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Harbor Towns Inc.

Town of Hertford,

Waterfront Assessment and Recommendations

The in-town dock and waterfront systems of Hertford were positioned by Mayor Ashley Hodges and Interim City Manager Doris Walton as potential targets for infrastructure improvements. In conversations with Manager Walton, the area was divided into the following sectors.

- 1) The main docks
- 2) The boat ramps
- 3) The ancillary floating dock attached to the western boat ramp
- 4) Other waterfront areas that could add value/convenience to the town.

Over a 6 week period the systems were visited by Harbor Town and A R Chesson staff a total of 9 times. Conversations with Manager Walton contributed to the overall assessment.

As Harbor Towns, their staff and contributors came to conclusions about different sectors, we coordinated with specialized design teams from vendors and others. Allison Platt, who at this time is working with both Harbor Towns Inc and the Town of Hertford, was a source of information and expertise. Floating dock experts, Dock Doctor of Vermont provide kayak/canoe expertise.

Assessments

1) The Main Docks

Overview

The main docks of the in-town system are well constructed and sturdy. They allow an adequate number of boats for the town to be docked in town. At the main outside dock power and pump-out is available. With the exception of the power cables, (which our experts would rather see in conduit), there are no real problems with construction or concept. They are sturdy and well built. Their construction is as large as possible under the present CAA rules, given the distance across the river and the location.

Using the Docks

The present docking system, while well built, is neither attractive to boaters nor user-friendly. From an aesthetic perspective it does not represent the town in a positive way, having no architectural welcoming detail nor association with the historic town of Hertford. The walkway to the docks, while well built, is unwelcomely narrow and has no handrails. There is no place to sit, contemplate the beautiful scenery, fish, eat lunch or read a book. There is no sun-shelter. For a boater, it provides the necessities but no character or pleasure. For the nearby park user, the ramp out can appear threatening.

2) The Boat Ramps

Overview

The Hertford Boat Ramps area is a much-used town facility. The area has two parallel ramps that (in normal water height) allow good transition at an excellent angle. Finger docks are well positioned and a concrete addition to each of these docks is designed to allow boaters to bring their boats on or off the trailers without getting feet wet. At this time, while the finger piers were assessed as being in good shape. There are potholes near each of the finger piers due to the constant traffic wearing down these most-used spaces. The concrete additions had deteriorated and were not keeping feet dry, there was multiple eroded elements both above and below the waterline.

Using Boat Ramps

In conversations with Manager Walton, the boat ramps are constantly in use. At the same time, she also reports many boaters complaining about the condition of the ramps.

3) The Ancillary Floating Dock

Overview

Attached to the Western finger pier is a small ramp, (4X 6 ft) that leads to a long floating dock (40 X 5 ft), ((used as an auxiliary stopping place for boats using the boat ramps). This dock was tethered to three 12”X12” poles by a steel collar. While the surface of the dock was rough, and might soon need replacement, there were no safety issues with the installation. Because of the method of attachment and design, this long, narrow dock has a propensity to rock side to side, so it would not be recommended for those new to boating.

Using the Ancillary Dock

During our visits we did not see this dock in use. While use as a secondary holding area for boats using the ramps seems evident, there was no information available as to how kayakers and canoers launch and recover, and whether they use this facility.

4) Other Waterfront Areas

Overview

Sitting in the river beside the western finger pier of the Boat Ramps is a 16’X 16 ‘Sea Doo cushion. This cushion is designed to allow personal watercraft to power up from the water to a space where they could leave their water craft.

Above the ramp area on land is a kayak storage area some distance from the water.

Using the Other Waterfront Areas

During our assessment trips there these areas were not in use.

Town of Hertford

Waterfront Recommendations

1) The Main Docks

Harbor Towns recommends using the existing structures as the basis for a new user-friendly dock system which provides:

- A) Better facilities for the transient boater
- B) Safer and more attractive access from shore
- C) Shaded areas and seating for boaters and public
- D) A more aesthetic design element in keeping with the historic nature of the town.

Better Facilities for the transient boater

While our redesigned facility would retain the present pump out and power station we would add additional facilities on each of fingers as shown in our presentation. At the present time the Hertford Main docks can handle two boats with facilities. We recommend that we expand that ability to 10 boats at a time.

Safer and more attractive access from shore

We recommend that the main walkway from shore be widened and that rails be added to both sides, giving a sense of security to the public.

Shaded areas and seating for boaters and public

We recommend the addition of a gazebo with seating in the center for the main docks. We further recommend that the principal furthest dock from the shore be widened and provide permanent bench seating.

A More Aesthetic Design

Along with the user-friendly elements of the new proposed design, we recommend using lighting elements that reflect the historic nature of the town. The use of an in-dock gazebo (harking back to the screw-pile light house of the region), a new friendlier walkway, and sitting places on docks, transforms a utilitarian set of docks into a unique, interesting and attractive place to dock, sit, fish and stay. It changes from a place to leave a boat to a photo opportunity.

2) The Boat Ramps

Harbor Towns recommends the following for the Hertford Boat Ramps

- 1) Repair the ramp both above and below the water using a coffer dam.
- 2) Put in new concrete ramps from the docks to the ramp above so that boaters do not get their feet wet.

3)The Ancillary Floating Dock

In consultation with floating dock specialists, “The Dock Doctors” Harbor Towns recommends a new ancillary floating dock system. The new design has the following advantages:

- 1) It is larger and more sturdy less tipping and moving
- 2) It incorporates an ADA approved Kayak/Canoe Launch system, recognized as being the easiest to access from dock to water.
- 3) A better, safer dock on which to wait to access the ramp.

The new system will provide an easier more user-friendly way for both trailered boats and kayaks.

4) Other Waterfront Areas

We have not been able to ascertain whether the personal watercraft system, (The Sea-Doo Cushion), is ever used for that purpose. If it is never or rarely used, we recommend a permanent dock system be designed to replace it and that the Kayak Stand, presently up above the ramps, be relocated to this space. Our recommendation is based on both the aesthetic of such a move, but also as a user-friendly element wherein a kayaker can get the boat and immediately launch.

In Summation

We believe that these structural and design improvements meet Harbor Towns grant requirements and transform the Hertford Waterfront Areas. These areas will immediately have more user-friendly facilities, conform better to the area aesthetics and provide an attractive addition to the town.

When the waterfront improvements in the 5 historic towns of the Albemarle are completed, Harbor Towns believes these new facilities will result in new visitors and new opportunities for area business.