

To: Finance & Personnel Committee and City Council  
From: La Crosse Boat Harbor Neighborhood  
Re: Harbor Information  
Date: October 12, 2017

### **Thinking about the resolution.**

We support the resolution to spend up to \$1.8 million to update the La Crosse Municipal Boat Harbor with the majority of that money being borrowed from the reserve fund and paid back with slip fees and harbor revenue.

We do not support the design of the Harbor that has been submitted to the DNR or the timeline of all new everything by May 1, 2018. City officials have said they want our input. We are hoping to have discussions on the design and timeline that makes sense for the City and for boaters.

We are in agreement that changes and updates need to be made. Having the City upfront the cost of those changes and updates gives them the control and flexibility in the design and timeline of the solution.

This resolution provides that the majority of the funds will be paid back to the reserve fund. After that time, the harbor becomes a revenue generator for the City either through slip fees and revenue from harbor services or through a lease agreement with a third party operator.

### **Thinking about the harbor design.**

Don't change the current dock footprint and harbor design. It makes sense for boaters and has worked well for 30+ years.

Keep the docks in place as they are now for the DNR permit.

This makes sense with the short time restraint and allows for the harbor to open next spring. It also provides time for meeting and planning.

Install new floats, upgrade the water and electrical, and install new decking to bring the current docks up to DNR and federal standards and codes.

This plan also allows for the option of phasing to take place.

### **Positives with the current harbor design**

Keeping the current layout of the docks and slips assures all current slip holders have a spot in the harbor for next year. The placement of larger boats around the perimeter of the harbor makes for safer and easier maneuvering. The spacing between the docks is also adequate in the current layout. Keeping the gas and pump out dock in its current location makes a lot of sense. It is visible from the main channel (advertising and inviting). It provides easy access for all boats that are passing in the main channel and for boats that have slips in the harbor. It provides a transient boat slip for travelers and rental boats. If it were placed inside the harbor in a different location, rental boats and other boat traffic would have to travel the length of the harbor past other boats in their slips increasing the chance of collisions. Having the gas and pump out dock in its current location is extremely important for emergency and bad weather situations.

Currently and throughout the past, the gas dock at Municipal Boat Harbor has been the overnight choice of the larger boats traveling in the spring north and in the fall south. The current dock is long enough to accommodate these larger boats and is easy to access along with proximity to the downtown area. Not only do these boats pay an overnight transient fee, but they also frequently go into La Crosse for meals and entertainment.

The current location of bathrooms, dock access points, parking areas for slip holders and visitors, and the area for winter storage and maintenance all have a proven track record.

ADA compliance is important and can be achieved with the current design through removing stairs and adding ramps.

#### **Negatives with the new harbor design**

Room for 200 plus cars parked on the east end along Marco Drive, a new bathroom/shower building, and public boat landing with its own parking lot is a lot of congestion. Marco Drive is already heavily used by the City's own traffic from buses, city trucks and other equipment, employees, deliveries, and fire trucks. There are also two ballparks, the waste drop off site, semi trailer parking lots, and semi truck traffic for barge loading and unloading that utilize Marco Drive. All of these factors will contribute to a congested, high traffic, and more hazardous area.

The proposed timeline of a complete redesign of the harbor by May 1, 2018 is not realistic. All 160+ boats would need to be pulled out. The larger boats and houseboats would need to be pulled and blocked up for winter storage. It may not be possible to get all of this done before the harbor freezes. Some people live on their boats year-round. It is their home. What provisions will be made for them?

City officials have stated that they want input from the boaters. How do we provide input with this tight timeframe? The harbor will be in place for many years. We don't support rushing to get this done. It is possible to phase this in and still meet the needs of the DNR to remove the styrofoam from the docks.

Completely changing the harbor design and footprint will only drive up the costs. The harbor generates money, and the City will recoup their investment costs.

The following information has been provided to the City Council, Park Board, Joint Board of Harbor Commissioners, Mayor Kabat, and the Park and Rec department staff. This is important input from boaters.

• **Keeping Rick Clemment and the La Crosse Harbor Services on the premises for needed mechanical work on boats and for emergency situations including the pulling of large houseboats has always been a high priority for La Crosse boaters.**

- We need their equipment to pull our boats in an emergency, for maintenance, and for winter storage.
  - The emergency pull out is of the utmost importance for our safety. This year, a sinking houseboat, pulled within an hour by Rick on a day he wasn't working.
- They have the tractors and trailers to do the above-mentioned work, along with the skills necessary to do so safely.
- Boats from the La Crosse Municipal Boat Harbor depend on La Crosse Harbor Services for this service, and also boats from other marinas come to here for launching and pulling service.
- If his business is eliminated, this only leaves one other facility that could provide this service. Sinking boats would be impossible to tow up the Black River and wait for the railroad bridge to lift.
- We also believe that with Rick based at the Harbor, any changes to the Harbor within this process will be a smoother transition than if he is gone.
- Rick Clemment is the owner of La Crosse Harbor Services and his business is an essential part of our Harbor and boating community. Rick is also a highly qualified mechanic.

• **Key issues concerning the development of the marina. Not in any priority order.**

1. Pump out station, preferably one on each dock like many other harbors
2. Fire hose station on each dock for safety
3. Handicapped accessibility to docks
4. Bathrooms with showers
5. Gas sales
6. Electricity
7. Water
8. Winter storage areas
9. Summer short-term storage area for maintenance with water and electricity for hull cleaning and repair.
10. Services for boat owners who live on their boats year round
  - a. Having someone there year round is a safety advantage
  - b. Another revenue stream
11. Dock attendant for assisting boaters into slips
12. Proper lighting for safety
13. Boat traffic flow: boat landing, wind effects, bigger boats, service dock
14. DNR permits for extension docks, dock boxes
15. Dock and slip placements that make sense to boaters and boat traffic
16. Keeping the trees and foliage around the Harbor for wind breaks
17. Providing slips for larger boats
18. Dock widths, wider for people walking to pass
19. Location of slips for big boats that makes sense with concerns of ease of docking and traffic
20. People who currently lease slips from the La Crosse Boat Harbor should have preference or first chance with the new harbor to secure a lease
21. Transient docks
  - a. Over night travelers
  - b. Tourism visitors
  - c. If there is a restaurant, customer parking
22. Car parking and traffic patterns

• **Our Neighborhood Association wants to work together with the City of La Crosse to make the La Crosse Municipal Boat Harbor a "Great Harbor."**

Our objective is to be a positive influence in the process of developing the future of the La Crosse Municipal Boat Harbor. As consumers, tax payers, and boaters we have a vested interest in having the community's and our interests met.

You, we, have this one opportunity to make changes to the Harbor that will last into the next thirty years, our recommendation is that you take your time and do this right. Brainstorming, research, and discussion prior to making any final decisions.

Any questions for us? Contact Dennis Smalley via email ([houseboate@gmail.com](mailto:houseboate@gmail.com)) or text or phone call. 608-632-1393