

TOWN OF IPSWICH - MASSACHUSETTS

Ipswich Shellfish Advisory Subcommittee to the Select Board
Meeting Minutes
February 8, 2022

A meeting of the Shellfish Advisory Subcommittee to the Select Board was held on Tuesday, February 8, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. Members participated remotely utilizing Zoom in accordance with the Governor's March 12 Order suspending provisions of Open Meeting Law and to promote public health and social distancing.

Members present were Chairperson Linda Alexson, Wayne Castonguay, Peter Soffron, and Sandi Corning. Also, newest members Michael Walker and Evan Orlando. Charlie Surpitski arrived 7:20 p.m.

Staff present were Chief Nikas and Shellfish Constable LaPreste and Recording Secretary Rodgers.

This meeting was video recorded by the host.

Chairperson Alexson introduced the members attending and welcomed new members Michael Walker and Evan Orlando.

Citizen Queries: There were none.

Constable Report: Constable LaPreste announced commercial permit renewals are due by March 1st at the town clerk's office with payment.

The Ipswich River is open as of January 7th. DMF closed all shellfish beds on January 29 and 30th during the blizzard; it was cautionary measure in case of coastal flooding; flats re-opened on the 31st.

In response to Ms. Alexson's request, Constable will provide the data sets for the year 2021 and she will share with members.

2022 Commercial Task Program

Constable suggested delaying the task program again this year, just to be cautious, due to the pandemic. He related that things are in good shape as the result of past years' work; basic maintenance has been kept up. Discussion took place regarding the scope of the program. The involvement is good, 100 clammers participate on average; the program was started when the clammers assisted with seeding certain areas (seeding the flats no longer takes place). All work takes place outdoors. It was decided to revisit at the April meeting and assume it will go forward.

Chief Nikas reported on Food and Drug Administration (FDA) putting pressure on states along the Eastern Seaboard regarding closing shellfish areas within a certain number and style of moorings. Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF) has worked with the FDA explaining this area is different, whereas houseboats are not used all year long. Ipswich is located in a federally mandated no discharge zone and operates a pump-out boat, along with the town of Rowley. DMF has drafted a management plan; when it's published FDA will send a copy.

2022 Green Crab Trapping Bounty Program

Chief Nikas requested a motion to set the price to trap green crabs; currently it's .40¢ per pound. Discussion took place.

Constable LaPreste spoke to the process of trapping green crabs; two people trap at approximately \$20,000 each, per season. He spoke to the scope of work. He encourages anyone to trap. Mr. Surpitski initiated discussion regarding an added incentive to increase the bounty and provide more flexibility for funding the program.

MOTION:

Mr. Castonguay moved to make a recommendation to the Select Board to set the payout price at forty cents per pound of green crabs for the coming fiscal year 2023. Mr. Surpitski seconded, the motion passed with a roll call vote: Soffron, yes; Castonguay, yes; Walker, yes; Surpitski, yes; Orlando, yes; Corning, yes; and Alexson, yes.

Chief Nikas reported a balance of \$41,000 in the enhancement fund and recommended \$14,000 to subsidize the green crab eradication program. Discussion took place.

MOTION:

Mr. Surpitski moved to make a recommendation to the Select Board to provide \$14,000 from the enhancement fund for the green crab program for the coming fiscal year. Mr. Soffron seconded, the motion passed unanimously with a roll call vote: Soffron, yes; Castonguay, yes; Walker, yes; Surpitski, yes; Orlando, yes; Corning, yes; and Alexson, yes.

Mr. Surpitski requested the Chief and Constable to pursue the volunteer contributions to provide additional funds for green crab trapping. Chief agreed to communicate with the interim Finance Director to set up a gift fund.

MOTION:

Mr. Castonguay moved to make a recommendation to the Select Board to set up a 'gift account' for green crab trapping. Mr. Surpitski seconded, the motion passed unanimously with a roll call vote: Soffron, yes; Castonguay, yes; Walker, yes; Surpitski, yes; Orlando, yes; Corning, yes; and Alexson, yes.

Regulations – Definition of “Resident”

Ms. Alexson welcomed Amy Akell, Town Clerk, who expressed concerns regarding people seeking recreational permits who do not live in Ipswich full time; many people have a second home and don't fit into the category. Discussion ensued regarding the intent of the definition and the interpretation of “year round”. The Town should have a consistent definition for “resident”. The language of current census was discussed at length. Topic was continued to the next meeting.

2022 Commercial Permit Lottery

The Town received nine applications for new commercial shellfish permits. Chief Nikas randomly picked nine chips. The corresponding names are as follows: Jon Desmond IV, Jeffrey Perkins, Ryan Orlando, Stephen Merrill, Judith Theokas, Chris Desmond, Vito Ciaramitaro, Michael Moon, and Craig Cantin.

When the existing commercial permits are not renewed, names will be picked in the order listed; the commercial permit list stays 'alive' to 2023. There were only two student applications.

Regulations - Permit/Enhancement Fees

Ms. Alexson conveyed that the Finance Committee has requested consideration of an increase in fees for shellfish permits. A comparison chart of fees from surrounding towns was reviewed. Lengthy discussion took place, many issues and concerns were voiced. Some comments mentioned were; the seventeen years since the last increase; the rate of inflation; Ipswich is the most expensive among the surrounding towns because of the additional fee for the enhancement fund; the value of the task program; the town's contribution; expecting level funding is problematic; revenue and expenses were discussed.

It was suggested to draft an all-inclusive recommendation; Ms. Alexson, Mr. Castonguay and Mr. Surpitski will put together a proposal based on this evening's discussion.

Topic was continued to the next meeting and a draft proposal will be provided.

Documents and exhibits used by the Shellfish Advisory Subcommittee to the Select Board: 6 pages of local comparison fees; document: "2021 Permit Fees and Enhancement Fund Revenue"; Definition for resident and summer resident; 15 pages Shellfish Rules & Regulations.

► Approval of minutes:

MOTION: Mr. Surpitski moved to approve the October 13, 2021 meeting minutes. Ms. Corning seconded, the motion passed unanimously with a roll call vote: Soffron, yes; Castonguay, yes; Walker, yes; Surpitski, yes; Orlando, yes; Corning, yes; and Alexson, yes.

The December meeting was informational only, due to a lack of a quorum.

► Next Meeting –Tuesday April 5, 2022 @ 7:00 PM via Zoom.

It was moved, seconded and unanimously passed with a roll call vote to adjourn at 9:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Marie Rodgers

These minutes were approved on April 5, 2022 with minor edits.

Pursuant to the 'Open Meeting Law' the approval of these minutes by the Board constitutes a certification of the date, time and place of the meeting; the members present or absent; the findings made and actions taken. Any other description of statements made by any person, or the summary of the discussion on any matter, is included for the purpose of context only, and no certification, express or implied, is made by the Board as to the completeness or accuracy of such statements.