



REGULAR MEETING

March 2, 2023

6:30 PM

A Regular Meeting of the Stonington Shellfish Commission (SSC) was held on this date. Members present were Chairman, Mr. Donald Murphy; Mr. Alan Banister; Mr. Donald Raffo; Mr. John Swenarton; Secretary Mr. Austin Clark. There is a quorum present. Also in attendance was our warden Mr. Rob Russell.

- 1) Call to order – The meeting called to order at 6:31 pm. Prior to commencing, the Chair shared a letter from the First Selectman Danielle Chesebrough reappointing Commissioner Clark to a new term as a Commissioner.
- 2) Comments from the public – Steve Plant asked about the use of cages in the winter for storage of inventory if that would require a change in the application?
- 3) Review and approval of the regular meeting minutes of February 2nd, 2023. A motion was made and seconded (Banister / Raffo) to approve the minutes as presented. Voted 5 – 0.
- 4) Correspondence – In the meeting packet, were three applications from Stonington Farms Shellfish, Inc. dated February 27, 2023 for locations in Murphy Point, Mason Point & East of Ram Island. The Commission will review these for completeness and discuss them at the April 2023 meeting.
 - Also contained in the monthly meeting packet was correspondence to and from Garrett Timmons of Harmony Sea Farms, LLC concerning any information on the application for 40 moorings in lower Wequetequock Cove.
 - There was also an e-mail to William MacKay, informing him of the Commission updating his longitude & latitude coordinates with the DA/BA also in preparation of the expected lower Wequetequock Cove application.
 - On February 13th, 2023 the Chair forwarded to David Carey of the DA/BA Garrett Timmons of Harmony Sea Farms, LLC's application to conduct aquaculture in Wequetequock Cove.
 - Commissioner Raffo shared with the Commission information concerning grants two local aquaculture farms, Sixpenny Oyster Farm and Harmony Sea Farm received from the State of Connecticut.
 - A letter from Alissa Dragan of the BA/DA was shared reclassifying a portion of the lower Mystic River growing area in Groton from Conditionally Approved – Seasonal to Prohibited based on the reevaluation of the Shoreline Survey finding commercial activity and marinas in that portion of the River.
 - The Chair shared with the Commission a communication from Docko Inc. asking to be put on the agenda for this month's meeting for the Lockwood Coveside mooring application.
 - There was also included in the packet much communication from various parties regarding this application, including a March 2nd, 2023 detailed e-mail from Garrett Timmons concerning the potential conflicts of his application for aquaculture and the aforementioned Coveside mooring application.
 - In attendance at this month's meeting was the Harbor Master, Eric Donch. A discussion was held about the Coveside mooring application. The Chair said that he would attend their regular monthly meeting which is scheduled to be held on the 2nd Monday of the month, which is the 13th at 7pm at the police station meeting room.

5) Business

- a) The monthly water quality samples were distributed and the Chair commented that the water quality samples were very good. It was noted that the recreational areas were re-opened on February 7th, 2023 and remained open for the remainder of the month, and the State issued a re-opening notice for the lower Mystic River for February 6th.
- b) The Pre-Submission application before the Shellfish Commission made by Docko Incorporated on behalf of the Coveside Marina, LLC was presented and discussed. The application presented showed 14 moorings, seven on each side of a travel way, reduced from the originally proposed 40 mooring site. Keith Neilson answered questions regarding the depth of the water in the travel way at low water as being 2.5 to 3.0 feet of water. Concern was expressed about the location on the west side of the travel way, that the mooring swing radius may approach an approved shellfish aquaculture location. Also, as expressed by the State DA/BA any increase in number of moorings in a body of water has the potential to downgrade the water quality classification by the State which could affect both commercial and recreational shellfish activities. The Chair asked the harbor management personnel present if they would help prepare an overlay map of all the existing moorings in this area of the Cove and add these to the requested locations to determine how many moorings there would be and how the State might then classify the water quality of the area. After a lengthy discussion, the Chair offered to provide Docko, Inc. the longitude and latitude corners of the existing aquaculture license holder's plots and of the most recent aquaculture plot request, and Docko, Inc. agreed to make a new plot map so as to be able to plot them in relation to the proposed mooring field site.
- c) Commissioner Banister updated the Commission of plans to create a living shoreline near Boat House Park north of the Seaport. Both he and Chairman Murphy have met with the Town's Economic and Community Development Director, Susan Cullen and have suggested that ribbed mussels would provide an environmental benefit better than blue mussels or oysters.
- d) A review of the annual remuneration from all license holders was provided. All license holders have paid in full. It was suggested the Commission might review its license wording, regulations and guidelines as it applies to holding acreage but not actively working the site.
- e) The Chair presented a revised application from Stonington Farms to request plots of bottom for aquaculture without gear, as the original application was for the use with gear which would have necessitated an application for Joint Agency review. The Commission will consider these at its next meeting.
- f) Commercial shellfish report: Steve Plant thought that the spring market might be short on oyster supply due to the lack of seeding during the peak of the COVID lock down. Kris Simonds mentioned his boat had just been relaunched and had not much to report. Garrett and Sally Timmons spoke about the grant they received and the equipment they plan to purchase to help with their harvesting. Sally also mentioned that she had conducted a shellfish introduction program to a class in the North Stonington school system.
- g) Consideration for a new category of shellfish permit for youths. After some discussion again this month, after it was raised at last month's meeting, the Commission proposed that the Commission offer a Youth category of shellfish permit for ages 13 to 15 and the fee be the same as a senior at \$10 per year.. It was thought that a rubber stamp, perhaps in red, could be used to label the permit as "YOUTH". A motion was made and seconded (Raffo / Banister) to create a youth permit with the annual fee being \$10. It was voted in favor 5 – 0.
- h) Financial Review: The invoices from Don's Dock were reviewed and an allocation of \$1,777.03 was made for the payment of the Commission's locker, winter boat storage and miscellaneous boat expenses.

6) New Business:

Under new business, Commissioner Clark asked if the Commission had any thoughts as to reducing the catch limit size on a daily permit to a peck from the current bushel. The warden opined that most people fishing on a daily permit, don't harvest a full bushel as a rule.

Commissioner Raffo offered that we might think about efforts to teach the enjoyments and benefits of shellfishing to various groups in Town, and wondered if members of some of the Yacht Clubs might not be a target audience.

7) Hearing of nothing further, a motion was made and seconded to adjourn at 8:12pm (Banister / Raffo) 5 – 0.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Austin P. Clark".

Austin P. Clark
Secretary