



WESTPORT™

SHELLFISH COMMISSION
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**DRAFT
MINUTES
WESTPORT SHELLFISH COMMISSION
JULY 10, 2024**

ATTENDANCE

Commission Members:

Jamie Walsh, Chair
Barry Lytton, Vice-Chair
Dick Harris
Jesse Harte
Scott Reichhelm
Clarinda Higgins, Alternate

Ex-Officios:

Colin Kelly, Conservation Director
Brendan Fearon, Westport Marine Police

Staff:

Susan Voris, Admin. Asst. III

Guests:

Matt Murray, resident

The July 10, 2024 meeting of the Westport Shellfish Commission was called to order at 6:35 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 July 10, 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:

use something like Google translate, call in a translator or take the individual in for processing. He stated there is surveillance set up and they are watching people walk into the water. He noted the previous evening there were up to 60 people turned away. Some returned around 2 a.m. and issued a trespass violation. Individuals are parking on Hillspoint Road and moving over the tide gate. There is no signage at the tide gates. The motion detection cameras show walk-ins from the Preserve, Sherwood Island State Park and from the maintenance garage. He stated there is a need for changes to the parking at Old Mill Beach. He discussed Simple Trespass SGS 53a-110a and how it can only be enforced through proper signage.

Officer Mark Grasso discussed the issuance of the trespass violation to the three individuals the previous evening. He noted they were cooperating. He stated it would be easier for the officers to issue the violations with more signage.

Cpl. Fearon noted a motor vehicle stop yielded 15 bushels of clams and oyster from the pond. This product was returned to the pond. The individuals were arrested. The taking of shellfish from the pond makes this a Commission issue. There is stealing of the bags from the oyster operation. He added based on the surveillance camera footage, Officer Sam Sabin responded and stopped 4 males while noting drag marks on the sand to the pickup truck they were using. No one had a drivers license and when running the plates the truck was registered in Danbury. He stated there needs to be a proactive strategy to address this issue. The area is classified as Restricted Relay. The taking of shellfish for consumption is a health hazard. He noted there is a need for additional signage and parking changes along Hillspoint Road. The Mill Pond is private property that was granted to the Northrop family via a Kings grant in the 1800's. He has spoken with Jeff Northrop, who has stated he would be placing no trespassing signs around the property. This would allow the Police Department to issue trespass violations. He noted there are no signs related to no clamming at the tide gates. Signs need to be bi-lingual. He stated that he is in contact with the DEEP Encon Police weekly to send an officer overnight for patrols.

The Commission agreed to write a letter of support for greater parking restrictions along Hillspoint Road and at the Old Mill Beach parking to support enforcement abilities. Chair Jamie Walsh will write and send out.

The Commission asked for clarification about the arrests and that the taking of 15 bushels was the first incident.

Cpl. Fearon stated there was a break in of the shack in the Mill Pond last month and the taking of shellfish occurred this week. He has discussed with his supervisor, Deputy Chief Ryan Paulsson, changes to the parking on Hillspoint Road in order to limit it to residents, which would begin to address violations through the issuance of parking tickets. He did note that there are limited officers on the overnight shift and there are times when enforcement is not possible. Increased enforcement in the Mill Pond will get the word spread. Currently, the Mill Pond is known as a place to go crabbing and shellfishing.

The Commission asked if Marine Police could put the small boat in the pond to assist in their patrols.

Cpl. Fearon stated yes, but they would have to dedicate two officers from 8 p.m. to 8 a.m. to be effective.

The Commission asked whether he needs to use Commission funds to cover the overtime.

Cpl. Fearon stated the Commission allotted 12 shifts at low tide. The hours would have to be extended.

The Commission agreed. They asked if Cpl. Fearon has the ability to cover the hours.

Cpl. Fearon stated yes based on the theft of the shellfish product.

The Commission reviewed the key points for the letter of support Mr. Walsh will write and send.

The Commission discussed that Mr. Walsh would write a letter to the Town showing the Commission's support that will aid Westport Police Department's enforcement activities in the Mill Pond.

5. Recreational Shellfish Report

Ms. Voris submitted the following report:

The Commission has issued **376 annual recreational permits** as of July 9, 2024.

Adult Resident Permits issued –	176	(\$ 5,250.00)
Senior Resident Permits issued –	176	(\$ 2,580.00)
Adult Non-resident Permits issued –	20	(\$ 1,200.00)
Senior Non-resident Permits issued –	4	(\$ 120.00)
Daily Permits issued -	5	(\$ 75.00)

The Commission has collected **\$9,225.00** since December 18, 2023 when we began issuing the 2024 recreational shellfishing permits.

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

Month	Days Open	Days Closed	Total Days
January	18	13	31

February		29		0		29
March		6		25		31
April		20		10		30
May		21		10		31
June		30		0		30
July						
August						
September						
October						
November						
December						
		124		58		182

Notes:

Closure Events

- 1/9 - 1.93" rainfall event
- 3/6 - 2.16" rainfall event
- 3/7 - closure event due Bed 409 public health issue keeping beds closed minimum 21 day
- 3/7 - sewer line break and spill at pump station 9/ Hillandale Road into Muddy Brook
- 3/12 - sewage spill at pump station with bypass into Silver Brook
- 3/23 - 3.02" rainfall event
- 4/3/24 - >1.5" rainfall event
- 4/29 - sewage bypass in Norwalk impacting the Saugatuck River

Ms. Voris noted that the shellfish permit sales are slower this year but she believes that this is due to the high rainfall events last year and staff has seen an uptick in permit sales in the past couple of months.

6. Old Business

- a. Update on Farmers Market participation – B. Lytton to provide detail

Mr. Lytton stated that the Commission had a successful day at the Farmers Market. They were told by the Green Market that they were a great addition. They had many visitors to the booth. Many sampled oysters with the youngest being about 6. He is planning on trying again prior to Labor Day weekend.

Mr. Walsh noted the table runners ordered by staff for introducing the Commission and staff will order table covers. He suggested that the Commission order a tent and tables of its own.

The Commission discussed potentially selling clam rings and knives at the booth.

b. Continue discussion about free permits for indigenous individuals

Ms. Voris reported that she received an email from Alissa Dragan, Sr. Environmental Analyst of the Bureau of Aquaculture. Ms. Dragan indicated that the Commission could reach out to the tribal nation for dates and the number of people interested in attending or Tessa Getchis of SeaGrant to liaise with the tribal nation. She indicated that at this time it was more work and effort than staff has time for.

7. Other Business:

a. Clambake

The Commission discussed potential dates for their annual clambake. It was decided that Thursday September 5, 2024 as the preferred date or Tuesday, September 3, 2024 would be the alternative date.

Staff will coordinate with Westfair Fish & Chips and Parks and Recreation to determine which date works. They will reach out to members regarding the final date and assignments for the clambake.

- b. Mr. Kelly noted there was a power outage that caused tide gates to remain open over the July 4th weekend. There is a schedule for opening the tide gates to allow for greater flushing of the pond. This was off schedule and allowed the tide gates to remain open 24 hours a day over the weekend. Public Works was responsive as soon as they received a call from Jonathan Goldstein of Haslea, Inc.
- c. Mr. Kelly noted the USDA Council of Soil & Conservation is looking for potential grant ideas relating to shellfishing, sediment and erosion control, and stormwater management. He asked the Commission if there were any projects that they would like to see addressed.

8. Next Steps

The July 10, 2024 meeting of the Westport Shellfish Commission adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Motion: Walsh **Second:** Lytton
Ayes: Walsh, Lytton, Harris, Harte, Higgins, Reichhelm
Nayes: None **Abstentions:** None **Vote:** 6:0:0