



Town of Stonington
Shellfish Commission
152 Elm Street Stonington, CT 06378

SPECIAL MEETING
March 4, 2021
6:30 PM

A Special Meeting of the Stonington Shellfish Commission (SSC) was held on this date online by WEBEX. Members present were Chairman, Mr. Donald Murphy; Mr. Alan Banister; Mr. Donald Raffo; Mr. John Swenarton; Secretary Mr. Austin Clark; and alternate member Mr. Dan Barrett. Also in attendance was our Warden Mr. Rob Russell.

- 1) Call to order – Meeting called to order at 6:35 pm
- 2) The Chair opened the public hearing on the application by Little Narragansett Bay Oyster Company, LLC to conduct aquaculture on approximately .73 acres between Elihu and Goat Islands in lower Wequetequock Cove.

Per the Notice of Public Hearing, the Chair checked with Town Hall on the Commission's website, e-mail address and mail box this afternoon to gather any correspondence or comments. There were none.

The Chair called upon any members of the public present that wished to comment to make their presence known. Mr. Dexter Murphy expressed support of additional aquaculture locations to support the raising of shellfish in the area. Hearing of no other comments, the Chair mentioned the e-mails from the abutting neighbors Mr. Stephen Bates and Ms. Jennifer Martin of Elihu Island Trust, both stating their support and encouragement of the site and application.

The Chair asked if there were any questions from the other Commissioners, and as there were none, the Chair closed the public hearing at 6:40pm.

- 3) Discussion of the results of the public hearing. Mr. Don Raffo made a motion to accept the application of the Little Narragansett Bay Oyster Co, LLC to conduct aquaculture in Town waters, and that motion was seconded by Mr. Alan Banister. A vote was held with all members voting in the affirmative. The question of remuneration was raised, and Mr. Don Raffo made a motion that the Commission's standard license fee per acre be applied to this new aquaculture location and was seconded by Mr. Alan Banister. All voted in favor.
- 4) Comments from the public – The Chair mentioned that there was expected to be comments from the public on tonight's agenda, however, the application in Article 7c under business has been withdrawn.
- 5) The Chair called upon those present to review and comment for the approval of the special meeting minutes of the February 4th Special Meeting's minutes. The correct spelling of Jim Markow's name was offered as a correction, and hearing of no other changes, a motion was made and seconded (Swenarton / Banister) to accept the February 4th 2021 minutes as amended. All voted in favor.

6) Correspondence:

- a) In the meeting packet was an e-mail from member Dan Barrett to the Chair requesting consideration for the creation of a Recreational sub-committee. Also included were the Chair's response and thoughts. Secretary Austin Clark commended

Alan Banister on the job he did presenting Stonington's response at the State's Shellfish Commission's annual meeting. He noted and Alan agreed that the State during its Town by Town response was focused on each Town's outreach effort and accomplishments, and this sub-committee would be a way for Stonington to develop a more comprehensive program.

- b) Don Raffo had submitted an article from an issue of "On The Water" regarding shell fishing and asked the editors for permission to link it to our website.
- c) Also in the monthly packet was correspondence from Beth Gomes, concerning an upcoming aquaculture application.
- d) The 2021 Shellfish Permits have been ordered, and should arrive by March 12th.
- e) An e-mail from Jay Spalding, Chairman of the Stonington Harbor Management Commission inquiring about placing an article about shellfishing in the Harbor Newsletter.
- f) An e-mail from Catherine Ellis, the ocean sciences teacher at Stonington High School asking if the Commission had the ability to engage a summer intern who has further interest in marine science. The Chair was going to pass her information along to Tessa Getchis.

7) Business:

- a) The water quality readings for the month were in the monthly packet, and it showed the beds were open for the whole month. The Chair made his water samples for the month without the Commission boat, and was hopeful that March would be the last month he would have to do that. Alan Banister continues to try to get the Davis Gauge people to help with the differences in measurements between their gauge and the plastic gauge at the water treatment plant. Alan has been asking the Davis folks about the effects of the wind on the measuring "tipping" buckets. With the softening of COVID restrictions, it was hoped to get with the IT people at the treatment plant to place the data on the web.
- b) Commercial Shellfishing Report The three commercial operators in attendance agreed that the market is still slow from COVID related lack of demand, but that they are able to keep up with the current demand. Garrett Timmons remarked on how clear the water has been recently. Will MacKay mentioned that the Pine Point School as a project was helping him develop a remote water quality sampling gauge.
- c) Per the item in our correspondence section, Item 7c application has been withdrawn.
- d) A discussion was held about the creation of a recreational Shellfishing subcommittee within the Commission. In the packet the Chairman included an e-mail he sent to Commissioner Barrett where he identified his thoughts on how the Commission might function for its major areas of operation. It was decided to appoint Commissioners Barrett and Clark to create the recreational subcommittee and develop a recreational outreach program.
- e) Mr. Clark updated the group on the progress of the new shell fish gauge. Costing is still an issue due to projected initial small quantity amounts.
- f) For the discussion on this request from the correspondence section, the Chair in his capacity as a member of the Connecticut Sea Grant Advisory Board recused himself from the discussion of a letter of support for the NOAA -OA proposal.
The meeting at this point was chaired by senior member Mr. Alan Banister. Alan explained a summary of the project as follows:
This is a proposal put together by the PI Dr. Penny Vlahos, Associate Professor, Chemical Oceanographer at UCONN Avery Pt., Other co-PIs are Jim Markow, Jimmy Bloom, Tessa Getchis, DABA

The concern is Threats to Aquaculture: Environmental Change, Hypoxia, Ocean Acidification, and Extreme rainfall/Drought.

The Goal: Insure resilience of the Eastern Oyster aquaculture production and to understand the effects of OA, disease, salinity, DO Methods: Examine oyster growth/reproduction v/v Salinity, OA, DO, Disease via controlled experiments, bioenergetics and hydrodynamic modeling.

Identify Region where Eastern Oysters are most vulnerable and to provide robust site selection.

Goal: Maximize Sustainability of shellfish yields in a changing Long Island Sound environment by:

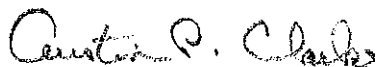
1. Monitoring key biogeochemical parameters

2. Monitor oyster growth and health
3. Evaluate Physiological response of oysters at various growth stages
4. Evaluate disease progression – Dermo under experimental conditions
5. Develop bioenergetic model to simulate AO, DO, Salinity, Reproduction, Mortality
6. Integrate data into modeling
7. Communicate results to stake holders

Alan mentioned that one of the areas of focus was Thames River, but suggested that with the importance of the sustainability of our local water for the Eastern Oyster, due to the number of commercial aquaculture holdings in Town waters, that he suggested that if we offered a letter of support, Alan would mention that Stonington should receive some emphasis from the project. The members of the Commission were so inclined, and made a motion (Clark / Swenarton) and voted four in favor with one abstention, Alan offered to write a letter of support to the group with which to meet their deadline.

- g) No report under the Enforcement section.
 - h) Equipment – Warden Rob updated the group regarding the launching of the Commission boat. The plan was to have the boat being prepared to be launched around April 1st by Don's Dock, and to have JP at PMW Marine attend to the approved repairs to the engine so that the boat could be launched by April 15th.
 - i) The Chair reported that 2021_22 permit sales for the period totaled \$175. And there were no invoices to pay at this time.
- 8) Prior to asking for a motion to adjourn, the Chair said he would be checking with Town officials to determine the status and guidelines for in persons meetings, as it was his hope to have the Commission's April 2021 meeting at our traditional venue. A motion was made to adjourn and seconded (Banister / Swenarton) and the meeting was adjourned at 7:25pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Austin P. Clark
Secretary