Cohasset Harbor Master Plan
Town of Cohasset, Massachusetts
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Anderson-Nichols & Co., Inc. / Planning Consultant
1984
Summary of Findings - Recommendations

Study Description
During the past six months the Cohasset Harbor Study Committee has been developing a Master Plan for the improvement of Cohasset Harbor. Anderson-Nichols of Boston has provided technical planning assistance to the Committee.

The Master Plan has been funded through a grant from the Massachusetts Coastal Zone Management Program and an appropriation by the Cohasset Town Meeting.

The Cohasset Harbor Master Plan generally covers a twenty-year planning period. An implementation schedule for the first five years is an important element of the Plan. The implementation schedule should be reviewed each year and adjusted for the subsequent five-year period. In this way, the Plan becomes a dynamic instrument which can be revised to meet the changing needs of the port, recreation, and other uses of the harbor.

The Master Plan requires public input which was facilitated by several program workshops. The Harbor Study Committee has reviewed the dozen comments and feel that this plan carries out the major goals and objectives, which were presented.

The summary document is backed up by a series of detailed recommendations which have been incorporated into a massive database. Copies are available for review at the Town Library and the Selectmen's Office.

Harbor Uses
General
Cohasset Harbor is used by a variety of activities. The dominant uses are: passenger ferries, freighter and general cargo, and commercial fishing. Some of the other uses include daily, weekend, and recreational use.

The Harbor is small in comparison to other harbor uses. The small area is a low tide, coupled with a high tide, land-based facilities, creates a situation with many conflicting demands for the use of a limited source.

Commercial lobstermen and recreational boaters currently share mooring and docking areas. Parking is limited. Access to the public boats limited.

There are some of the problems with the use of the vessel, which is a real problem.

Waterfront Use
There are over 7000 feet of waterfront in Cohasset Harbor. Twenty percent is commercial use, and fifty percent is private residential use. The rest is in commercial use.

Land-based commercial activities include the harbor: include Hugo's Lighthouse Restaurant, Kimball's Motor Inn, Gaffney's Yacht Sales, Mill River Marine Railway, and Haley's Cohasset Colonials. The Old Salt House, located at First Wharf, will have a ship store and fuel facilities.

Gaffney's Yacht Sales is the only land-based commercial operation dependent on a waterfront location.

Other Recreational Activities
The Town of Cohasset does not operate any active recreational programs in the harbor. The junior programs at the Sailing and Yacht Clubs, therefore, represent the major organized active recreational activities in the water.

Goals and Objectives
The recommendations in this Plan are based on the set of goals and objectives which are listed below. These goals and objectives were developed with input from the Port, residents, and stakeholders. The goal and objectives have been given to the specific goals and objectives; the value and relative importance of each will change over time.

- Maximize mooring/docking area utilization.
- Maximize recreational opportunities in harbor.
- Properly public access to, and parking for harbor activities.
- Develop centralized water and shoreline commercial fishing facilities.
- Maintain existing "scale" of harbor development.
- Continue harbor maintenance dredging.
- Resolve administrative problems associated with Town/Country line.
- Increase public awareness of, and information on, historic aspects of the harbor.
- Protect natural characteristics of harbor, i.e., salt marshes, watershed-floodplain areas, and salinity.
- Provide better harbor security.
- Provide adequate storm protection.
- Reduce pollution to harbor from boats.
- Provide better services for visiting boats.
- Provide better intersection visibility.

SUPPLEMENT TO THE COHASSET MARINER
April 24, 1980
### Policies Planning Chart

#### Recommended Actions

Cohasset Harbor is constrained by a limited water area. Existing land use, streets, geology, and protected wetlands severely restrict opportunities for expanding the water area. An additional constraint is the complex flow of currents resulting from tidal movements to and from Bailey's Creek and the Gulf.

The land area surrounding the harbor is suitable for waterfront activities in short supply. Therefore, residential areas ring the streets bordering the harbor and preclude any major opportunities for expansion.

As a consequence of the resource limitations cited above, any plan for Cohasset Harbor must be very efficient in its use of land and water areas.

During the development of the Master Plan, several options for harbor improvements were discussed, and for various reasons, were not included in the final plan. Two of these options were development of marine facilities in Whaler's Meadow and at the eastern end of Bailey's Creek. Based on current law, specifically the Wetlands Protection Program (c. 131, s.40) and the Coastal Wetlands Restrictions Program (c. 130, s.105), this type of activity in these regulated wetland areas is prohibited. The list of recommended actions therefore, represents activities that are viable under current rules and regulations and are consistent with the adopted goals and objectives.

The Cohasset Harbor Master Plan, shown above illustrates a number of recommendations to improve the harbor over a period of years. These proposals are described in the Policy Planning Chart below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RECOMMENDED ACTION</th>
<th>GOAL OF CRYE favorable</th>
<th>ESTIMATED COSTS</th>
<th>POTENTIAL SOURCE OF REVENUE</th>
<th>ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Acquire property adjacent to Parker Avenue boat ramp.</td>
<td>Provide adequate access to and parking for harbor activities.</td>
<td>Design: $120,000</td>
<td>Private Funding</td>
<td>No direct impacts. Construction of walkway in wetlands area. Limited impacts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Develop parking adjacent to Parker Avenue boat ramp.</td>
<td>Provide adequate public access and parking for harbor activities.</td>
<td>Design: $150,000</td>
<td>Private Funding</td>
<td>Limited impacts - area currently dirt parking area. Close proximity to restricted saltmarsh. Increased traffic on Parker Avenue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Develop new wharf, marina, and store area.</td>
<td>Increase public awareness of, and information on, historic aspects of harbor.</td>
<td>Design: $180,000</td>
<td>Private Funding</td>
<td>Beneficial educational impacts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Add additional float space at Cohasset Yacht Club.</td>
<td>Maximize mooring area and utilization.</td>
<td>Design: $200,000</td>
<td>Private Funding</td>
<td>No direct impacts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Change Town/County fee.</td>
<td>Reduce administrative costs and fees.</td>
<td>Design: $100,000</td>
<td>U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 100% funding</td>
<td>Requires adequate location for dredge material disposal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Develop parking &amp; green space on all areas between Lawrence Wharf &amp; Veterans Memorial.</td>
<td>Provide adequate public access to and parking for harbor activities.</td>
<td>Design: $180,000</td>
<td>U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 100% funding</td>
<td>Increased traffic, noise. Change scale of harbor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Develop new wharf, marina, and store area.</td>
<td>Maximize dockage.</td>
<td>Design: $200,000</td>
<td>U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 100% funding</td>
<td>No increase of about 30 boat mooring/docking spaces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Construct new boat ramp in Bailey's Creek.</td>
<td>Maximize recreational opportunities in harbor.</td>
<td>Design: $250,000</td>
<td>U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 100% funding</td>
<td>Belief traffic on Parker Avenue. Area is in close proximity to wetlands area. Some loss of vegetation forest cover.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Develop parking area &amp; float space on all areas in front of Hospital property.</td>
<td>Provide adequate public access to and parking for harbor activities.</td>
<td>Design: $200,000</td>
<td>U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 100% funding</td>
<td>May involve small amount of filling. Increased traffic, noise, activity in wetland area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Increase police surveillance of harbor and harbor basin water quality.</td>
<td>Maximize security of harbor.</td>
<td>Design: $150,000</td>
<td>U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 100% funding</td>
<td>Increase storm protection.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:
Implementation Program

A five-year implementation program and schedule north was prepared for high priority Harbor Master Plan recommendations. This schedule should be reviewed, revised and extended on an annual basis.

The implementation plan assumes a combination of local, State, or Federal funds will be available to facilitate project financing. In some cases, it may be necessary to amortize development costs through user fee charges. Specific recommendations for project implementation are contained in the memorandum included in the loose-leaf binder developed for the Harbor Study Committee during the course of the study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommended Actions</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Acquire property adjacent to Parker Avenue boat ramp</td>
<td>1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Construct boardwalk connecting Parker Avenue and Government Island</td>
<td>1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Develop first wharf area, fuel, ship stores, and boat pump-out facility</td>
<td>1982</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Extend Government Island Wharf</td>
<td>1983</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Develop historic walk and markers from Government Island to Cox's Point</td>
<td>1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Recharge boat mooring patterns in selected areas using grid network</td>
<td>1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Add additional float space at Cohasset Yacht Club</td>
<td>1986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Change Town/Country line</td>
<td>1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Continue harbor maintenance dredging</td>
<td>1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Develop parking and green space on fill area between Lawrence Wharf and Veterans Memorial</td>
<td>1989</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Harbor Uses (con’t)

Other uses of recreational activities: fishing. Small numbers of powerboats and sailboats are used for fishing from docks and boats, and to a limited degree, from shore. Swimming is allowed from boats or from shore. The most popular swimming area is north of the oyster bed off Bassett Beach.

Needs

The general demand for recreational boating is higher now (1977) than in the past. This is attributed to many factors, notably a general increase in leisure time and greater disposable income.

There are individual exceptions to this. The trend for boating is to one that people want to go more places in the water – including Cohasset Harbor. This demand shows no signs of reversing, although changes in the types of boats people purchase do change.

Trends for Cohasset Harbor show the shift in the use of pleasure-oriented boats to sailing. The total harbor fleet, however, is still relatively small – 150-200 powerboats and about 50 sailboats.

The current waiting list for a recreational boating permit is 84 names. Powerboats account for 77 of these and sailboats 5. The average boat length is 25 feet, with a range of from 12 to 60 feet. There is currently a long waiting list for a mooring in Cohasset Harbor.

The needs of recreational boaters in Cohasset Harbor are both diverse and highly individualized. This is due to the variety of boating types, owner preferences, and reasons for boat ownership. Several areas of concern arise repeatedly in discussions with boat owners and recreationalists.

The needs expressed most often are:

- Additional mooring space.
- Fuel facilities.
- Better boating facilities.
- Develop a winter floating facility and provide better security.

Commercial Fishing

Lobstering is the primary water-based commercial activity in Cohasset Harbor. This activity is seasonal for half of the commercial fleet, with the remaining half using the harbor area year-round. In the winter months, lobster boats moor near the Yacht Club dinghy area, which is a relic left from the past use of the harbor.

The Coast Guard's 60-foot tugboat keeps the entrance channel and mouth of the harbor from ice blocking the harbor. The Coast Guard's Westie, also a 60-foot tugboat, is responsible for the harbor. The harbor is dredged from time to time by the harbor board.

The harbor is operated for the benefit of the public, which includes fishers and non-fishers. The harbor is a public resource, and the funds generated from user fees help to improve and maintain the harbor facilities.

Other Commercial Fishing Activities

Additional to lobstering, several fishermen are interested in the commercial fishing industry. This is the period when the demand for catches and supplies for lobstering is limited. No boats utilize long-line type of fishing.

Bluefin tuna, with a current 1977 ex-vessel price of $2/1b, have stimulated interest in this market. Three to four tuna boats operate out of the harbor on a seasonal basis. Catches are brought to the Boston marine market.

Gillingter, as a supplement to lobstering, will continue, possibly increasing in the future.

Commercial Fishing Needs

A list of the needs, as expressed by commercial fishermen, includes:

- Improved mooring facilities.
- Better facilities for fish processing.
- Dock facilities.
- Fuel facilities.
- Better mooring space for larger boats.
- Improved storage for bait.