31
February	27	1	28
March	31	0	31
April	22	8	30
May	13	18	31
June	29	1	30
July	6	25	31
August	20	11	31
September	10	20	30
October	16	15	31
November	13	17	30
December	3	28	31
	199	166	365

Notes:

Closure Events

1/26 - rainfall > 1.5"
4/23 - rainfall > 1.5"
4/29 - rainfall > 1.5"
5/20 - rainfall > 2.5"
5/22 - sewage line bypass < 500 gallons
6/30 - rainfall > 1.5 "
7/14 - rainfall > 1.5" and flooding events
8/15 - rainfall > 1.5"
8/18 - rainfall > 1.5"
9/10 - rainfall > 2"
9/18 - rainfall > 1.5"
9/29 - rainfall > 4.3"
10/17 - transplant
11/23 - rainfall > 1.71"

Ms. Voris noted that the season started off strong and steady with issuance of permits but the rainy season slowed things down.

The Commission and Ms. Voris review the permits by location and the income and expense report.

6. Old Business

a. Update by Dick Harris on PFA sampling in the Saugatuck River.

Mr. Harris reviewed preliminary sample reports for the PFA's in the Saugatuck River. They are surprisingly good. Currently, not all samples result are available and analyzed but he noted that he has prepared a quality assurance plan and reviewed the sampling methods with the Commission. The test kits from Cyclopure are not EPA approved but when tested against an EPA approved the results are slightly off while still indicating elevated levels.

b. Discussion of CORR program.

Members of the Commission had received information about looking into the CORR program from the Health Department and decided to revisit the discussion. After the presentation at the Gathering of Shellfish Commissions, it was decided that the Commission members do not have the time to provide support or participation on a regular basis at this time.

7. Other Business

a. Update from Gathering of Shellfish Commissions

Members discussed the meeting.

Members asked about the boat mooring rule and for clarification regarding Cockenoe Island.

Ms. Voris noted that last year the Bureau of Aquaculture implemented a closure around the annual fireworks shows as the areas are a "Temporary Mooring Area" as it was a special event or party. There is no way to predict how many of the boats have heads on them. The same was implemented for Norwalk and Fairfield and a few other communities based on the closure notices she had seen during the same time period. This required testing for reopening after the events. Westport has mooring fields in the Saugatuck River and around Sprite Island that are closed seasonally that have occurred yearly beginning in mid-May and ending in approximately mid-November.

The Commission discussed the presentation by Michael Thomas, of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation. Members were in favor of tiering out a classification to allow First Nation members free access to the recreational beds with a permit.

Ms. Voris indicated this will require a regulation change.

8. Next Steps

The February 14, 2024 meeting of the Westport Shellfish Commission adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Motion:	Walsh	Second:	Lytton
Ayes:	Walsh, Lytton, Harris, Higgins, Williams		
Nayes:	None	Abstentions:	None
		Vote:	5:0:0