

Memorandum

TO: Hart-Miller Island Citizens Oversight Committee

FROM: Taylor Hoskins – MES

DATE: September 12, 2024

SUBJECT: Next meeting – March 2025

The next meeting of the Hart-Miller Island Citizens Oversight Committee (HMI C O C) will be held in March 2025 in the Conference Room at 2200 Broening Highway, Baltimore 21224. More details of this meeting will be shared as the date approaches.

Attached for your review is a copy of the final summary from the July 16, 2024, meeting.

FINAL
SUMMARY OF HART-MILLER ISLAND
CITIZENS OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE MEETING

July 16, 2024 – 5:00 PM
Hart-Miller Island

Attendees:

Baltimore County Seventh District: Paul Brylske (Chairman)*
Maryland Department of Natural Resources: Richard Ortt, Robin Reed, Chris Gleason-Smuck, Kenneth Miller
Maryland Port Administration: Holly Miller, Bob Munroe, David Bibo
Maryland Environmental Service: Megan O'Hara, Taylor Hoskins, Lincoln Tracy, James Cooper, Joseph McGrain, Hillary Lewis, Clara Liddell
North Point Peninsula Community Coordinating Council: Ed Crizer
Sports Fishermen: Sam Weaver*
Baltimore County Sixth District: Karen Wynn*
State of Maryland: Senator Johnny Ray Salling
Essex Middle River Civic Council: Bob Bendler
Baltimore Bird Club/Friends of HMI State Park: Joe Corcoran
Chesapeake Bay Association: Dr. Frank M. Neighoff, Jr.
National Aquarium and Friends of HMI State Park: Charmaine Dahlenburg
Baltimore County Department of Environmental Protection & Sustainability: David Riter
Baltimore County Senior Deputy Administrative Officer for Economic Development and Infrastructure: Sameer Sidh

**Appointed member of the HMI C O C*

Action items:

1. Maryland Environmental Service (MES) will continue to provide annual environmental monitoring updates to the Hart-Miller Island Citizens Oversight Committee (HMI C O C).
2. Maryland Port Administration (MPA) and MES will provide updates on North Cell Habitat Development progress.
3. MPA and MES will keep the HMI C O C updated as the HMI Infrastructure Working Group progresses.

1.0 Welcome & Opening Remarks

Paul Brylske, Chair

Mr. Brylske thanked MES, MPA, and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for hosting the meeting and transporting guests to HMI. Mr. Brylske thanked Mr. Joe Corcoran and the birders for the bird tour around HMI, as well as Ms. Robin Reed and DNR for their hard work during the past few weeks. Prior to approval of the March 2024 HMI C O C meeting summary, Mr. Brylske requested that page four be revised to state that funding from the Chesapeake WILD grant included \$3500 for bikes rather than \$2000 (*this revision has been made and approved by Mr. Brylske*).
Mr. Brylske

HMI COC

Final Meeting Summary July 16, 2024

thanked Baltimore County and Ms. Charmaine Dahlenburg for helping with the submission and approval of the Baltimore County community development grant for educational public signage. After introductions Mr. Brylske closed opening remarks by pointing out the diversity of agencies and groups represented by individuals in attendance, and he thanked everyone for joining the meeting and having interest and concern in the future of HMI.

2.0 Reopening of HMI

Holly Miller, MPA

Ms. Miller touched on the current legislation that may result in the reopening of HMI for limited dredged material placement. Ms. Miller explained that due to existing contractual agreements, it is unlikely MPA will be the on-site operator if it is reopened and will defer site operation to the property owner, DNR. However, MPA will continue to coordinate closely with DNR and Trade Point Atlantic (TPA) on the reopening of HMI. Ms. Miller noted that Baltimore County is currently overseeing the process of the community benefits agreement establishment.

3.0 Community Benefits Agreement

Sameer Sidh, Baltimore County

Mr. Sidh explained that House Bill 343 created an opportunity for limited dredged material placement at HMI and explained that a condition of potential limited placement at HMI is the establishment of a community benefits agreement. This agreement is required to meet county council approval on or before December 31, 2024. Mr. Sidh noted that the community benefits agreement process has been initiated and the formation of a steering committee is underway. The steering committee will include individuals representing a broad geographic range, as well as areas near the dredging location. Applications for the steering committee were posted on July 2, 2024. The agreement timeline states that it will be filed with the county council in early or late October. Per the legislation, the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) will need to provide the ultimate approval for placement of dredged material at HMI. Mr. Sidh was hopeful that the members of the steering committee would be announced sometime during the week of July 29, 2024. A public meeting to kick off the process will occur the week of August 5 or August 12, 2024; more information on exact days, times, and locations will be delivered when available. Mr. Sidh stated that there will be two bookend public meetings and in between those meetings, additional steering committee meetings would be held to work through the agreement. He explained that defining the term community benefits agreement, completing required tasks, and scoping projects with cost estimates will all be challenges that will need to be approached with flexibility. Mr. Brylske added that the HMI C O C members have gone on record with Baltimore County and TPA regarding necessities for community access to HMI.

4.0 Friends Group Updates

Paul Brylske, Chair

The first annual Friendsraiser by the Friends of HMI is scheduled for Saturday, July 20, 2024, at Charly's Sue Creek Restaurant. Mr. Brylske has attended meetings with Essex Middle River Civic Council, North Point Peninsula Community Coordinating Council, Bowley's Quarters Improvement Association, Wilson Point Association, and Oregon Ridge Nature Center regarding the future of HMI on behalf of the HMI C O C. He noted that there is a lot of community interest and reasonable concerns, so it is beneficial to receive public input outside of the HMI C O C.

5.0 Chesapeake WILD Funding

Charmaine Dahlenburg, National Aquarium

Mr. Brylske asked Ms. Dahlenburg to give an update on the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) grant. Ms. Dahlenburg explained that the NFWF grant allows \$5,500 for supplies and community engagement costs incurred by DNR for HMI State Park. On July 30, 2024, Baltimore City youth will visit HMI for a camping trip and on September 28, 2024, a mini BioBlitz event will be held at HMI for Girl Scouts of America. Mr. Brylske noted, and Ms. Dahlenburg confirmed, that this is a two-year grant. Mr. Brylske said he wanted to keep this grant going since it provides opportunities that the community needs, and he thanked the Aquarium for managing events.

6.0 Birding

Joe Corcoran, Baltimore Bird Club

Mr. Corcoran said that birding at HMI has been great. He noted that an HMI bird tour and walk earlier that day was very successful, resulting in approximately 50 different species including American Avocets, Caspian Terns, and interesting shore birds like Short-billed Dowitchers. Mr. Corcoran expressed that members of the Baltimore Bird Club are concerned about the future of HMI. The club is worried that HMI will be damaged, destroyed, or not returned to its former state following the potential limited dredged material placement. This concern will be brought up in the community benefits agreement, as well as the request that people still have access to HMI even while inflow of dredged material is ongoing. The Baltimore Bird Club is also hoping for the creation of a nature center where taxidermied birds and dioramas can be displayed as part of the agreement. Mr. Brylske noted that the HMI State Park ranger station currently displays an assortment of taxidermied birds donated by the Baltimore Bird Club. Mr. Corcoran said the largest concern is that the value of HMI does not decline, and once the placement is complete it is managed for the various birds that depend on the island for critical habitat, migration, and a food source. He noted that HMI is a primary place on their migration route, and as such, it is important that the island is available for current and future migrants. Mr. Corcoran explained that members of the Baltimore Bird Club will be attending meetings and following the legislation closely to ensure the protection of birds. Mr. David Bibo mentioned that on Poplar Island some endangered species have been recorded and asked Mr. Corcoran if any endangered species utilize HMI. Mr. Corcoran responded that he believes there are endangered species that use HMI, but a species may be designated as endangered throughout the world or only in the country or regionally. He mentioned that there were rarities that visit HMI, like the Roseate Spoonbill. He noted that warblers are declining and on the watch list, as well as shore birds including the Short-billed Dowitcher and Red Knot. Mr. Brylske asked what would happen if HMI was disturbed and not available to these birds. Mr. Corcoran responded that migrants will no longer have a place to stop over for food and are less likely to make it south to winter or north to breed, potentially contributing to endangerment. Mr. Bibo asked if any Roseate Spoonbills have been spotted at HMI recently and Mr. Corcoran confirmed sightings two weeks ago in the North Cell.

7.0 HMI Site Updates

Lincoln Tracy, MES

Mr. Tracy explained that HMI Operations employees are currently in a maintenance holding pattern. The land base pier located on Riverview Road is being replaced and therefore the HMI team is currently departing from a temporary land base at Weaver's Marine Services, Inc. A contract for the land base

pier was awarded in April 2024 and soil boring samples were collected on May 30, 2024. A pre-construction meeting will occur on July 17, 2024, and demolition is scheduled for July through August 6, 2024. Test pile driving will occur at the end of July, pile driving will occur in August, and pier decking will be installed from August through September 18, 2024. The contractor will demobilize on September 20, 2024. MES would prefer to have the land base pier contractor also complete maintenance on the Station 265 HMI personnel pier. MES is awaiting pricing estimates from the contractor. Once work on the Station 265 HMI personnel pier begins, it will take approximately one to two months to complete, during which time HMI will be unable to receive visitors.

Mr. Tracy reported that the current North Cell Pond elevation is 37.8 feet; HMI Operations staff are holding discharge until further notice to maintain elevation, since an elevation drop that is too low may cause pH levels to become more acidic. Daily road, vegetation, building, and equipment maintenance continue to occur, along with hosting and supporting tours of the island and birding groups. Mr. Bibb mentioned that the dredging that is required to be completed in front of the Station 265 HMI personnel pier has been eliminated from the contract as it will be too costly to take the dredged material from HMI to Cox Creek Dredged Material Containment Facility (DMCF). Although it is currently prohibited, Mr. Bibb hopes that in the future there will be an opportunity to put the dredged material on HMI, which would result in future cost reductions. Mr. Tracy explained that the language in the current legislation does not authorize placement of dredged material from the Station 265 HMI personnel pier on HMI.

8.0 DNR Update

Robin Reed, DNR

Ms. Reed reported that MES assisted DNR with the relocation of sand from around the pier area to the beach. For MES equipment to navigate through the area, DNR had to disassemble campsites seven through ten. These campsites were restored, and limbs were cleared back to open the sites again just in time for the fourth of July holiday weekend. The grills were replaced at campsites one through six and poles with signage were installed to show clear delineation between the campsites. Members of the Maryland Conservation Corp (MCC) including Gunpowder, Patapsco, and South Mountain crews, worked hard to restore the campsites and complete various tasks during multiple visits to HMI. Ms. Reed and Mr. Chris Gleason-Smuck are drafting a request to relocate the campsites that currently exist on Drum Point and Hawk Cove due to erosion and safety concerns. A few medical calls from Drum Point have occurred this year and due to its location, it is challenging and time consuming for DNR staff to respond to an emergency call. Mr. Brylske asked if additional sand would help protect this area from erosion and Ms. Reed confirmed that it would. She also noted that some picnic tables will be left in these areas for leisure, however, she reiterated that she plans to remove the grills and discourage camping in this area for safety reasons. In the future, DNR would like to see a boardwalk that extends from the fire road down through the marsh to be able to access the area around Drum Point and Hawk Cove. A new bulletin board with emergency information for visitors has been installed in the South Cell where the white and blue trail meet. Trash cleanup by the MCC crews continues along the south end of HMI and Mr. Sam Weaver has volunteered to haul it off the island. A few water rescues occurred since March including two men on the verge of hypothermia due to a sunken boat. Ms. Reed and staff were able to get the men back to shore at Rocky Point and reported the incident to the relevant agencies. The DNR camp store, bike rental, and concessions have been very busy and on Fridays and weekends hundreds of boaters can be seen docked around the island. DNR staff have been working hard to keep up with the camp store and

maintenance of bathrooms and grounds, tending to the campers and bikers, trash pickup and beach cleanup, grass cutting, etc.

A pre-construction meeting on July 30, 2024, with engineering, construction, and the awarded contractor was held to discuss the replacement of all the DNR building roofs, fascia board and roof on the tower, exterior doors on the restrooms, facade on the front of the restrooms, and the boardwalk boards and railings. The project is due to begin September 30, 2024, after the park is closed and operations have ended for the season. The Charm City race typically held in October has been canceled due to the construction at DNR and the MES land base pier. Sunday Funday activities are offered to all ages every Sunday in June, July and August. These activities are nature based including seine net fishing, boat building, and arts and crafts. Ms. Reed thanked Ms. Shannon Fittig for volunteering her time to help with the Sunday Funday activities while DNR staff have been shorthanded, the Friends Group for funding the Sunday Funday programming, and Ms. Dahlenburg for grant management. Ms. Reed asked everyone to come to the first annual Friendsraiser on Saturday, July 20, 2024, to support the Friends Group. Ms. Reed stated that rangers from North Point State Park are preparing a newsletter that will highlight updates for North Point State Park and HMI.

9.0 Administration and Open Discussion

Dave Bibo, MPA

Mr. Bibo thanked Mr. Johnny Ray Salling and Mr. Bob Munroe for being in attendance and confirmed that all action items from the March 2024 meeting have been completed. Discussion of the future of HMI, infrastructure planning, and DNR selection of assets to remain on HMI is ongoing. Mr. Bibo recently attended a Dredged Material Management Program Committee meeting where a gentleman from Steinweg terminal expressed concern about the original commitment by MPA to develop HMI and turn it over to DNR. Mr. Bibo confirmed that MPA would continue to work with stakeholders and DNR to ensure that the original commitment would be upheld. Mr. Bibo and Mr. Brylske agreed the next meeting of the HMI C O C will be in March 2025. Mr. Bibo thanked all agencies for putting the meeting together. Mr. Bob Bendler asked if there are any plans for the potential future nature center on HMI to link to or work with the nature center at Marshy Point. Mr. Brylske said he would like to see a link between Marshy Point, Rocky Point County Park and the sailing center, the Millers Island community and Sparrows Point High School, and North Point State Park. Mr. Brylske said he'd like to open access points throughout the vicinity to get people of all ages to HMI. Mr. Brylske mentioned federal legislation that has been introduced with the goal of designating the Chesapeake Bay as a national recreation area, similar to a national park, and noted that three sites have been located below the Bay Bridge for inclusion, including Sandy Point State Park.

Mr. Brylske noted that the meeting was adjourned ahead of schedule. The meeting was adjourned at 7:50pm.