

TOWN OF COLUMBIA BOARD MINUTES

July 25, 2024

The Town of Columbia Board of Aldermen met in Special Called Session at 7:PM, Thursday, July 25, 2024, in the meeting room of the Columbia Municipal Building. The meeting purpose was to consider funding issues concerning the Harbor Towns Ferries and improvement to take advantage of ferry passengers that will visit Columbia. Aldermen attending were Hal Fleming, Sandra Owens, Lynda Mastronardo and Bryan Owens.

Others attending were businessman Scott Mclaughlin, Chamber of Commerce President Eric Roughton and Tourism Development (TDA) Director Sara Phelps.

Mayor James Cahoon called the meeting to order and explained that the Town, Harbor Towns and other organizations need to be more open with meetings and actions. He cited concerns by the TDA that the business community lacks input in directions the town should go and how the \$2 million Legislative appropriation recently earmarked for the town should be used. All present agreed that there was a lack of communications at all levels.

The TDA presented a list of recommended improvements.

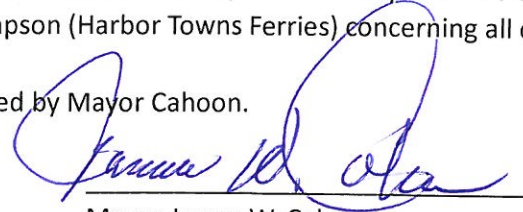
Attachment # 1

Mayor Cahoon said a 10% contingency is needed and noted that Harbor Town holds the funds with both the town and Harbor Town required to approve using the funds. Mr. McLaughlin asked about bids and the lack of written estimates. Mayor Cahoon said a process to move forward is needed. The TDA expressed a desire to address current needs of the town instead of creating new attractions like a ZIP Line.

It was noted that the \$500,000 Congressional allocation is for boardwalk repairs. Also the federal \$1.7 million appropriation to USFWS for nature trail improvements will be handled by Pocasin Lakes National Wildlife Refuge.

The Board, upon motion of Alderman B. Owens and unanimous vote, directed Mayor Cahoon and Town Manager Rhett White to meet with Peter Thompson (Harbor Towns Ferries) concerning all of the issues identified and discussed.

With no other business the meeting was adjourned by Mayor Cahoon.
This the 25th day of July, 2024.



Mayor James W. Cahoon

ATTEST:



Rhett B. White, Clerk

Meeting with the Town of Columbia – July 19, 2024 at 9:00 am, Town Hall's Conference Room

Attendees – James Cahoon, Mayor Sandra Owens, Mayor Pro Tem Rhett White, Town Manager Marlene True, Debbie Olson, Nancy McKaig, John McCann, and Sara Lilley Phelps

Welcome & Why we are here – Sara Lilley Phelps

- Time for a plan and funding sources that can accomplish many goals

John – noted the importance of stewardship when spending the tax dollars (fed. Money \$500K, \$1.7M + HTowns \$2M)

Marlene – concept – to create a plan that is mutually beneficial and mutually agreed upon

Debbie, the plan needs to be created in the best interest of Columbia, its businesses, and the community as a whole.

Mayor – explanation

- Current Funding Sources were secured - f1st was the Harbor Town, then the \$500K from Congressman Don Davis office
- \$500K for the Boardwalk only – plans need to be approved by the Board of Alderman
 - o Harbor Towns reported that the boardwalk would be only \$500K
 - But what if the boardwalk needs more than the \$500K
- Mayor recommends a meeting with Harbor Towns to request more communication

Rhett – understands that the CAMA permit applications have been submitted (granted, not sure of the timeline of the permit). Currently, A.R. Chesson is the contractor (as reported at the last Board of Aldermen meeting on July 8, 2024)

John & Marlene – with public funds must follow the rules too

- o Some additional discussion about following the non-profit rules – will Harbor Towns pull back funds for operating funds/costs? (some “fallback” money may be needed – noted from a conversation with Ed Goodwin & Peter Thomson)
- Debbie – can we make a plan – with our priorities as pointed out in the Tourism Plan draft
- Tying the waterfront together from the Visitor's Center toward downtown very purposeful and intentional

John – tying in all together – thoughtfully planned – even if additional grant funds are needed – and presented an integrated plan to Harbor Towns – are there any funds available for planning & designing

Discussion – where & how we can use current funding

- \$500K for Boardwalk Repairs (replacement) & Maintenance
- Call it “an extension for the Wayfinding Sign Project.”

We want our plan TO BE PRESENTED and mutually agreed upon.

OUR Goal – to make IMPROVEMENTs with what we already have (instead of “new” development)

NEXT Board of Aldermen meeting – August 12, 2024, unless there is a called meeting (Thursday, July 25th at 7:00 pm)

Meeting Consensus - TDA Committee (John) and - It's all about working together (community stakeholders) in alliance with Harbor Towns – 100% support and mutually beneficial

Harbor Town Grant Projects Acceptable for Funding

"The money will be used toward two objectives: (1) increasing each town's capacity to welcome and engage tourists and visitors as a destination; and (2) contributing to the mission, initiatives, and priorities of Harbor Towns, Inc."

The number one priority is for infrastructure improvements and enhancements to establish and upgrade town dock and dock area waterfront facilities.

Examples of priority projects include:

- Wayfinding and dock signage.
- Pavilion with restrooms.
- Dockside water, pump out, electricity.
- Replacement/ renovation/ extension of dock boardwalks.
- Boardwalk and dock hospitality accommodations for boaters, tourists, children, residents.
- Renovation/ extension of docks and additional docking slips.
- Engineering, design, and permitting expenses.

After that number one priority is fully accomplished, if any grant funds for a town are still available, examples of other appropriate projects include the following, if mutually agreed upon by town authority and Harbor Towns Inc. board of directors:

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- New destination attractions on the dock and waterfront that increase tourism and make use of the boats.
- New tourism events held on the docks and waterfront that include use of the boats.
- Waterfront tourism research.
- New regional tourism events in which towns cooperate and coordinate to bring visitors to the docks and waterfronts and make use of the boats.
- Some promotional funding for new events on the docks or waterfront venues that also feature the boats.
- Dockside murals and waterfront public art.
- Dock and waterfront access infrastructure such as sidewalks and lighting.