

City of Bainbridge Island
HARBOR COMMISSION



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and City Administrator
City Council

FROM: Bainbridge Island Harbor Commission

DATE: July 18, 2006

RE: *Recommendations for Managing the City's Waters*

The Harbor Commission is responding to widely expressed sentiments from Bainbridge citizens as well as specific requests from the City Administration, City Council, and Land Use Committee that, prior to the implementation of the approved Anchoring and Mooring Plan, management of our harbors must be brought into conformance with the operational tenets of that plan.

We have identified issues in our harbors and cited existing ordinances applicable to anchoring and mooring whereupon the city can and should begin active enforcement to solve those problems. In addition, we are recommending a limited number of modifications to existing code or in some cases adoption of new code in order to resolve situations not previously addressed.

These recommendations focus primarily on the physical aspects of anchored and moored vessels, whether used as residences or not, on all the waters of our island. We make these recommendations in the interest of improving safety, navigation, and environmental conditions in the harbors and to support the future implementation of the Anchoring and Mooring Plan. Our intent is to also ensure that these waters are being utilized responsibly and to increase their accessibility and enjoyment by all the citizens of Bainbridge Island as well as by others who might choose to visit our shores by boat.

Additional recommendations are intended to improve public access at the city dock in Waterfront Park. The city dock is a public amenity that serves many aquatic needs such as temporary tie ups for the boat launch, accommodation of visiting boaters and serving as a boarding point for excursion vessels. Unfortunately the dock has numerous small water craft permanently tied to it and space for larger vessels is often occupied by local boats placed there for long periods of time and often for unauthorized purposes.

Finally, there has been a marked increase in the number of derelict and abandoned vessels littering our waterways. These vessels are public nuisances, take up valuable space in our harbors and are often hazards to navigation, detract from the aesthetics of our waters, and threaten the environment with the potential release of hazardous materials. The costs associated with the disposal of derelict and abandoned vessels are substantial, and in most cases there is no way to obtain compensation from the vessel owner. As a result, the costs associated with the removal of

derelict vessels have become a burden on the city and tax-paying public. We include recommendations that will help to alleviate this problem.

Please note that none of these current recommendations call for the payment of new moorage fees, formal vessel registration with the city, or the signing of moorage agreements by boat owners. Furthermore, none of these current recommendations regulate or restrict liveaboards in Eagle Harbor as to who may live aboard, how many may live aboard or, for the most part, where they may be located.

The Harbor Commission is hopeful that all concerned City Departments will help us implement these recommendations at the earliest possible opportunity. We believe that vast improvements in the state of our harbors can be accomplished with minimal additional financial burden or staff workload. In our opinion it is vitally important to the successful implementation of the Offshore Marina to jump start the regulatory aspects of the A & M plan now. Additionally, even in lieu of the A & M plan, it is obvious that our harbors are in a downward spiral and that it is time for the city to proactively manage this most valuable of public resources, the waters surrounding our island.