

City of the Village of Minnetonka Beach
Dock Committee Meeting Minutes - APPROVED
September 26, 2024 ~ 5:30 p.m.

Present: Chair Jeff Steinke, Vice Chair Jim Knudsen; Committee Members: Jack Foss, Lucian Panait, Todd Pottebaum, Dan Van Handel, John Whitaker; Council Liaison Tracey Breazeale
Absent: Chip Zawislak
Guests: None

Staff: City Administrator Heidi Honey, City Clerk Jane Burgess, Public Works Superintendent Jason Hilgers

1. Call to Order
Chair Steinke called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m.

2. Approve Agenda

(Foss motion, Pottebaum second to approve the agenda of September 26, 2024. All ayes.) Motion passed.

3. Approve Minutes of February 6, 2024 Dock Committee meeting

(Van Handel motion, Panait second to approve the February 6, 2024 Dock Committee meeting minutes. All ayes.)
Motion passed.

4. Certificate of Appreciation – Chip Zawislak was unable to attend, a certificate will be mailed to him.

5. Old Business

5.1. 2023 Fall Dock Removal Feedback

Steinke stated it appears dock installation and removal is improving a great deal and that it is important to keep the new habits that have been established. Hilgers stated a new dock contractor will be taking care of the swim beach docks. Pottebaum stated the residents at the swim beach did not think the spring installation went well. Timelines and promises were not kept. They decided to move to a new contractor and hope for a better installation next spring.

5.2. City Council Objective – Explore Improved Configurations at Beach Docks 12-16

Steinke stated that Council charged the Dock Commission to explore and recommend to City Council opportunities to enhance the broader resident experiences at and around the swim beach to improve: Lake Views, Safety, and Water Quality."

The swim beach was not closed the entire season due to water quality issues. Burgess was asked her opinion on why. She stated that there is no specific explanation for this besides the Hennepin County water testers performing testing properly, as tests were not done properly last year. The county made an emphasis on training for this season. The city has tracked storms, drought, geese, and many other potential reasons but found no pattern for high levels of e.coli.

Steinke explained that their goal is to have a recommendation to City Council to improve beach docks. Although some committee members are swim beach slip renters, he asked that they all think of the broader community and ignore any personal interests. At a workshop in May 2024, many people attended who discussed various possible configurations and ideas. Steinke reviewed a chart in the packet which shows three ideas that came out of the workshop and pros and cons for each. They are:

1. Reconfigure docks to the south in rectangle shape (similar to Excelsior),
2. Move interior slips to other locations within the city (highly challenged/most difficult), and
3. Remove boathouses and canvases but allow lift canopies (longest list of pros, least number of cons)

Steinke referred to an email in the packet from LMCD representative Dennis Klohs who supported option #3.

Van Handel did not support #2. Pottebaum explained that it did not mean that current slips holders would be moved but, when a slip is vacated, the slip would be moved. Pottebaum also added a 4th option, which is to do nothing.

Van Handel asked if the 3rd option would adequately solve the issue. Whitaker did not know if that would eliminate a blocked view if lift canopies are allowed.

Steinke referred to Option #2 stating that James J. Hill's vision was for non-riparians to have equal access to the water and each slip available to a non-riparian is a golden nugget and something special for the community. The community does not want to give up any slip, and the consideration is to move some.

Breazeale asked Burgess how many slips could be moved to County Rd 15. She responded that she has no idea and Honey stated they did not know water depths or any other information and docks need to be located off of firelanes. They can't be on private property. The part off the golf course may be owned by the golf course or not city land. Whitaker suggested connecting slips along Shoreline to cluster them together and move slips there.

Foss stated he has been on a dock on Shoreline Dr (County Rd 15 and Lake Rd) for 50 years. Crossing is a negative as it is dangerous for adults and especially dangerous for children, and there is no parking. It is also very mucky. He does not think getting rid of boathouses makes a difference to improve views because boats are on lifts. He asked who is unhappy with the views. He has a kayak at the swim beach and does not see the beach used much. Most people who live across from the swim beach have a slip there. He is wondering where this is request coming from. He added that they have worked really hard to get what they have, and they have given slips up when property was given to adjacent homeowners and those slips had to be moved elsewhere. There has been a lot of movement of docks over history. He added that he is at the swim beach often and you can still see the sunset from the beach. He thinks this exercise takes a lot of time and he does not know if it is necessary.

Van Handel asked if Dock 15A would have to remain where it is currently located because it is a Priority 1 dock. Burgess and Honey explained that the property owner should be able to have a private dock but due to the curvature of the shore, it does not work. Honey doesn't know if the location would have to be the same. There was discussion that Dock 15 isn't a view blocking slip. Van Handel said if 15A isn't an issue than 16 shouldn't be considered a view blocker either. Burgess clarified the area they are talking about is Docks 14 and 15 where there is an open area between them. There was discussion about creating a PUD for a reconfiguration and going out 200 ft which requires including Dock 16. Whitaker questioned if the proposed reconfiguration is viable because of the wind, and muddy base of the lake. He stated Excelsior's similar shape reconfiguration works because they have permanent docks in a non-windy location, so it is a moot point. Wind causes his dock to shake at the end of it and he uses mud plates. Steinke summarized there challenges with wind and navigation as well as safety.

Whitaker asked if this exercise is to figure out if there is a great, easy solution or what the driver is. Breazeale stated the idea was to improve the views of the beach. Over time the swim beach was the easiest place to move docks to, it was the most desirable place to have docks, and boats and boathouses have gotten larger. Each of these "creeps" has created the view that is there now. Longer term residents have said the beach is not what it used to be, and it used be better for swimming. She stated is it difficult to know if the swim beach is not used much because it is not desirable or if people just live differently and their lives don't include going to the beach. She said the idea is to determine if there is any way at all to think creatively to get that feeling back. She asked if removing boathouses will make a difference or if they need more physical space and would they have to move slips to possibly less desirable locations but make them as advantageous as they could be. She stated that it is difficult because the city wants everyone to have a dock and that's what makes Minnetonka Beach special. They want everyone to make Lake Minnetonka easily accessible for lake life. She added that it would be a fail if they came up with an idea but it would now take new residents five years to get a slip in Minnetonka Beach. She said that's not what they want to happen. Steinke stated the closer they get to meeting the objective, the more likely Council will accept their recommendation and, if they don't, then Council will come up with their own solution. Council could always come up with their own solution regardless of the recommendation.

There was discussion about adding slips on County Road 15 but it is dangerous. They discussed adding slips at Arcola Docks but it is full of dock space. Could they go to the north. Burgess replied there are already docks taking the space.

Honey stated it appears the docks span the entire area but they would need to research. Burgess stated there is no parking near Arcola docks. Breazeale talked about the crosswalk stating that people stop for pedestrians and slip renters could park near there and use the crosswalk or maybe they could get another crosswalk. Burgess stated that people don't stop at the crosswalk by Lafayette Ridge. Foss stated there is no place to walk along 15 due to poor lighting so he does not think there would be another place to put a crosswalk in. Van Handel discussed concerns about Shoreline Drive. He says #3 is not ideal but the best option for what's presented. He stated you can put your stuff in your boat and put your boat cover on. Pottebaum asked why you would upset the lives of 25 slip renters instead of relocating two slips when someone moves. Whitaker referred to the Arcola docks where the dock could be attached where there are gaps now to get more slips to that location. He said when two people vacate their slip, they could move the two slips there.

Todd Snell – Snell was in the audience who has expressed interest on being appointed to the Dock Committee. Snell managed a 6-building condo development with 72 docks in Okoboji, Iowa. Initially they were hodge podge with different docks, and different size and height boat houses with a lot of mud and 30-40 mph winds. The solution there was a pier system, and he thought it was possible to figure out this dock reconfiguration without moving anyone. The pier system is expensive, and the slip renters would need to buy into it and have it managed somehow. The system needs to be stick built every year. It would be much more stable and not need to go out as far. There was a lot of discussion about cost and how it would be built. Whitaker talked about issues in Okoboji with keyholing. He suggested that resident Ben Bjorkland be consulted to help figure out the cost of it and viability. Snell went on to say it could be two piers with six boats on each side of each pier and use 30% of the land. Snell added that Minnetonka Beach is a crown jewel, and it would make the beach uniform and the views would be better. Steinke stated this may be a good option to explore with Richie Anderson. Everyone must buy in to new equipment and a group or board could control it. Foss said the problem is that there is turnover and change of ownership of dock equipment. He did not think this was feasible in the city. Steinke stated there are residents who are extremely cost sensitive and this would be costly. Snell stated that this would need to be driven by the city and Steinke stated the city is not interested in running a marina. Snell stated the city would need to own the dock to maintain control over it.

Van Handel stated some dock sections are currently community owned and repair costs are shared by the owners. There is some community ownership already being practiced. Foss stated that condo associations with annual fees is completely different than the city dock program. The city has done the best it can so far to make it a great place to be. There are many different types and sizes of boats.

Steinke then discussed Option #3 Removing boathouses. He suggested doing a test by not allowing boathouses for one season to see if it changes the views. Whitaker stated a boathouse is a benefit. He discussed seeing if it is possible to move two slips to the Arcola Dock location and leave the canopies as is.

Paniat stated the directive is not very clear. They have talked about water quality and geese, and then they talked about views. He does not think the message is clear on what they want to achieve: views or water quality. He added that they are looking at removing boathouses (vertical solution) or removing 2 docks (horizontal solution) and he asked if one or the other solution would make a big enough difference to Council to make them happy. Whitaker stated they thought there was water movement concerns but suggested it must be moving fine and asked if the city passed all water quality tests this season. Burgess stated they are speculating that proper testing is why the results are better but they don't know a definitive answer.

John Rosendahl- Rosendahl spoke from the audience stating they were looking at safety, e.coli and views. He asked why e.coli is in there. Steinke stated that is the most difficult to figure out. He added that for safety concerns, nobody wants to cross Shoreline Drive. The dock configuration has been there probably 15 years. Part of the value of the community is built around having access to the lake for non-riparians. He stated giving up one, and moving it anywhere would be a mistake. Moving it from a safe environment to a less safe environment is a mistake. He stated safety issues related to reconfiguration is not acceptable. He talked about his dock which is closest to Shoreline Dr is very wobbly just two sections out from shore. He does not agree that poles can be used to go out 200 ft in Richie Anderson's proposal. Whitaker agreed. Steinke asked which solution Rosendahl preferred. He asked what they are trying to achieve. He said you can see sunsets and canopies protect the assets from UV. Greenwood has canopies. Privately owned docks have boathouses. There were concerns if the boathouses are removed for a test, it will look

like a hodge podge because all of the boats are different sizes. Steinke commented that it appears the recommendation is to do nothing and asked how that will be received by Council.

Foss stated that what it is today has happen over a number of years and has satisfied people.

Breazeale stated they have gotten to where they are today by allowing changes and movements bit by bit while trying to accommodate resident wishes, and not done by an overall planned situation. She asked if they were to start from scratch how would they want that to look, and how would they get there. She added that it may take 2-5 years. They are trying to balance non riparian and the entire community use of the beach park. Foss said all of this is coming down to looking at alternates that they are finding to not be viable. He thinks you can see the lake from the beach. There was discussion that the property owners across from the beach have all turned over and they knew what the beach looked like when they bought the property. Foss said they don't need to start from ground zero. A lot of effort has already gone into this and it is not necessary to start from ground zero. Breazeale stated she understands and appreciates all the work that has taken place so far and just wondered if there was a clean slate, what would they do differently. Pottebaum said it is the right question to ask to see what we would want if it was a clean slate. They need to find a balance of minimizing the pain over time, have canopies all the same height, ask that they go from different colors to green canopies for harmony, maintain what we have and create harmony. How do they create this harmony. Steinke stated through attrition the docks stay but the boathouse goes away. Rosendahl stated that 60% of the homes have turned over in the past 15 years and this would be removing part of the value that is already existing there (protecting their asset). People still remain on the wait list and their expectation is that they can protect their asset in the same manner in which the existing assets are protected today. Snell stated he thinks they owe it to the slip renters to be able to protect their assets and would never want to take a boathouse away. Perhaps they have a vision over 10 years giving people time to buy into the vision. Whitaker said maybe the recommendation is to get all boat houses the same height, and canopies the same color over time. He said there was probably a lot of thought put into moving the slips to the swim beach and not along Shoreline Dr and he guessed it was safety. Breazeale stated she does not know if lot of thought was given but there was a long waiting list of people wanting to be at the swim beach, so they worked to move them to the beach, and safety. It is the most safe, there is parking. Burgess added and Breazeale agreed that there is room for bigger slips too. Knudsen stated that this goes back to when the City vacated property. The city owned the shoreline from Dock 9 to Dock 10 and when that happened the people on Dock 8-9 lost two slips because of the necessary setback on both sides, and the same thing happened at Dock 10 where City vacated the lakeshore strip of land on Lafayette Road to the property owners and they lost two slips due to setbacks. They also lost one slip at Dock 11 from the Goodman lawsuit. He stated that five slips were moved to the swim beach and that is when the big expansion happened at the beach because that was where there was room to move them. This started in 1978 when the city voted to vacate the land. This was summarized in Dennis Klohs' letter in the packet.

Panait asked if they could have some other configurations drafted by Richie Anderson. Whitaker mentioned views being obstructed if you go out 200 ft. There was discussion again about the pier system where people would have to buy in to the vision, find creative financing to make it happen, and have the same height and color boathouses.

There were a few different conversations taking place about different ideas. Whitaker offered to meet with Richie Anderson to discuss the concept and Snell offered to talk with Bob Bjorkland about the concept also. At a previous meeting, Zawislak said it is not feasible to go out any further than it currently is. Commissioners discussed that more information is needed to make a recommendation. They are taking this seriously and want to have the information to make a good recommendation.

(Van Handel motion, Panait second to study the feasibility of a T90 dock reconfiguration at the swim beach; all ayes.)
Motion passed.

Burgess stated that however this turns out, she asked that they be sensitive to people who are currently renting slips to give them time to make decisions if they need to. She stated the dock permit process begins in February. Breazeale stated they may want to put a pause on moving people up the swim beach dock wait list.

6. Adjourn

(Foss motion, Van Handel second to adjourn; all ayes.) Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 6:56 pm.

Minutes taken by City Administrator Heidi Honey.

Others present: Todd Snell, John Rosendahl