

Marine Industry Revitalization Advisory Council

Thursday, March 18, 2021

Present: *Presiding Officer Robert Calarco, Legislator Susan A. Berland, Legislator Al Krupski, Commissioner Jason Smagin, August Ruckdeschel, Kimberly Lamiroult, Tom Kehoe, Eric Kreuter, Eric Johansson, Vinny Pesce, Michael Jensen, Imran Ansari,*

Staff members present: *Bob Fonti, Derek Stein, Lora Gellerstein, Christina DeLisi, Jacqueline Routh*

Meeting called to order at 10:05 a.m. by Presiding Officer Robert Calarco.

Welcome & Introductions:

Presiding Officer Calarco asked each member present to introduce themselves. He announced Jacqueline Routh is new to his staff and asked the Advisory Council to welcome her.

Approving January 6, 2021 Meeting Minutes

Presiding Officer Calarco asked if the Advisory Council has reviewed the January 6th Meeting Minutes and asked if anyone had any changes they would like to suggest. Seeing none, he took a motion to approve the January 6th Meeting Minutes from Augie Ruckdeschel which was seconded by Tom Kehoe and approved unanimously.

Sub-committee Updates:

Aquaculture & Commercial Fishing Sub-committee:

Presiding Officer Calarco moved onto Sub-Committee Updates, asking Tom Kehoe to update the Advisory Council on the Aquaculture & Commercial Fishing Sub-Committee. Tom Kehoe noted they had a very active and engaged committee meeting. He thanked the Legislature and the Advisory Council for approving the Suffolk County Aquaculture Lease Program review. He noted Western Towns, including Smithtown, Huntington and Babylon do not have similar programs. Tom stated the most pressing issue in the seafood industry remains connecting commercial fishermen with distributors and commercial grocery chains. He stated he will reach out to August Ruckdeschel separately in order to help make connections between grocery stores and fishermen.

Legislator Al Krupski stated the wholesaling business is difficult. He noted growers for kelp and shellfish are in the near shore area and operating successfully. Legislator Krupski stated one grower operates in Widows Hole in Greenport and one was in Oysterponds and was moved due to regulatory failure by the DEC and were moved offshore. They still have non-harvestable animals growing in the creek but only because of private ownership of underwater lands. Tom Kehoe asked if Tuthill was moved out of the creek. Legislator Krupski replied they were a couple years ago. The DEC had been sampling by the creek and was sampling the wrong spot, but it would

take three years to complete and harvest in that location. He noted it remains an ongoing issue and a lot of operations working close to shore do not require boats and based on their location limit navigational concerns. Legislator Krupski noted the 1,000 foot offshore requirement was included in the enabling legislation. He had tried to put forward in the review process wording that would enable the SCALP program to operate closer to shore, but had not gotten support. Now there are individuals working with State officials to try and get support for reducing the limit in order to ease navigational concerns that had arisen during the ten-year review, he stated the Advisory Council should hear more on this soon.

Vinny Pesce stated some members of the AMI had proposed having the daisy chain at the bottom of the surface and not on the top of the surface since that would be less intrusive. Legislator Krupski stated there a number of regulatory hurdles, but there is no requirement on the type of gears, during the ten-year review there was a lot of discussion on who would regulate navigation and no-one raised their hand, the County program does not regulate the type of gear and that was the decision made at the end of the review. He noted growers are successfully using gears on the bottom and floating gear. He noted there are efforts to raise sugar kelp and micro-algae as well. Vinny Pesce responded that he's seen diagrams of sugar kelp raising gear and it looks intrusive, he asked if the kelp season does not align with the boating season. Legislator Krupski replied that it is planted in late fall, around late October or early November, depending on water temperatures and it grows throughout the winter, but by May it needs to be taken out of the water. Sellable kelp must be harvested in May. Vinny Pesce replied that then he doesn't think there'd be an issue, since it's not during boating season. Legislator Krupski recalled his conversation with Assemblyman Thiele that if someone has a daisy chain on the bottom you are still excluding the wild harvesters, if the gear is on the surface or not that doesn't change, but there is opportunity to grow oysters on the surface. Legislator Krupski noted this entire discussion is dependent on the State permitting growing to take place closer to shore. August Ruckdeschel stated Legislator Krupski was right, biofouling occurs on the product if it is kept in the water too long. He noted there is already kelp growing in some southern bays, SBU is doing a pilot program in Peconic Bay now as to determine where it would grow and to determine where it could feasibly occur, commercial production is not currently enabled. Tom Kehoe noted Dr. Gobler is doing studies in Shinnecock Bay as well. Augie Ruckdeschel replied that's correct. Tom Kehoe noted the DEC's water sampling staff is not everywhere, and they have been willing to accept Dr. Gobler's results, he suggested that could be an opportunity for the Tut Hill Creek growers. Legislator Krupski noted the DEC follows shellfish hygiene standards and they have their own methodology, and they have opened up certain areas for growing, but it's news to him the DEC would accept non-DEC water testing results. Tom Kehoe noted the DEC works with Dr. Gobler hand and glove. Legislator Krupski stated he had tried to get the DEC to use the Suffolk County Marine Environmental Learning Center (SCMELC) in Southold to be used for water quality testing but it's a matter of State representatives admitting this is a problem, while they are saying it's due to staffing. He noted they had done independent testing at Stirling Harbor, but the DEC won't allow it, which prohibits opening more land and starting more growing projects. He stated he'll relay this information to the Town.

Presiding Officer Calarco asked if there was anything else that came from the sub-committee. Legislator Krupski noted it also ties into water quality and sampling and testing issues the same way shell fishing does. Eric Johansson asked if carbon credits are awarded for shellfish aquaculture. Legislator Krupski replied he does not know, but they do it in other states commercially. August Ruckdeschel responded that there's no problem now, but the DEC had a bioextraction focus group that looked at nitrogen credits for kelp and oyster growing, he's looked towards the NRCS for funding with carbon capture and they are experimenting with it in Chesapeake Bay. Locally there is nothing yet in place.

Education & Workforce Development Sub-committee:

Since David Wicks and Diane LaChapelle were not on the call, Derek Stein reported the discussion from the last Sub-committee meeting focused on a proposed virtual career day that would be held in late April or early May in line with the start of the season. Presiding Officer Calarco asked if we wanted to pull together some career day before the season starts what would we need, he felt it is a good idea but needs to come together quickly. Derek Stein replied the Department of Labor was willing to help the County with that, as was BOCES. He felt the biggest concern would be getting the word out for any event, but noted the Department of Labor held career fairs prior to COVID in 2019. He stated he drafted a program based on some of the charting the course events the Legislature had hosted, with a panel starting the day, then breakout rooms over Zoom, followed by a closing discussion. Presiding Officer Calarco had suggested that since it'd be a career fair perhaps it could have marinas and others come in in order to meet with potential employees. Lora Gellerstein asked if it would be something with both angles. Eric Johansson had noted on April 28th he would be meeting with the Workforce Development Institute with the State to meet with Middle and High School students with information on the windfarm industry and stated it will take a lot of push by Legislators and the State to move this forward. Eric Krueter noted in the past they had set up career fairs speaking about the recreational boating industry and the needs of their industry and felt that would be useful. He also noted Kingsborough is running classes for their apprenticeship program with 25 apprentices, 8 or 10 of whom are from Suffolk County. Their partner in Western Suffolk BOCES had not run classes this year and hope to restart that in the fall. Eric Johansson noted Suffolk County Community College is working closely with SUNY Maritime towards an articulation agreement. Presiding Officer Calarco asked if there was agreement to pursue a career fair, Eric Kreuter replied that a career fair would be helpful and they would be willing to get some members of AMI to speak. Derek Stein asked if May or April would be better. Eric Kreuter stated that since this Spring will likely be busy either time would be fine, training would take place more so in the fall. Presiding Officer Calarco asked if Derek Stein would reach out to the Department of Labor, he replied he would. Derek Stein then asked if the labor situation at marinas has changed. Eric Krueter replied it is still tough, with a surge in the industry. Efforts to push education programs need to continue, 20% of all positions are still not filled.

Eric Johansson stated he had forwarded information on NOAA on boat safety, to discuss the dangers of hypothermia. Vinny Pesce felt one issue their industry has is that kayaks and canoe deaths are counted towards boating deaths, which may not be included in NOAA's statistics. Eric

Johansson noted vessels under 26 feet will be required to have a kill switch. Eric Kreuter noted that most boats currently have kill switches, so that will not greatly effect the industry.

Economic Development Sub-committee:

Imran Ansari noted the major takeaway from the Sub-committee was to put together a letter to the State to put together an agency of the Department of Transportation that would oversee maritime related issues which from conversations seemed to be one potential solution to these issues. Derek Stein had put together an initial draft letter on this issue, and Imran Ansari asked if that letter could be distributed after the meeting. Eric Johansson noted it is surprising the Department of Transportation does not have a marine division for any kind of planning of maritime transportation. He noted the State of New York has many different kinds of waterways but has no coordination between these different levels and with upcoming windfarm work that could continue for years to come and is something the State needs help to move forward on. Presiding Officer Calarco noted this could become a larger effort, there could be outreach to build a coalition through communications with other ports that are experiencing similar lack of interest in maritime needs. Eric Johansson noted there was a push a few years ago to transform rail lines into bike paths, and once you give those away they are gone for good, and deep water works the same way. There is a limited amount of deep water around Long Island permitting use in shipping which impacts quality of life directly by putting more trucks on the road instead. Legislator Krupski seconded the need to keep waterfront open, he noted as marine zoning gets changed for housing development or for access then that zone is lost. Legislator Krupski asked if the State Department of Transportation taking control of maritime transportation would impact ferries. Eric Johansson noted the Department of Transportation already regulates ferry and are all privately owned and this new agency would help to support them. He noted it is a cleaner form of transportation as well, and Shell Energy is committed to carbon free fuels, and if they see it as the future then it will be the future, but if there is no working waterfront then the County would be losing that opportunity. He recalled a study he had worked on in New York City regarding the Brooklyn Navy Yard, which debunked a million-dollar consultant study which called for closing the Navy Yard and placing condos there instead. Presiding Officer Calarco asked if the idea with this organization would also be able to assist with planning rather than a regulatory agency with the goal of identifying concerns. Eric Johansson said yes.

Presiding Officer Calarco had noted one other concern that was raised was about an IDA study, and asked if that was discussed. Imran Ansari had noted they went more down this route, but that is still a question. Derek Stein stated there had also been a question if the colleges would do it. Presiding Officer Calarco added the IDA would perhaps be more ready to fund a study compared to a college, and has already put together LWRPs for the State, Legislator Krupski noted LWRP's are available and a study may just involve cobbling them together. Presiding Officer Calarco agreed, but noted some municipalities still don't have LWRPs adopted, including the Village of Patchogue. Eric Johansson noted the study he referred to involved the Economic Development Corporation, and NYSERDA also makes funding available. Presiding Officer Calarco asked to set up a meeting between the IDA and some members of the sub-committee in order to discuss what funding would be available.

Environmental Sub-committee:

Suffolk County Department of Parks Commissioner Jason Smagin was asked to speak on the kayak rack proposal. Commissioner Smagin began by noting his office was contacted by Legislator Berland about a proposal to place kayak, canoe and paddleboard racks in County Parks. Commissioner Smagin noted some recommendations the Parks Department has include 6 locations for a pilot program in County Parks and it is something they have discussed internally and they have looked at what rates other municipalities have considered. He met with the Head of Maintenance at County Parks to have him go over cost estimates and materials for some kayak racks based on pictures Legislator Berland had sent over and that he is here to answer any questions.

Vinny Pesce noted the initial idea was towards finding funding for dredging. He noted it was brought up at the last meeting, Legislator Berland had stated State approval would not be necessary. There was a lot of discussion about if sponsors could be acquired, what the cost would be or if it could be installed. Presiding Officer Calarco asked if the main issue was whether or not using the funding for dredging would be viable. Commissioner Smagin replied that approval to use funds for dredging would first have to come from the Parks Trustees and then the Legislature. He stated he's not sure how Parks Trustees would react to funding coming from this being used for other areas. Legislator Krupski stated that he thought if there's a need for this you would be able to expand from the 5 or 6 sites to cover more County parks.

Vinny Pesce stated he supports the plan, but feels it would be better fitted to another sub-committee if the money is not used for dredging. Legislator Susan A. Berland stated that this came out of discussion for what money could be used for dredging, and that currently they have to bond out millions of dollars that may not even get passed by the Legislature to fund dredging, and while this proposal would not cover the full cost of dredging, it could cover a significant chunk of costs, including those for dredge support equipment. She noted there's always battles where the money may go in the end, but this is coming from this Advisory Council, not Parks. It's more important to get the project going. Legislator Berland noted former Huntington Maritime Director Ed Carr had sent the design of the racks where they had went through a number of incarnations they ended up with 20 ft long racks that look like a E on the ground, she noted they are constantly sold out. She felt it would be better to start the program set up and figure out where the money will be going after the program is running, she noted Bob Fonti would try to find materials that could be donated. Vinny Pesce just felt that it would befit the sub-committees time to turn back towards dredging due to the needs from this past winter.

Legislator Susan A. Berland asked that if the design was longer than what was envisioned would the 6 selected sites still work. Commissioner Smagin replied the Department is still doing research such as determining what the cost would be of building a rack in the 4-stack they had proposed, since that would take up less space. He stated their work is being done in house but they have a lot of work in-house such as getting playgrounds open for summer, and that it's in the queue. Legislator Berland replied that she would prefer to know sooner rather than later to get materials

and time donated to see what can be done in house or not, rather than finding out the week before Memorial Day and mentioned they may need to put forward a resolution to complete this project. Commissioner Smagin stated he cannot guarantee a date because of staffing but if a donation is upcoming he would be supportive. Eric Johansson stated New Jersey's Department of Transportation Maritime Division cost-shares with the Army Corps. of Engineers for dredging and noted he had to leave to teach a class.

Legislator Susan A. Berland noted she is just concerned they may miss the season, and suggested if time is an issue then the pilot program should only cover one site and they should see if they can get materials donated and the racks built Her conversations with the Town of Huntington were that the taller racks always had issues with people not wanting to place them on the upper rack. She noted they may have the same reaction. Commissioner Smagin replied that the Parks Department locations are different than the Towns, which are right on the beach. He stated his team is evaluating it, and if MIRAC members wanted to tour the sites they are all ears. Presiding Officer Calarco mentioned he had reached out to Parks about placing something at Canaan Lake now that the Lake is accessible, he asked if the County could look for a company that would rent racks for particular boats or kayaks and let them run the show. Commissioner Smagin stated they could look for that, but with regards to Canaan Lake that is one site that would make sense, but since it's smaller it would be better to have a stackable kayak rack. Commissioner Smagin suggested they want to have kayak racks that befit the specific sites. Legislator Berland replied that it would be losing a lot of potential revenue if the County went with an outside vendor. Presiding Officer Calarco noted they are running out of Task Force members, and at this point it is more of an internal County discussion.

New Business

August Ruckdeschel noted that he is working with the Long Island Commercial Fishing Association, NY Sea Grant and Cornell Cooperative Extension on a survey for commercial fisherman that they are waiting to distribute. It is essentially a state-of-the-industry, he already has pre-COVID data and it is targeted towards wild harvest fisherman. He asked for the Advisory Council's help to spread the word about the survey when it is released. Presiding Officer Calarco asked if he could email the information they could share with the Advisory Council.

2021 Meeting Schedule:

Derek Stein stated the next meeting of the Marine Industry Revitalization Advisory Council would be Thursday, May 13th, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. Sub-committees would again meet before that meeting in April.

Presiding Officer Calarco adjourned the meeting at 11:35 a.m.

Meeting Summary by Derek Stein.