



Dear Members of the SF Marina Harbor Association:

September 1, 2008

We invite you to our next membership meeting on Wednesday, September 3, 2008 at 7:30 pm, Golden Gate Yacht Club. SF Rec and Park will present the berthing policy and 37% rent increase to the SF Rec and Park Commission for approval on September 4, a meeting which you are encouraged to attend. If you cannot make it to City Hall, the Association meeting is your chance to advise us (and Rec and Park staff) on your concerns.

Agenda:

- *Financial projections (posted at www.sfmarinaharbor.org) including debt service
- *Larry White, Interim Harbormaster, will outline the proposed berthing policy
- *Mary Hobson, Project Manager, will discuss the renovation process including a plan to save money during the renovation by completely closing West Harbor for 18 months or more, a complete surprise to all of us.

I wish to share with you the following memo dated 8/27/08 to Ms. Hobson, along with her prompt response, so you will come better prepared to the Sept 3 meeting:

Dear Mary:

I know you are organizing a follow-up to last night's meeting regarding West Harbor. I just wanted to mention a few of the items presented to you and add a few more concerns:

1. Closing the harbor – this was the first time this concept was mentioned. In several years of presentations by the Department, it was always stated that boats would be removed in manageable groups to vacant slips in the harbor, and the harbor would still be operational. We understand that closing the harbor for 18 months (or more) might seem more efficient from an engineering and construction standpoint, but have you considered the social dislocation, and the comprehensive financial standpoint beyond the construction costs?

First of all, where would the boats go? If they went to Sausalito, Richmond, Alameda, this would greatly inconvenience boaters and their crews, especially those who do not have transportation, moreover it would make city front regattas much more difficult to organize. Second, West Harbor would lose the slip rental income, and the City of San Francisco would lose the property tax as well as the possessory interest tax. This would likely be greater than the money saved from the construction efficiency.

If you have secured berthing space in the Pier 39 area, that would work better in terms of the boats being available for city front usage, and for the city to collect property tax, but of course there would be a major parking problem, and West Harbor would still lose the revenue as it would go to the Port.

Frankly, once you removed the derelict boats and the month-to-month boats, there might be enough space to move boats from one area to another. In addition to keeping the harbor operational, this would enable the contractor to do manageable sections rather than trying to mount a huge team to do the harbor all at once.

2. Small keelboats – you heard a lot from representatives of the wooden boat fleets about their being displaced from the harbor altogether, given many are in month to month slips. Also, some would like to be grouped for the obvious community of interest. Finally, given they sail with no motors, they expressed the desire to be in upwind slips. In general, they felt that the final design should include more 25 and 30 foot slips than the current conceptual plan allows so they can remain where they are, and possibly become even more clustered. This would seem to be desirable given the historical nature of these fleets as well as their active use of the city front racing area, something that apparently did not show up in your consultant's review of Bay Area boating.

From looking at the plan, it would appear there is space just inside the two new breakwaters for a finger pier that would accommodate small keelboats, and given they have no motors, would make their entrance and egress from the harbor much easier. It also appears there is unused space along the walkway marked #1 to the west of the current harbormaster's office, and that a small boat pier in this area would not impact the turning basin. I hope you will consider this in upcoming planning.

A comment was made that bumping 20-25 foot boats up to 30 foot slips might result in 30 foot boats going up to 35 foot slips and 35 foot boats up to 40 foot slips. There was not a clear response from you as to how this actually was going to work. A presentation should be made on what is likely going to happen to people in month-to-month slips – are they going to receive a permanent slip because there will be plenty of vacancies due to the number of slips to become vacant from non-seaworthy evictions, and from the replacement of slips in the outer harbor that washed away in previous years.

3. Ramps – the comment was made that there needs to be an additional ramp along Marina Blvd. While you may be correct that the proposed 200 yard spacing is within some marina guidelines, once again you need to keep in mind the age of the users, and their convenience in hauling sails and supplies to their boats. At least one more ramp would seem desirable.
4. The proposed 37% increase was not thoroughly presented, in that the cash flow statement was not available for our review. It is impossible to opine on a proposal without the detail behind it. Our sense is that this is excessive coverage and that a small sinking fund be set aside for future replacement.

It seems you are trying to create a large reserve from rents paid by West Harbor boaters to cover the costs of the East harbor project. You even stated in the meeting that any unused funds from construction would go into starting the East Harbor project, whereas we believe this should result in lower berth payments by West Harbor users.

We realize you have a tough job in managing this project. We do hope you can include the cultural context as well as the construction efficiency when the plan takes final form.

It would be helpful if you could address these issues in greater detail in the SF Marina Harbor Association meeting at GGYC on Wednesday September 3rd.

Sincerely,
Bruce J. Stone

Dear Bruce:

I will attend the meeting on Wednesday to report on the status of the various capital endeavors and our next steps. I cannot answer most of the questions raised in your email simply because I lack the data and/or expertise to do so. We have a long road ahead. At this point I must be cautious in my words, so as not to unintentionally make statements which may be viewed as commitments or final decisions as to how this project will ultimately be implemented. I apologize if my comments caused alarm. I certainly plan to work hard with the Marina tenants to develop a work plan that results in the very least disruption as possible.

How boats will be reassigned is a complex issue. The policy for small boats is our attempt to nail down at least one of the variables in this equation. I know Larry is working hard to address the issue of non-seaworthy vessels as well. Once we have a handle on the pool of boats to be accommodated, we can begin to evaluate the impact across the various berth size ranges.

I will see you on Wednesday evening. My thought is that rather than try to discuss design and project implementation, I would really like to focus the discussion on how we can work together to make decisions going forward. Ideas for future meeting topics, working groups or user surveys are things we may consider. I hope to relay the message to your members that there are still a lot of decisions yet to be made, and that the Department is committed to an open and cooperative partnership with all the project stakeholders.

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I hope we will have a strong turnout for this meeting on September 3 as it is an opportunity for berth-holders to learn more about these important issues and express your thoughts to the folks managing the project. You are also encouraged to attend the SF Rec and Park Commissioners' meeting at City Hall, starting 2 pm on September 4.

Sincerely,

Bruce J. Stone
President, SF Marina Harbor Association

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