

**Waterfront Recreation Committee
Minutes
November 3, 2003**

Attending: Members Steve Gates, Richard Sassara, Michael Schock, Dennis Shypertt, Lori Stirn and Commissioners Hoby Streich and Sherry Bohn. Staff Members: Dave Harlan, Mike Doke, and Linda Hull. Absent: Member Ann Frodel

- 1) Sherry Bohn opened the meeting at 3:00 p.m.
- 2) **Committee Role and Policy Context:** Dave Harlan stated the committee's role is to help staff resolve waterfront recreational issues that periodically arise as part of its function. Members will also be asked to provide feedback to the Port Commission on rates, regulations and other policy decisions. Sherry Bohn said the ad hoc Waterfront RV committee last summer was helpful to the Commission on that issue.

Harlan asked the committee to keep in mind that the Port's Strategic Plan and 5-Year Capital Plan, which govern Port planning, are reviewed and updated annually. It is posted on the www.portofhoodriver.com website for anyone to review. The financial management goal in the Strategic Plan is to have all assets be financially self-supporting, decreasing subsidization from bridge revenues. Therefore, ideas for improvements to recreational areas, which are currently being subsidized, need to have associated strategies for payment of the costs. What the committee will not be doing is creating unrealistic improvement plans without consideration of the requirements of the Strategic Plan or 5-Year Capital Budget.

The other guidance document is Ordinance 22 (also on the website), which regulates conduct on Port property; its enforcement is through the City of Hood River Police Department. However, no citations have been issued under that ordinance.

Lori asked if the charge of the committee is to find revenue sources? She said in Ashland, for example, a certain percentage of food and beverage income goes toward parks and recreation. Hood River Parks & Recreation has development fees to create parks but it doesn't cover operations and maintenance. Harlan said the user rates for Port properties are set by the Commission, but they will consider additional input from various citizen committees. Harlan stated the committee would evaluate fees/rates for all recreational asset areas.

Harlan also told the committee the Commission requested a revised Marina Plan this year and it is to include revenue assessments in any plan. An ad hoc committee will be appointed soon to work on that project and the Waterfront Recreation Committee will have input as well. Also a consideration is the advisory vote several years ago that marina park area development can only be recreational.

- 3) **Season Overview:** Harlan explained that the shoaling of the river around the Marina Beach and the Spit has created a potentially costly problem on the waterfront. Between the low water levels and the glacier slide along Highway 35, the sand is continually shifting and reforming all around the area. If the Army Corps of Engineers did permit the work, it's possible that the next high water would move it all again. Harlan will be researching WRDA (Water Resources Development Act) appropriations for assistance as well as the Army Corps of Engineers to see what can be done to restore the windsurfing

beach area. According to Harlan, it's very difficult to obtain permits to work around the water today and heavy penalties are assessed if any unauthorized work is done. He also said vandalism of the new restrooms added costs this year and closed the facilities for a time for extensive plumbing repairs.

Harlan said the Marina slips were full with a waiting list for the summer. The current CPI-adjusted rates cover operations, but not any repairs or capital projects. The dock floats are deteriorating and need replacement and is an expensive project. Rates now are lower than The Dalles or Cascade Locks. Lori Stirn asked if the Port would consider a Port District rate separate from a non-Port District rate similar to Park Districts.

The Spit, according to Harlan, saw increased use this year increasing the hazards to windsurfers and marina beach users who walk out to the Spit on the shallow sandbar. No user fees were charged this year, but the Commission is interested in reviewing that this next season. The user fee may be a way to manage the overcrowding and diminish the hazards. There is a limit to what improvements can be done on the Spit due to environmental requirements.

The cruisedock activity has decreased over the past three years, partly due to the economy affecting tourism so there are less bookings. Dockage fees cover the operating costs of the dock but nothing more for improvements. Captains do not like the dock placement, preferring to be parallel to the waterfront because of the winds as well as the hazards of maneuvering through windsurfers and kiteboarders. The Port has restricted access to the dock because of hazards and security. New security requirements will have to be implemented to continue to receive ships with over 150 passengers (Queen of the West).

The Event Site use did not increase this year. The cruisedock and Event Site were subsidized by about \$42,000. Vandalism at the restrooms and dogs running at large were continuing problems. The Port had complaints that the restrooms weren't open on weekends before and after the season (May 15 to September 15). To keep them open means more labor costs for cleaning and stocking. The Commission contemplated RV overnight parking last season but delayed action until further study. This committee may want to discuss that issue because there is a demonstrated need for this type of facility in Hood River.

The Hook had no improvements this year other than partnering with CGWA to plant trees around the windsurfing schools, so the Commission did not consider user fees. The road is graded annually and portable toilets are provided. Michael Schock asked if portable toilets could be placed on the eastern part of the Hook for those launching there? Steve Gates thought that user fees might be considered for next year because the area gets a lot of use, especially with the Marina beach condition. If the Port could bolster its revenue stream then more improvements could be made, including additional grading of the road. Harlan said the waterfront redevelopment included proposed funding mechanisms to improve the Hook and creating additional park space at the east end on Lot 7. Gates said if there was an "honor" pay system it would be less labor intensive. Harlan said the experience with honor pay systems at the Event Site was that about 50% paid. Sherry Bohn wondered about a season pass to cover the Hook, Spit, and Event Site and if vehicles didn't have one they could be ticketed with the ticket price applied to the pass cost. Gates said today's reality is that people "pay to play".

Harlan said this suggestion would go to the Commission for discussion and policy-making.

- 4) Marina Park:** Lori Stirn asked if there were concerns about the liability to the Port because of the shoaling creating hazardous swimming areas, and there are concerns according to Harlan. She asked if the Port could take a proactive stance and approach the Army Corps of Engineers from this perspective to get the problem worked on by them. Harlan will be attending a conference this week and will have an opportunity to discuss the issue with them and also to find out about the status of WRDA.

Jim Bison stated the marina beach is upwind for kiteboarders and sometimes they get hung up on the bridge and piers. The sandbar joins the Spit area through shallow waters and many people walk over and get in the way of kiteboarding. That situation as well as the Hood River's swift current has created hazards for users of the marina beach. Harlan said there are no easy answers to the shoaling problem; there are signs posted in the area warning of the dangers. A lot depends of nature, weather, water flow, and glacial slides that the Port cannot control. Sherry Bohn asked about checking with the Corps to see how long it would take to get permits for a pipeline dredge that could scoop the sand and move it to another place and if it had any value to use or sell. Permitting is done in "water windows" for torpidity and fish concerns. Jim Bison said the Port of Kalama has a portable pipeline dredge that may be able to help as a resource.

Marina rate increases are usually based on the CPI (Consumer Price Index) rate. The Commission will be looking at an increase for 2004 during strategic planning. Sherry Bohn and Steve Gates asked if comparative rates from other similar marinas (both public and private) and amenities could be researched to guide the Commission's decision on 11/18 to increase marina rates. Lori Stirn said it helps if people understand the associated costs to operate a facility and the increases are implemented gradually.

Steve Gates made a motion, Richard Sassara seconded, that a comparative rate study be done on public and private marinas similar to the Port's in amenities and used in considering a marina rate increase for 2004. Gates requested that all future recommendations to the Commission be in the form of a motion.

Harlan said the Marina Green might potentially be used for a staging area for the bridge redecking project for a 2-year period. More information on that will come from the contractor once the bid is awarded later this month. Michael Schock asked about any plan to connect the waterfront redevelopment area with the marina green and being able to use the resources. Harlan said right now each area has one access point; the developer has talked about an auto bridge over the Hood River to connect the areas for another access point. Options for resources are all unanswered at this point. Michael wondered if an objective of this committee could be to think of how to work it out and propose resources.

- 5) The Spit:** Because of the limited area, early in the season Mike Doke felt that it was a management headache with all the instructors, schools, and parking issues. He said three years ago there was one certified school; this past summer there were six. But as the season progressed, the schools worked out their issues together. Jim and Cori Bison said the wind is better in Stevenson and they are improving their site; however, because of the shallow water and sandbar, Hood River is the best place to teach. Lori Stirn asked about the number of people participating and is anyone tracking that? Jim

said no, but maybe they could track it through sales. Mike Doke said it would be really helpful to the sport itself if the Gorge Kiteboarding Association could get better organized and/or join with CGWA to address issues, numbers, etc. Bison stated the rogue instructors are still out there but it is tiring to keep chasing them down and they were all so busy that they just let it go. He suggested that all certified school instructors be differentiated from the rogues by wearing something that identified them as certified (color of shirt, etc.). Also, implementing a protocol to follow for reporting those people would be helpful. The Port has kept the school concession low for three years because it was a new business; this year the concession fees may be restructured similar to the windsurfing schools. Bison also said the overcrowding is a problem in the sport and there are not enough facilities. User fees were discussed with the suggestion that a daily fee for the Spit and the Hook could be \$2 (being unimproved) with a season pass that would cover all Port sites.

- 6) **Event Site:** Harlan said one issue each year is the damage events cause when their people drive tent and fence stakes into irrigation. Suggestions were to charge a damage deposit up front; to draw/paint lines on the ground to show where irrigation lies; or to have tents in the parking lot.
- 7) **RV Facilities:** The RV day-camping issue was discussed. Harlan said the maintenance crew takes out six 55-gallon barrels of garbage twice a day at the Event Site. The fee for overlength vehicles is \$10 daily and \$100 annually. The water access had to be locked up because they were filling their RVs tanks. There appears to be a need for a facility on the waterfront for these types of recreationalists in RVs, and may be a possibility in the interim during waterfront development. Lori Stirn said the Boardman 60-unit RV park is 98% full all summer and asked if this idea was in the Strategic Plan for the future. Harlan said not yet, and no specific place has been identified. Steve Gates wondered how big of an area would be needed for a 20-unit facility to start; there seems to be a big need here.

User fees of all the areas were discussed. The current fees are \$3 daily, \$50 season pass at the Event Site with no charge at the Hook or the Spit. It was felt that \$4 at the Event Site, \$2 at the Hook and the Spit would be a reasonable daily fee. Using an honor system vs. a person to collect the fee will have to be determined.

Steve Gates made a motion for the committee to endorse an increase to user fees at the Event Site and implement user fees at the Hook and the Spit and to incorporate the season pass at all three sites, possibly adding a season pass at the Hook and the Spit only for \$30. For these fees, users will benefit from extra road grading, additional portable toilets, etc.

- 8) Next Meeting: Monday, January 5, 2004, 3:00 p.m. Expo Center Conference Room