

## **Marine Industry Revitalization Advisory Council**

Thursday, August 13, 2020

**Present:** *Presiding Officer Robert Calarco, David Wicks, Legislator Al Krupski, Legislator Susan A. Berland, August Ruckdeschel, Chris Pickerell, Kimberly Lamiroult, Diane LaChapelle, Tom Kehoe, Michael Jensen, Eric Krueter, Eric Johansson, Vincent Biondo.*

**Staff members present:** *Clay Adam Wade, Bob Fonti, Derek Stein, Lora Gellerstein*

*Meeting called to order at 2:00 p.m. by Presiding Officer Robert Calarco.*

### **Welcome & Introductions:**

*Presiding Officer Calarco asked for the members of the Task Force to introduce themselves and state whichever industries they are representing.*

### **Reviewing outstanding issues & topics:**

#### **COVID-19 issues:**

*Presiding Officer Calarco noted that Marinas had worked very early on to develop a reopening plan that was accepted and implemented by the State, allowing them to open up at the beginning of the season.*

*Eric Krueter started by noting that COVID had a heavy impact at first, and marinas were initially closed for about a month before lobbying efforts aided by the Council and County Executive paid off allowing marinas to open around April 15<sup>th</sup>. After reopening there was a surge of people who were interested in boating since their vacations had been cancelled. He noted boat sales have been exceptional this year, and it has been a real strong year with boating. The Marine Trade Association has worked to stay on top of COVID issues and has worked to keep employees safe, he is unaware of any employees being infected with COVID-19. He noted the industry anticipates that next year may be the same, since there is no guarantee of a vaccine by next summer. Presiding Officer Calarco stated that is good to hear, and asked if rentals have resumed. Eric Krueter replied that there may be vagueness with rentals being allowed but most marinas are allowing rentals. Legislator Krupski noted that he felt that as more people are out on the water with their boats, more will see the benefits of boating. Eric Krueter said that he hopes they will have fun on the water and be more interested as it can be a family industry.*

*Tom Kehoe stated that the East End commercial fishing fleet took a while to launch, but efforts were complicated since a large percentage of their catch goes to restaurants. He noted restaurants are opened on Long Island but in New York City more restaurants remain closed. He also added that he has been on calls with the County Executive and others to try and bring more local fish into supermarkets but it is not an easy process. Tom Kehoe restated that the commercial fishing industry is quite divided, some families hunt while others work in shellfish,*

*and due to competition, these fishermen often aren't in contact with each other. A not-for-profit group of commercial fishermen on Long Island would be beneficial.*

*Chris Pickerell stated Cornell Cooperative works closely with the fishing industry and noted shellfish farmers were hit very hard at first. Cornell was able to get a PPP loan for their oyster farms which financed their oyster growing efforts for a month. He noted shell fish farmers have been hit very heavily, one proposal is for National Marine Fisheries to buy larger oysters to use for preservation since they may not be able to be sold commercially. Chris Pickerell noted he had received a call from Jim Gilmore recently which stated that there was \$6.7 million in federal relief funds allocated for commercial fishing and aquaculture. He stated that he and another representative of Cornell will be on the committee to decide where that money goes, but noted it is less money than what New York should receive. August Ruckdeschel noted that Congress has not resolved differences on the Heroes Act but he does believe there is funding reserved in both versions of the bill. He noted there are multiple resources proposed for the recreational fishing industry, commercial fishing and aquaculture. He noted efforts have continued to highlight local fish by providing more sustainable species that have been less sustainable in the American market. He agreed with Tom in that the commercial fishing industry is still struggling, he noted that many restaurants are still operating at 50% and therefore are purchasing less fish and have lost many days at sea. August Ruckdeschel added that the Department of Economic Development and Planning is continuing it's work on the Suffolk County Aquaculture Lease Program 10-year Review and plans to bring it forward to the whole Legislature for renewal later this year. He noted some final issues with the map remain, and there are still a few meetings remaining. The plan will introduce at least a kelp farming pilot program. He noted that the Food Policy Council had a meeting last week as well where Doctor Stephen Tettelbach spoke about scouting for Peconic Bay scallops, which showed low populations over the past few months. He stated there remain additional threats as well. Chris Pickerell stated that Dr. Tettelbach's team felt it was due to temperature and perhaps oxygen levels and not predation or disease. He added that it appears to be 50% of the total population that was lost.*

*Tom Kehoe added that the commercial fishing industry feels it has been ignored by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management regarding proposed offshore wind farms off the coast of Montauk. He stated East end fishermen are concerned that it would radically change the way they do business. He noted that they are looking to have a seat at the table, since the project is continuing to move forward. Chris Pickerell added that Cornell is meeting with Orsted to bring on local universities to conduct research. Eric Johansson stated that the shipping industry was able to weather the initial pandemic well. He recently made a presentation about the offshore wind program for the Sierra Club as part of the OSPARS Commission. He offered to share the presentation with the Council. He was also on a call with the Center for the Long Island Sound and noted that the State of Connecticut put together a Blue Plan for the Long Island Sound.*

*Presiding Officer Calarco stated he had gotten a call from Jim Gilmore about the \$6.7 million in COVID relief available for the fishing industry. He noted the Legislature sent an all-18 letter and received a letter back from the White House citing the \$6.7 million in funding. He asked Chris Pickerell if there was any more information about this committee or a timeline, who*

replied that he has no knowledge of that. August Ruckdeschel stated he had been suggested as a member but the DEC would have to put together a plan. Chris Pickerell stated it sounds like a quick turnaround, but New York still didn't get as much money as it warrants, noting that Alaska received \$50 million.

### **Career Days / Educational Programs:**

Diane LaChapelle asked Eric Krueter what is the status of the marinas workforce. Eric Krueter said it generally is in the same position as it was last year, but trainings are on hold and colleges are reopening in a number of different ways. Presiding Officer Calarco asked if there had been communication with Suffolk County Community College and BOCES. Eric Krueter replied that prior to COVID they had set up classes with Western Suffolk BOCES, but that was shut down with COVID and is unclear how it will reopen this fall. Conversations with SCCC are also on hold due to COVID, and programs and collaboration between Eastern Suffolk BOCES and Kingsborough Community College have also been put on hold. David Wicks seconded that schools are in a holding program; marine tech programs have different capacities. He noted logistics need to be figured out when schools are reopened, and they have held a number of outreach programs with adult and youth learners. In January, he and Diane LaChapelle were able to speak to counselors as well. He would recommend that these conversations be saved for when schools begin to reopen. Presiding Officer Calarco asked what the schedule is like for marine engineering students, David Wicks said that students could possibly come in one day, but districts would need to coordinate schedules. He noted there is also a wide disparity in finding room for students. Eric Johansson added that SUNY Maritime is opening on September 6<sup>th</sup>, and the Merchant Marine Academy has been open for a few weeks. He noted they have bachelor's programs and associate programs for marine engineering. The associate degree program is unique in that it provides a SSCW training which enables students to work in the offshore wind industry.

Chris Pickerell noted that past discussions focused on creating some basic guides for individuals looking to get into the oyster and shellfish aquaculture program. David Wicks suggested meeting in the future to discuss possibly integrating that into BOCES programs.

### **Wind Power / Cabling:**

Presiding Officer Calarco moved on and asked Eric Johansson if he had information on wind power and cabling issues. Eric Johansson explained that he shared it with the Advisory Council and that he got involved with this in the Champlain-Hudson cable program. He noted the debate on this issue has raised a number of issues, as anchors can potentially strike cables, causing leaks or disabling cables. He noted the cabling routing proposals have their own issues going through sensitive areas, and there is a bigger topic of discussion on the range of issues posed from offshore wind farm cables. He added it is both the commercial fishing and shipping industries which are both concerned about the project. Chris Pickerell added Cornell would look to study species habitation in cabling corridors and to determine a baseline of what species are currently on the site. Legislator Al Krupski added there is a major concern with cabling due to

*the narrows going into New York Harbor since matting may not work long term. He noted the best option is to build a new power facility on the South Shore of Long Island in order to avoid damage to the shipping industry, but that is also the most expensive. He also noted there is a court case where 4 NIFA cables were struck by a barge, which ruled that the cables should have been ruled a facility and NIFA should have been responsible for paying any damages. Presiding Officer Calarco suggested that the Advisory Council may be served to create a subcommittee on cabling and offshore wind. Tom Kehoe, Eric Johansson and Chris Pickerell offered to serve on this subcommittee, a motion establishing the subcommittee was made by Tom Kehoe, seconded by Chris Pickerell, and was approved.*

### ***Aquaculture Lease Program / New Business:***

*Presiding Officer Calarco asked if there was any further discussion about the SCALP program. Chris Pickerell has noted that it's important to get as many voices into the discussions as possible and he feels there is a way to balance their differing interests. He noted that while the map shows a large amount of bay area that could be utilized, the actual space is somewhat limited. He stated the County should look to support the program and the lease owners who provide to the local economy. Presiding Officer Calarco noted he had been on a call about the maps and there were a number of differing interests at play in the map, but they have found viable grounds that can enable fishermen and baymen to operate. Legislator Krupski noted there was an arbitrary 1,000-foot exclusion line from the shore, but some Towns conduct aquaculture well within 1,000 feet. He noted it was put in due to navigational concerns, but speaking to Assemblyman Fred Thiele, both agree that it could be reduced down to 500 feet and maintain navigational safety and provide more areas for shellfish to be cultivated it. One recommendation from the final report will be to provide more compatible areas for shared use of the bay and relax the 1,000-foot exclusion zone. Presiding Officer asked members to bring these concerns to their constituencies and would happily look to put together presentations for these industries if necessary. Tom Kehoe added that the commercial fishing industry recall that residents often don't support commercial fishing activities. August Ruckdeschel stated the recommendation could be filed with the Legislature for consideration in the fall, possibly the late fall, but the process is committed to be completed by the end of the year. There is only one more meeting after the meeting on August 20<sup>th</sup>. Presiding Officer Calarco noted that sounds like the recommendation may be provided to the Legislature in October, giving time to the Advisory Council to receive input as we move to support aquaculture. Presiding Officer Calarco suggested that the next meeting can look to put together a letter in response to the Aquaculture Lease Program report and that the next meeting should be in early October.*

*Legislator Al Krupski noted that the Connecticut Blue Plan ignores their state's dumping of dredge spoils into the Long Island Sound and that he has spoken to the Governor of Connecticut about this issue and it's impacts on shellfish. Chris Pickerell noted that they probably will say that since it is a deeper bay it doesn't impact shellfish grown in shallower waters. Legislator Al Krupski agreed, saying it is in everyone's best interest to say that.*

*With no other business, the meeting Presiding Officer Calarco adjourned at 2:58 p.m.*