

Westbrook Council of Beach Associations

Minutes

July 1, 2024

The Westbrook Council of Beach Associations (WCOB) meeting was called to order by President Pat Marcarelli at 7:02 PM. The following people were in attendance:

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| Pat Marcarelli | President |
| Cindy Howard | Vice President |
| Ann Cole | Secretary |
| Maria Botelho | Coral Sands Beach |
| Ron Botelho | Coral Sands Beach |
| Tony Cozza | Island View Beach |
| AnnMarie Ferreira | Middle Beach |
| Jackie Keith | Pilots Point |
| Steve Mason | Stannard Beach |
| MaryJane Monahan | Coral Sands Beach |
| Lucy Nobile | Pointina Beach |
| Tom Nobile | Pointina Beach |
| Amy Palumbo | Middle Beach |
| Rick Parks | Old Kelsey Point |
| Dave Russell | West Beach |
| Michael Tosatti | Grove Beach Terrace |
| Jack Zamary | West Beach |

Scholarship Recipient: Our high school award recipient Dev Patel did not show. We were unable to present him with the \$500.00 check at this time. Pat will try to contact him again. President Pat Marcarelli asked for a change in tonight's agenda. He would like to present our guest speaker first and have regular business to follow. All were in agreement.

Guest Speaker John Hall:

Pat then introduced John Hall, Westbrook's First Selectman, who was here to give an informative presentation on some of Westbrook's happenings. Pat told Mr. Hall the floor was his.

Mr. Hall said he would like to talk about a number of issues:

#1. The State DOT is replacing the deck on the Singing Bridge on Route 1 (near Bill's Seafood). The initial proposal had the work starting during the summer of 2027.

John said this timeline would not be feasible for Westbrook and he strongly urged the DOT to change this starting date. After several meetings, the starting date has been changed to November 2026. There will be overnight complete closure of the bridge, with one-way alternating traffic 5 days a week. Beams are being replaced, along with decking and navigation

lights. With the November 2026 start date, this project will not impact the Town as much as it could have. There will be a meeting on this project July 2nd, and another one later this month.

#2. The replacement of the 153 bridge over I-95 will happen in 2026. This is a consolidated project with 4 ramps being realigned and installation of push button pedestrian signals.

#3. July 4th Holiday Policing Issues: The police department will be paying overtime and double time for the holiday period. There will be a minimum of 3 officers during the day and a minimum of 4 at night (Wednesday through Sunday). The department has 10 police officers now, along with a new resident female officer for the night shift. The department has a new police cruiser as of a month ago, and another will arrive any day. John stated Westbrook is finally fully staffed at the police department.

#4. Seaweed Issue: Excessive seaweed was a problem 2 summers ago. Now we have a 10-year fixed permit in place from the DEP for getting rid of the seaweed on the town beaches. This permit allows the clean-up to be done by machinery, instead of by hand, and then hauled to the transfer station. Pat commented that high school students have begun raking and bagging seaweed on West Beach starting today. Pat said that if anyone needs seaweed removal, to contact Colleen at the Public Works Dept. to generate a work order.

Pat also commented that our private beach associations have to hire their own contractors for seaweed removal. He presented a postcard ad for hand raking services from Sandy Sweepers Beach Cleaning Service at 203-499-7280.

#5. Transfer Station Fees: Transfer Station permit fees will be increasing. This is mainly due to the phenomenal increase of contractors using this site, so we are trying to curtail out of town loads from being dumped. Homeowners will be requested to give a note/proof to their contractors, stating they are working on their premises in order for them to dump. Transfer stickers can be obtained through Colleen at the Public Works Dept.

#6. Mall Project: This project is being launched slowly. There has been a year of soil testing and lab work. The main issue is what the DEEP will approve for sewer usage. The request in front of the DEEP is that they are asking for 100,000 gallons a day for the 600 apartment/100 condo project. John said he is optimistic they'll get 75-80%. Informational meetings (with Zoom availability) will start on July 18th at the High School auditorium at 6:30PM. Pat stressed that this is such an important meeting due to most of our residents being in town. As soon as the Zoom sign-in information is obtained, John will let Pat know so he can forward the info to all. Mr. Hall then opened the floor up for questions.

Dave Russell asked for an update on the Route 1 sidewalk project. John said the project on the south side of Bellstone Road to Riverview Road (800 feet) is almost ready to go to bid with a few more easements still needed. There are also several other sidewalk projects happening; one is from the Saybrook town line to the crosswalk at Chapman Beach. This will be a combined project with a dual grant from the State which will start next spring. We have \$1.9 million federal money coming in from a 2019 grant for a project starting from the Post Office east to Old Forge Road (north side); and a project just completed from I-95 to the YMCA.

Grant Applications:

John told the group that the Connecticut Harbor Port Authority has grants for municipalities with smaller ports that are in need of improvements. The Town has submitted 2 applications. One is for \$75,000 for an engineering plan to raise the level of the town dock on Hammick Road South, and the second application is for \$200,000 for Duck Island's east-west breakwater deterioration. John said "It's a shot in the dark" but it was important to submit these applications.

Jack asked Mr. Hall if there was any public input on the Dunkin Donuts property? Apparently they did not have certain permits in place so they were issued a cease and desist order. Discussion was had on the possibility of a Krauzer's Food Store going in on this property. The group discussed the pros and cons this could have on the town. This project will be discussed at the regular zoning meeting on the 4th Monday in July.

John also informed the group that there are 3 roofing projects being done in the historical district of town which have been secured by a grant: The Bushnell House, the Academy Building and the old library.

Cindy Howard asked who is in charge of development for the Town of Westbrook...our center for example? John said there is a Town Center Committee and an Economic Development Committee that meets jointly every month. These committees have to actively address the town center septic in order to move forward for any development such as restaurants and more businesses. They have to develop a concept/plan for the 50 properties that will be directly affected by this septic/sewer approval. The most current cost estimate is approximately \$13 million. There will be an informational meeting in August, with the hopes of going to a referendum in November. In order for Westbrook to move forward with economic development, the town would have to get behind this project and realize we have to invest money to make money.

Another project being discussed for many years now is the building of a new Community Center. John stated it's time to bring it up for a yes or no vote. There are 3 sites in town being looked at, along with a consultant in place looking at building concepts, costs and staffing. This is anticipated to go to referendum in a year or so.

Mall Outlets Discussion:

The gentleman who owns this property is from Paris. What is being proposed is a \$450 million project with apartments (with retail businesses on the bottom), condos, a parking garage, hotel; an entire village concept. As this project starts to slowly move forward, the group discussed the septic and pumping needed, the environmental impact and economic impact vs. our infrastructure going forward, i.e. our resources of police, fire, ambulance service, overflow on our beaches; and the need for potential revenue back to our tax payers.

Pat asked John his thoughts on this project, looking down the road for the future of Westbrook.

John said the anticipated increase of students is maybe 50 to 80 more kids. We have room for 1400, so we have more than capacity. It's not anticipated to have many young families

buying/renting these units due to the market rate. As a tax revenue, it should be no problem. If you balance out what the revenue is going to be in taxes vs. what the expenses are, this is still very favorable to the town.

John commented that if anyone wants to get a feel of what's being proposed, go to Salem, New Hampshire where he has visited.

John wanted to inform everyone of a few other items: (1) the town is hiring a facilities director for all town buildings and schools. This will be a beneficial savings to the budget as we go forward; (2) the Solar Project at the town hall is ready to go and at no cost to the town. This will generate 80% of power for this building when it goes on line and (3); road work projects are being done on 8 roads in town with chip sealing at a cost of \$115,000. This is money well spent.

Maria Botelho asked if there was any consideration for bicycle trails as there have been many bicyclists on their narrow streets. John did acknowledge how dangerously narrow and hilly the north end of town roads were for bikes, but as of now, the only thing done has been the speed limits were lowered.

A question was asked about AirBnB regulations and if any are in place. John said there is nothing in place right now. This subject would have to go through a zoning meeting.

John also noted that all moorings have to be registered with the town by calling Harbor Master Charlie McSorley at (860) 943-3240. Mr. McSorley will also handle any mooring concerns.

We have an interim animal control officer in place. We are looking into a collaboration with 3 other towns for a permanent officer. They were looking at \$25,000 for Westbrook's share but now that's up to \$38,000. This will have to go back for budget approval.

Warning signs have been posted, in three languages, for Salt Island so no one gets stranded and needs to be rescued from the fire dept. when the tide comes in.

There being no further questions for Mr. Hall, everyone gave him a round of applause and thanked him for his time.

Pat went on to the regular business on the agenda:

Minutes Approved

Motion made, seconded to approve the minutes of June 3, 2024. Unanimously passed.

Treasurer's Report

In lieu of Steve Smith unable to attend (excused absence), President Marcarelli reported that there is \$2,466.96 in the checking account and \$6,400.53 in the savings account as of July 1, 2024. Motion made, seconded to approve the Treasurer's Report as presented. Unanimously passed.

Harbor Patrol:

Dave Russell stated that it's been pretty quiet so far and that July 4th is the busiest time. After the holiday weekend it will start to slow down. Pat complimented Dave on doing a great job and thanked him for his service.

Alleviating Hunger - Annual Food Drive

The food drive will take place on Saturday, July 13th from 9:00AM to 1:00PM on the town green. Tony mentioned that volunteers are still needed. Pat has 3-4 kids doing community service to help out also. This has been advertised with posters, flyers and on our local TV channel 19. Atlantic Outboard has supplied the boat for the "fill-a-boat" event along with a police cruiser to fill. This is our biggest fundraiser and we are hoping for a great turnout.

Coastal Resiliency:

Tony stated that there will be an important meeting scheduled the last week in August. The draft of the 3rd section is complete, the 4th will be done next week and they are closing in on completing the final draft.

Ad Hoc Committee:

Jack and Dave have been involved with this committee since its inception and have done an outstanding job. They highlighted items of the most recent Ad-Hoc committee:

*Jack discussed the committee's involvement in defeating the Cannabis store and having them back out of coming into the area. This is now no longer an issue all due to the work and involvement of our residents and this Committee.

*South of Route 1 was discussed as being the town's largest money generator. We have to take care of this area as there are more taxable resources there (The Lee Company, Safe Harbor Marina and Waters Edge).

*Dunkin Donuts Property - A handout of the Krauzer's Food Store located in Branford was given out to everyone. This was to show what is being planned to move onto this property. The group discussed how this could affect the area with its late hours of operation (critical for police coverage), the selling of alcohol - do we really need another location selling alcohol?; the spot lighting, traffic/motorcycle noise, the issues are endless. Other late hour businesses in the area will be asked what their hours are.

Pat said that this is in a residential AND historic zone so this should have restricted hours of operation. Pat stressed that the purpose of this council is to protect every town resident.

Good & Welfare:

MaryJane Monahan is our COB publicist for the Westbrook Events magazine. This is now on-line and will be mailed out to residents shortly.

MaryJane also said she had the name and number of the interim animal control officer. She is Caroline Fountain, and can be reached at (860) 391-7127 with any animal issues.

Next Meeting: Monday, August 5th or 12th at 7:00PM depending on room availability.

There being no further business to discuss, motion made, seconded, unanimous to adjourn the meeting at 8:24PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Cole, Secretary