

Newport Beach Commission 2022 Annual Report to City Council

Meetings:

The Commission held twelve meetings during 2022.

Commission Members and Attendance in 2022

Richard Klaffky - Chair (No Absences)
Mark Fitzgerald – Vice Chair (No Absences)
Aly Oakley (Secretary) – (No Absences)
Demetri Damaskos – (One Absence)
Elaine Trainor – (One Absence)
Scott Skuncik – (Two Absences)
Roan-William Iribarren- (One Absence)

- Parker Sizeland, Mark Fitzgerald and Roan Iribarren joined the Commission during 2022. Parker Sizeland resigned in June due to a busy work schedule.
- The Commission has two vacancies at year end.

Activities

- Proposal for Construction of New Beach Facilities, Site Improvements and Beach Nourishment Project

The dominant issue before the Commission's in 2022 was the development of the proposal for the reconstruction of three principal structures at Easton's Beach- the Rotunda, the Snack Bar Building, and the Carousel Building by the outside consulting team engaged by the City. The final report represented the combined efforts of DBVW Architects, Fuss & O'Neill (Landscape Architecture), Woods Hole Consulting (Environmental Vulnerability Assessment), and Yoder & Tidwell Ltd (Structural Engineering). Individual members of the Commission were permitted to attend three working meetings with the management team from the city and representatives from DBVW and Fuss & O'Neill over the course of the development of the plan. As information about the proposal became available to the Commission, many hours were spent discussing various aspects of the proposal and communicating our thoughts to City management and to the consulting team. On June 28th the Commission wrote to Joseph Nicholson, William Riccio Thomas Harrop and Martha Warenfels of DBVW raising some early concerns about the plan. Nearly all individual members of the Commission also attended the City Council Workshop on October 19th at which the plan was presented and had a chance to further question the consultants. On November 2, the Commission welcomed Joseph Nicholson, and William Riccio to the Beach Commission meeting and discussed the need to substantially reduce the overall cost of the plan, the uncertainty of funding for the plan, and the need to establish priorities as to which features of the plan were most important to preserve. Accordingly at year end much work remains to be done to revise the plan into one that can realistically be funded and best meet the needs of the City. Given these uncertainties the Commission is working to complete a new report to City management as to how it views the priority of the various features of the plan as a

guide for the necessary downsizing decisions. The Commission also intends to report its findings to the City Council.

- Easton's Beach Carousel

The carousel itself is assumed to be an important feature of the new plan given that the plan includes a new building to house the Carousel. However, the Carousel itself is not part of the Consultants' report and may not be included as revisions to the Beach plan are made. Nevertheless, the Carousel is a historic and valuable asset which the City will likely operate in the future at some location. The Carousel last operated in September of 2019, as it was idle for the 2020 season due to the pandemic and has remained idle since then due to the closure of the Carousel Building. No maintenance has been performed on the Carousel during this time. The Beach Commission has advocated for basic preventive maintenance to be performed on the Carousel to better preserve it for future operation. On July 27, the Beach Commission wrote to the City Manager and the Director of Public Services requesting that an outside contractor be engaged to do this work. We understand that this work has now been authorized and are awaiting a specific schedule from the contractor.

An additional concern is that the Carousel sits in a building which is unsafe to occupy and is expected to be demolished. The Commission also has advocated for the Carousel to be removed from this building and stored in a safe location so that it is protected and the necessary demolition of the building can proceed. At this time however we are still not aware of a plan to move the Carousel.

- Sea Wall Repair- The sea wall along Memorial Boulevard bordering Easton's Beach is in serious disrepair. Representatives of the Commission have pointed out safety risks at the many impaired sections and requested that the city address these concerns. Representatives of the City have responded that Memorial Boulevard is a state road and that the wall is not a city asset. Commission representatives later inquired of the DOT but were told that the construction of the wall pre-dates the DOT itself and it is unclear whether the state owns the wall or is obligated to maintain it. The issue remains unresolved.

- Installation of additional dunes and sea grass-

The Commission met with Wenley Ferguson and David Prescott of Save the Bay as they proposed the installation of additional dunes and planting of sea grass to help protect against beach erosion. These measures have been implemented by Save the Bay at other beaches in RI with positive effects. The Commission endorsed this proposal.

- Meetings with outside groups using the Beach-

The Commission met with Margo Crawford, founder of Breakthrough Waves, a non-profit organization that provides no-cost treatments including wave therapy for those dealing with PTSD and similar disorders on an individual basis. This is the second season that Breakthrough Waves has conducted sessions at the Beach and it appears to be progressing well.

The Commission also met with representatives of the November Project. This is a worldwide non-profit organization which hosts early morning workouts free of charge for all who wish to

attend. The Newport chapter has been operating for 4 1/2 years at Easton's Beach and appears to be progressing well.

The Commission met with Chris Carr, President of the Newport Volleyball Club. The Volleyball Club has long held volleyball tournaments at Easton's Beach. The tournaments have grown in popularity and are believed to be among the largest beach volleyball tournaments in the Northeast. The tournaments are held on weekends through the summer and have at peak times created concerns among Beach management about overcrowding on the Beach, and over stretching staff resources. Both Beach management and management of the volleyball club see important benefits in the relationship and would like to have it continue within appropriate time and space constraints. Erik Reis and Chriss Carr subsequently agreed to revised limits in terms of number of nets in use during peak and off-peak beach times. Since that time NWC's compliance with the revised agreement has been noted which seems to have remedied the issue.

- People's Beach and King Park Beach

Commission members were asked to visit King Park Beach and People's Beach and report on recommendations for repairs or improvements there for the April meeting. Recommendations were for repair of the sea wall at King Park which is crumbling in some sections. At Peoples' Beach the drifting sand near the pathway and entrance to the Beach was noted. It was suggested that perhaps dune planting could be useful in mitigating the heavy drifting.

Respectfully Submitted
Newport Beach Commission
December 29, 2022