

# City of Newport Waterfront Commission 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

## HARBOR MANAGEMENT PLAN

One of the primary overarching goals of our Harbor Management plan (HMP) is the **“protection of the authentic seaport character of Newport Harbor.”** With the update of that plan officially completed at the end of last year, 2025 marked the kick-off of implementing actions to achieve the plan’s objectives and using the document as a guide in decisions made by our Commission. These HMP objectives are built around 7 key areas: Harbor Facilities, Natural Resources, Mooring and Harbor Management, Public Access, Water Quality, Storm Preparedness, and Law & Policy.

## MOORINGS

We are ending 2025 with **938** moorings in the Harbor, an increase of **21** from the beginning of the year. Of that amount **65%** are private moorings and **35%** are rental moorings. The mooring waiting list now stands at **1,200**. With residents waiting as long as 10 years for a mooring in our harbor, our Commission worked with the Harbormaster’s Office to increase the number of moorings available to the public by:

1. Adding 20 new moorings in Spindle Cove area
2. Ensuring the compliance the State’s mooring transfer rules and mooring classification and insurance requirements
3. Seeking the proper balance between private and rental moorings

## HOUSEBOAT LEGISLATION

The Commission has been engaged in a multi-year effort to enable the City of Newport to effectively regulate Houseboats within Newport Harbor. The proliferation of floating structures primarily for habitation is viewed as contrary to the protection of Newport Harbor for use by mariners and the quality of the harbor environment. Current State regulations already prohibit the mooring of Houseboats within State waters, and we would like to re-affirm the City’s ability to regulate them with the harbor’s marinas.

Along with supporting proposed legislation from our State legislators, the Commission is advancing language that refines the definition of a houseboat and clarifies the City’s authority to regulate. This new language is now being reviewed by the City Solicitor.

## CRMC APPLICATIONS

The Commission reviewed the following CRMC applications as referred to it by City Council. Of particular interest to the Commission as applicable was impact on public access, impact on water quality/environment and consistency with Harbor Management Plan.

- **West Wind Marina Expansion (CRMC# 2024-12-052)**: West Wind Marina sought to expand their marina footprint to improve safe navigation within the interior of the marina. The expansion of the marina into public trust waters promoted us to ask what the owner could do to help the City of Newport in turn for using these waters for the expansion. Per our inquiry and with support from Friends of the Waterfront, the applicants agreed to provide racks for 18 kayaks and to provide a ferry stop with benches/shade, an assent to CRMC's standard of 10ft Marina Perimeter Limit line for the entire boundary of the marina, and an assent to repair the drainage ditch even if hotel project is not approved.
- **Newport Yachting Center Expansion (CRMC# 2025-02-022)**: The Newport Yachting Center is seeking to expand its marina from 3.44 acres to 3.89 acres, an increase of 13%. The main reason for Yachting Center's request: boats are getting bigger, and this new configuration will allow for easier in and out access at the marina.
- **Ann St Pier Extension (CRMC #2010-05-070)**: This application is an update to the original project that was approved by the City Council back in July of 2013. The new modifications reduce the dock extension length from 333 linear ft to 210 linear ft.
- **New Residential Dock At 96 Washington Street (CRMC#2024-02-002)**: The major ask was a variance to extend out into deeper waters to operate a 20-foot boat.
- **Minimum Setback Variance 88 Washington St (CRMC# 2024-06-087)**: Owners of this property were seeking variance requiring a specific setback from a coastal feature. The commission voted to make no recommendation on the application given the lack of any supporting data from the applicant.

## AIDS TO NAVIGATION

Early in the year, the United States Coast Guard (USCG) announced a cost-cutting plan to remove approximately 350 navigation aids along the East Coast with 36 of those buoys residing along the RI coast and in Narragansett Bay. They asked the public to comment on their plan before making on a final decision on their removal. Believing that that removal of these aids to navigation would reduce boater safety, our Commission, joining forces with SailNewport, the Harbormaster’s Office and other local associations, to put out the word to stakeholders/boaters to how to best send comments to the USCG to oppose this proposal. The Commission also contacted the offices of Senators Whitehouse and Reed to enlist their support of the issue. Current status: Due to the high level of opposition voiced, the USCG has tabled this initiative for now.

## **ECONOMIC IMPACT STUDY**

Maritime activities in Newport Harbor generate a sizable amount of revenue for the City of Newport and the State of RI. It has been years since the city conducted an Economic Impact Study which quantifies the value of harbor visitation and provides for city and state officials actionable insights for planning, investment and stewardship of the Harbor. The Commission voted to conduct an initial Economic Impact Study that seeks to quantify the contributions by the annual races and regattas that our City hosts. The study will be funded by funds set aside in the harbormaster’s budget and a contribution from Discover Newport.

## **PERSONNEL**

In January, our Commission welcomed the following new members Parker Ives, Ned Jones and Patrick O’Connor. The Commission would like to acknowledge departing members Bob Anton, Jerry Baum, and Fred Roy and thank them for their years of service to the Commission and the Newport waterfront.

## **STRATEGIC PLAN**

The Commission met in special session on 6 December and prepared a strategic plan to guide its activities during 2026 and evaluate its operating practices, ordinance and priorities.

## NEWPORT WATERFRONT COMMISSION

### 2025 MEETING ATTENDANCE

|                | Jan      | Feb      | Mar      | Apr      | May      | Jun      | Jul      | Aug      | Sep      | Oct      | Nov      | Dec      |
|----------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| D. Kane (C)    | P        | P        | P        | P        | P        | P        | P        | P        | P        | P        | P        | P        |
| G. Lash (VC)   | P        | A        | P        | P        | P        | P        | A        | P        | P        | P        | P        | P        |
| J. Kokulis (S) | P        | P        | P        | P        | P        | P        | P        | P        | P        | P        | P        | P        |
| H. DiPietro    | P        | P        | P        | P        | P        | P        | A        | A        | P        | P        | P        | P        |
| J. Greichen    | P        | P        | A        | P        | A        | P        | P        | P        | P        | P        | P        | P        |
| M. Marosits    | P        | P        | P        | P        | A        | P        | P        | P        | P        | P        | P        | P        |
| P. Ives*       | *        | P        | P        | P        | P        | P        | P        | P        | P        | P        | P        | P        |
| N. Jones*      | *        | P        | P        | P        | P        | P        | P        | A        | P        | P        | P        | A        |
| P. O'Connor    | *        | P        | P        | P        | A        | P        | A        | P        | P        | P        | P        | A        |
| <i>Absent</i>  | <i>0</i> | <i>1</i> | <i>1</i> | <i>0</i> | <i>3</i> | <i>0</i> | <i>3</i> | <i>2</i> | <i>0</i> | <i>0</i> | <i>0</i> | <i>2</i> |

*\*Ives, Jones, and O'Connor were appointed to the Commission in Jan 2025.*

**# END #**