

NEWPORT BEACH HARBOR COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
City Council Chambers – 100 Civic Center Drive, Newport Beach
Wednesday, January 14, 2026
5 p.m.

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Steve Scully, Secretary
Bob Miller, Commissioner
Rudy Svrcek, Commissioner
Don Yahn, Commissioner
Gary Williams, Commissioner

ABSENT: Ira Beer, Chair
Marie Marston, Vice Chair

Staff Members: Paul Blank, Harbormaster
Chris Miller, Public Works Administrative Manager
Cynthia Shintaku, Management Analyst

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Led by Secretary Scully

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS (NON-AGENDA ITEMS)

Secretary Scully opened public comments.

Paige Gosney, representing Susan Jennings, addressed the Commission regarding an ongoing dispute with the City concerning a neighboring floating dock that encroaches approximately 15 feet onto Ms. Jennings' property at 503 North Bayfront. Mr. Gosney stated that the dock has existed for approximately 60 years and has long been a point of contention involving Ms. Jennings and her family. She explained that City staff, including Public Works Administrative Manager Chris Miller, previously provided written assurances that Ms. Jennings would receive notice if any work were proposed on the dock, given its significant encroachment and potential impacts. Despite those assurances, Mr. Gosney stated that no notice was provided when the neighboring property owner replaced pilings and reconstructed the dock structure in April of the prior year. He noted that while the dock platform itself remained, the pilings and walkway were newly installed in the same location.

Mr. Gosney asserted that the work constituted a reconstruction under the Harbor Code and therefore should have required referral to the Harbor Commission for a public hearing with public notice, particularly because the dock adversely affects a neighboring property owner. He stated that Ms. Jennings was denied the opportunity to be heard and to request Commission review of whether the dock should remain, be rebuilt, or be realigned to reduce its impact. He emphasized that the purpose of the request is to allow the Harbor Commission to weigh in on the appropriateness of the dock's location.

Secretary Scully requested clarification regarding the addresses involved. Mr. Gosney confirmed that Ms. Jennings' property is located at 503 North Bayfront, the neighboring property at 505 North Bayfront, and identified the neighboring owner as Katherine Green.

Secretary Scully closed public comments.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Draft Minutes of the November 12, 2025 Harbor Commission Regular Meeting

Secretary Scully opened public comments. Seeing none, Secretary Scully closed public comments.

Commissioner Yahn moved to approve the November 12, 2025 Harbor Commission Regular Meeting minutes, as amended. Seconded by Commissioner Miller. The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Miller, Svrcek, Yahn, Scully

Nays: None

Abstain: Williams

Absent: Martson, Beer

6. CURRENT BUSINESS

6.1 Restoring Oysters in Newport Harbor and Commensurate Benefits

Recommendation:

1. Determine this action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15060(c)(2) and 15060(c)(3) of the CEQA Guidelines because this action will not result in a physical change to the environment, directly or indirectly; and
2. Receive and file.

Secretary reported that Mr. Ulcickas is ill and unable to attend the meeting. As a result, he explained that the item will be postponed and is expected to be brought forward at the February meeting.

6.2 2026 Harbor and Beaches Master Plan - Approve

Recommendation:

1. Determine this action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15060(c)(2) and 15060(c)(3) of the CEQA Guidelines, California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3, because it has no potential for resulting in physical change to the environment, directly or indirectly.
2. Approve the 2026 Harbor and Beaches Master Plan and recommend staff forward to the Finance Committee for consideration.

Public Works Administrative Manager Chris Miller presented the Harbor and Beaches Master Plan, which the Harbor Commission reviews annually. He noted that the Commission reviewed the plan in November, did not meet in December, and is now being asked to provide final comments and consider approval so the document may move forward for further review and approval. He stated that physical copies of the plan were available in the lobby due to the document's size and complexity. He explained that the plan serves as a comprehensive, living list of major harbor-related capital projects requiring long-term planning and funding consideration. He emphasized that the document is not a budget and does not approve expenditures, but instead informs future annual budget development, which begins each July 1.

Public Works Administrative Manager Miller stated that the plan consists of a detailed spreadsheet outlining project scopes, timelines, and estimated costs, acknowledging that cost estimates are projections based on experience rather than exact figures. He noted that the document is updated annually to reflect new information, emerging projects, and Commission input. He reported that he incorporated prior Harbor Commission comments, primarily within the "Potential Projects" section, and invited commissioners to identify any additional corrections or refinements. He concluded by offering to answer questions, provide additional detail as requested, and incorporate any final edits identified during the discussion prior to Commission consideration of approval.

Commissioner Svrcek referenced several upcoming bulkhead projects identified in the plan, including the West Newport street ends in 2027 at an estimated \$18 million, the Balboa Peninsula street ends in 2028 at approximately \$23 million, and the Grand Canal bulkheads in 2028 at an estimated \$60 million. He noted that these projects collectively represent nearly \$100 million in anticipated costs and inquired whether grant funding could help offset those expenses.

Public Works Administrative Manager Miller acknowledged the significant cost and stated that staff routinely evaluates available grant opportunities as projects advance into design and implementation phases. He explained that while the listed dates reflect current forecasts, staff would likely stagger the projects rather than undertake them simultaneously, and timelines would continue to be refined in future updates.

Commissioner Svrcek emphasized the scale of potential grant funding and suggested that securing even a portion of those funds could justify dedicating staff or resources specifically to grant acquisition.

Public Works Administrative Manager Miller confirmed that the City has an on-call grant consultant whose primary role is to pursue grant opportunities across departments, including Public Works, Library, and Recreation. He stated that this consultant serves as the City's first-line resource for identifying and pursuing applicable grant funding for large capital projects.

Committee Member Svrcek noted that the bridge to Collins Island is expected to be reconstructed or replaced and asked whether that project was included in the current plan or funded through a separate budget.

Public Works Administrative Manager Miller responded that the bridge project is not included in this plan but is addressed in another planning document. He acknowledged that the project could reasonably be included here, but explained that he has not been directly involved, as the staff member previously managing the project retired last month. He stated that staff is currently determining who will assume responsibility for the project and noted that earlier questions regarding funding responsibility have since been resolved.

Commissioner Yahn questioned the phasing and scheduling of the West Newport and Balboa Peninsula bulkhead projects, noting that Phase One of the West Newport project listed a design year of Fiscal Year 2025 despite appearing to already be underway. He asked whether the schedule should be updated and whether projects occurring within the next year should be elevated for Finance Committee review.

Public Works Administrative Manager Miller responded that the 2025 design year is accurate and confirmed that staff is actively working on the project. He clarified that not all projects are reviewed by the Finance Committee, explaining that only the largest projects typically require that step, while others are incorporated directly into the annual budget and reviewed through the City Council budget process.

Commissioner Yahn raised concerns about the future value cost estimates, noting that the projected increase from approximately \$1.6 million to \$18 million over a short period appeared inconsistent. He noted that Phase Two is \$15.6 million and questioned if Phase One and Two were being combined for a net cost of \$18 million.

Public Works Administrative Manager Miller acknowledged that the future value cost estimate column shown in the spreadsheet was inaccurate, explaining that the formula had not been vetted and should have been hidden. He apologized for the confusion and clarified that Phase One and Phase Two costs were being combined to reach the overall projected total.

Commissioner Yahn indicated that the explanation resolved his concerns and noted that his confusion stemmed from the spreadsheet presentation rather than the underlying project assumptions.

Turning to Lower Castaways, Commissioner Yahn explained that the \$47 million figure listed under potential projects originated as a placeholder tied to an earlier swimming pool concept developed during subcommittee discussions. He emphasized that the figure was not intended to reflect a current or finalized project cost and noted that the concept has since evolved toward a park-focused approach that may involve public-private funding and a significantly lower cost.

Public Works Administrative Manager Miller agreed, stating that the placeholder was intentionally retained to keep the project visible in long-range planning. He explained that frequently adjusting speculative figures can create unnecessary confusion and confirmed that staff's intent was to maintain awareness rather than provide a precise estimate at this stage.

Commissioner Miller raised two comments regarding capital planning. First, he noted that the upcoming dredging and reconstruction of the yacht basin would require relocating vessels and suggested that this may present an opportunity to replace aging piers concurrently, acknowledging that staff may have a different construction sequence. Second, he referenced recent super-tide events that resulted in localized flooding near Agate Street, South Bayfront, and Palm Street, and asked whether the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) includes sufficient funding to elevate and protect vulnerable harbor infrastructure.

Secretary Scully revisited the \$47 million placeholder listed for the Lower Castaways project. He acknowledged that while the figure was intended as a placeholder, it may create unnecessary concern due to its size.

Public Works Administrative Manager Miller stated that staff could reduce the figure or set it to zero. He agreed that retaining the \$47 million figure could be misleading and committed to revising it in the final version of the plan.

Commissioner Yahn noted that some potential projects, such as the water taxi, are currently shown with zero estimated cost. Secretary Scully commented that including large placeholder figures can give the impression of excessive government spending.

Public Works Administrative Manager Miller agreed to make that change.

Secretary Scully expressed appreciation for staff's willingness to adjust the document and commended the City's long-term, forward-looking approach to infrastructure investment. He contrasted Newport Beach's proactive maintenance practices with infrastructure conditions observed elsewhere and emphasized the importance of continued investment to preserve the City's quality and resilience.

Secretary Scully opened public comments.

Adam Leverenz thanked Public Works Administrative Manager Miller and staff for preparing the Harbor and Beaches Master Plan, describing it as a valuable, forward-looking and informative document that functions as a "living" planning tool. He stated that the level of detail provides meaningful insight into future capital needs. He noted an inconsistency in the spreadsheet under the Public Piers – Repair/Replace section. He observed that several piers recently rebuilt remain listed under repair/replace rather than being moved to the completed projects category and asked whether those entries should be updated. He then addressed Potential Projects, Item C, referencing a public dock proposal in Promontory Bay discussed approximately one year earlier. He noted that the item had been removed from the current spreadsheet and requested clarification. He recalled that the original proposal placed the dock within a navigation channel, which raised concerns from nearby property owners, and that two alternative locations were later identified. He pointed out that one alternative location appeared to utilize an existing public walkway area and questioned why that option could still not be considered, particularly given its proximity to nearby commercial amenities.

Mr. Leverenz also referenced other potential projects listed, including the water taxi proposal and the alternative mooring tackle pilot program. He noted that a water taxi has previously been discussed as a

means of adding value to moorings but cautioned that public concern exists regarding long-term staffing costs. He suggested that, if pursued, the City consider a third-party operator and ensure the concept receives thorough analysis and public discussion.

Jim Mosher stated that he had previously commented on the document and noted that it originated as the Tidelands Infrastructure Capital Plan, which was developed by the City Council's Tidelands Management Committee. He explained that when the committee dissolved around 2012–2013, it assigned ongoing oversight responsibilities to multiple bodies, including the Harbor Commission and the Water Quality Coastal Tidelands Committee. He advised that the Harbor Commission should not feel obligated to review all items in the plan, as certain topics, particularly those related to ocean beaches, sand replenishment, and upper bay catch basin dredging, fall under the purview of the Water Quality Committee rather than the Harbor Commission. He expressed concern about coordination and timing, noting that the Finance Committee is scheduled to review the plan in February, though its continued operation at that time is uncertain. He added that while the Water Quality Committee met recently and will meet again before February, the plan is not currently on its agenda, leaving uncertainty about when those items will be reviewed.

Mr. Mosher further noted that some projects under consideration by the Water Quality Committee, including rehabilitation efforts near the Newport Aquatic Center, do not appear in the current plan. Regarding Lower Castaways, he stated that although he appreciated the Harbor Commission's interest, the site is neither within the harbor nor technically tidelands, but rather a City park. He suggested that projects related to Lower Castaways, as well as upland improvements near the Aquatic Center, may be more appropriately addressed through the City's Parks Master Plan rather than the Harbor and Beaches Master Plan.

Anne Stenton, representing the Newport Mooring Association, expressed appreciation for the Harbor and Beaches Master Plan and concurred with prior comments regarding its usefulness and clarity. She thanked staff for preparing and sharing the document and for facilitating the discussion. She requested clarification on two items listed under Potential Projects: the mooring helical anchor upgrades (onshore and offshore) and the alternative mooring tackle pilot test program. She asked staff to explain the scope and intent of these items.

Secretary Scully closed public comments.

Secretary Scully requested a motion to approve the Harbor and Beaches Master Plan with the revisions discussed, including confirmation that the plan is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). He clarified that the revisions included setting the Lower Castaways project cost placeholder to zero, and asked whether any additional changes were required before proceeding to a vote.

Commissioner Yahn moved to approve the 2026 Harbor and Beaches Master Plan, as amended, including the CEQA exemption, and to recommend that staff forward the plan to the Finance Committee for consideration. Seconded by Commissioner Williams. The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

Ayes:	Miller, Svrcek, Yahn, Williams, Scully
Nays:	None
Abstain:	None
Absent:	Marston, Beer

6.3 November 2026 Harbor Commission Meeting

Recommendation:

1. Find this action exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15060(c)(2) (the activity will not result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment) and 15060(c)(3) (the activity is not a project as defined in Section 15378) of the CEQA Guidelines, California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division

- 6, Chapter 3, because it has no potential for resulting in physical change to the environment, directly or indirectly; and
2. Approve the updated November 2026 Harbor Commission Meeting date.

Secretary Scully noted that the November 2026 Harbor Commission meeting is currently scheduled for November 11, 2026, which coincides with Veterans Day, a City holiday.

Secretary Scully opened public comments. Hearing none, Secretary Scully closed public comments.

Commissioner Svrcek moved to reschedule the November 2026 Harbor Commission meeting from November 11, 2026, to November 18, 2026. Seconded by Commissioner Williams. The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Miller, Svrcek, Yahn, Williams, Scully
 Nays: None
 Abstain: None
 Absent: Marston, Beer

6.4 Ad Hoc Committee Updates

Recommendation:

1. Find this action exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15060(c)(2) (the activity will not result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment) and 15060(c)(3) (the activity is not a project as defined in Section 15378) of the CEQA Guidelines, California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3, because it has no potential for resulting in physical change to the environment, directly or indirectly; and
2. Receive and file.

Balboa Ferry Ad Hoc – Commissioners Scully, Svrcek and Yahn (05-10-2023)

Secretary Scully reported that he recently spoke with Joe Beak and representatives of the Beak family ferry company, which has been actively pursuing grant funding to construct new electric ferries and the associated charging infrastructure required for daily operations. He noted that the company previously received \$2 million through the Carl Moyer Program, which required destruction of the existing diesel engines. He further reported that the ferry company has now successfully completed the required documentation and approval process with the California Air Resources Board and has been awarded an additional \$8 million in grant funding, bringing the total grant funding to \$10 million.

Secretary Scully stated that the company will now proceed with the architectural and design phase, including hiring a marine architect, to design and build three new electric ferries. He noted that following completion of design, the company will issue an RFP to select a shipyard for construction. He concluded that, based on the current timeline, it is likely that electric ferry service will be operating in Newport Harbor within approximately two years.

General Plan Harbor & Bay Element Update Ad Hoc – Commissioners Scully, Marston, and Yahn (10-09-2024)

Secretary Scully stated that, in his view, the item had reached its conclusion. He noted that the Harbor Commission had transmitted its final recommendations to the ad hoc committee and suggested that no further action was necessary unless a commissioner disagreed.

Secretary Scully asked Harbormaster Blank whether the appropriate next step would be to place a motion on the agenda to formally conclude the item, or whether the matter could be closed at the current

meeting. Harbormaster Blank advised that the Commission could adopt a motion to formally conclude and resolve the item.

Secretary Scully indicated that such action would be taken later in the meeting and requested confirmation from Commissioner Yahn as to whether he agreed with that approach. Commissioner Yahn stated that he had no objection.

Harbor Commission Objectives Committee – Commissioners Beer, Scully, and Marston (08-13-2025)
None.

Secretary Scully opened public comments.

Jim Mosher stated that an ad hoc committee for the General Plan update was no longer necessary. He clarified that the Harbor and Bay Element, incorporating comments from the Harbor Commission, is currently being prepared by a City consultant. He reported that a nearly final draft is expected to be made public within the next week and will proceed to the Planning Commission and City Council.

Mr. Mosher noted that the 24-member General Plan Advisory Committee, on which he serves, is expected to hold its final meeting in approximately one week. He further explained that the Harbor and Bay Element will return to the full Harbor Commission one final time for review prior to consideration by the Planning Commission and City Council. He concluded that, given this process, a separate ad hoc committee was no longer needed. He noted that the City is aiming to complete the process and obtain City Council approval by June.

Adam Leverenz thanked Secretary Scully and Vice Chair Marston for their extensive review and detailed feedback on the General Plan materials, noting the significant volume of information involved.

Based on the discussion, Secretary Scully stated that the General Plan Update – Harbor and Bay Element ad hoc committee should be formally concluded.

Commissioner Williams moved to terminate the General Plan Update & Harbor and Bay Element ad hoc committee, Seconded by Commissioner Yahn. The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

Ayes:	Miller, Svrcek, Yahn, Williams, Scully
Nays:	None
Abstain:	None
Absent:	Marston, Beer

There was no further action taken on this item, and it was received and filed unanimously.

6.5 Harbor Commission 2024 Objectives

Recommendation:

1. Find this action exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15060(c)(2) (the activity will not result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment) and 15060(c)(3) (the activity is not a project as defined in Section 15378) of the CEQA Guidelines, California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3, because it has no potential for resulting in physical change to the environment, directly or indirectly; and
2. Receive and file.

Conduct annual review of Title 17 and recommend updates to City Council where necessary
(Commissioner Yahn)

Commissioner Yahn reported that the committee is actively conducting the annual review of Title 17. He stated that staff presented proposed items earlier in the process and that a stakeholder meeting was held in October, which generated public comment. He explained that the committee is now refining the feedback received from stakeholders and the public. He noted that although the committee had planned to present an update earlier, the absence of a December Harbor Commission meeting delayed that timeline. He stated that a consolidated and conclusive list of recommended changes, incorporating public input and proposed revisions, is expected to return to the Commission at the February meeting. He characterized the process as productive and on track.

Commissioner Miller concurred, noting that he attended the same stakeholder meeting and agreed with the assessment.

Collaborate with the Water Quality/Coastal Tidelands Committee to partner on areas within the Harbor that both Commission/Committees intersect (Commissioners: Svrcek, Scully)

No update.

Continue with the participation of businesses, nonprofits, and the Harbor Department with a Newport Harbor Safety Committee to promote best practices and address safety issues on the water
(Commissioner: Scully).

Secretary Scully stated that he expects to provide a more detailed update at the next Harbor Commission meeting. He noted that the Commission has previously discussed whether additional safety training or education should be required for individuals renting watercraft under marine activity permits. He reported that he has begun exploring this concept, including potential safety requirements prior to renters leaving the dock. He indicated that the topic may be brought forward for further discussion and possible agenda placement at a future meeting.

Review Harbor Department responsibilities, evaluate the Department's readiness and effectiveness to deliver Harbor services as necessary for normal operations and during emergencies and make recommendations as determined necessary (Commissioner: Scully, Williams).

No update.

Work with City Staff on an update of the market Rent to be charged for onshore and offshore mornings
(Commissioner: Williams, Beer).

No update.

Support staff in all efforts related to the dredge completion of the Federal Navigation channels in addition to the upcoming agency renewals of Regional General Permit (RGP54) shallow water dredging permit.
(Commissioners: Cunningham, Svrcek)

No update.

Secretary Scully opened public comments.

Adam Leverenz returned to the discussion on the Title 17 updates and noted that, following the stakeholder meeting, many participants were unfamiliar with the current advancements in composting toilet technology. He stated that he conducted additional research and encouraged the committee to review modern options before finalizing draft revisions, noting that updated technology could materially affect prior discussions. He reiterated his long-standing concern regarding reducing human waste in the harbor and urged the Commission to restore restroom facilities as an explicit goal and objective. He acknowledged that the topic has been controversial in the past but stated that removing it entirely from consideration is not productive.

Chair Beer closed public comments.

There was no further action taken on this item, and it was received and filed unanimously.

6.6 Harbormaster Update – November and December 2025 Activities

Recommendation:

- 1) Determine this action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15060(c)(2) and 15060(c)(3) of the CEQA Guidelines because this action will not result in a physical change to the environment, directly or indirectly; and
- 2) Receive and file.

Public Works Administrative Manager Miller provided an update on the City's two active dredging projects. He explained that staff tracks progress through a chart updated weekly, including an update completed that morning. He noted that the chart shows progress on the Lower Bay federal dredging project, which is being performed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, as well as the separate Balboa Yacht Basin dredging project, which is being completed by a different contractor.

Public Works Administrative Manager Miller noted that the tracking website is publicly available and that staff also distributes email updates every one to two weeks. He invited interested parties to request inclusion on the email distribution list. He explained that map colors indicate project status. He noted that the green areas reflect completed dredging, including the Turning Basin and approximately half of the area in front of the Balboa Bay Club and Resort. He stated that the remaining area in front of the Balboa Bay Club is expected to be completed within the next few days, after which crews will move west into the purple section over the coming weeks.

Public Works Administrative Manager Miller explained that all dredged material shown on the map, except the blue areas, is being transported to the Port of Long Beach for disposal. He reported that as of that morning, contractors had completed 38 scow trips to the Port of Long Beach, representing approximately 53 percent of the total material designated for disposal at that facility. He emphasized that delivering more than half of the Long Beach-bound material in a short time frame, since the project began in early December, represents significant progress. He stated that the next phase will focus on dredging from Marina Park to 19th Street, which also requires disposal at the Port of Long Beach. He explained that to access that material, contractors must first dredge through connecting channels, and staff is coordinating the most efficient approach to meet the Port of Long Beach's disposal deadline in mid-May.

Public Works Administrative Manager Miller explained that additional dredged material beyond that area is suitable for open-ocean disposal at the LA-3 site, approximately six miles offshore. He noted that the shorter transport distance allows crews to increase efficiency, with a target of up to two scow loads per day. He explained that each scow typically carries approximately 2,400 cubic yards of material, below its maximum capacity, to ensure safe transport. He concluded by noting that staff continues to plan for additional project components, including dredging within the Newport Harbor mooring fields, which will require further coordination. He emphasized that the City's top priority remains completing the remaining Port of Long Beach disposal material near Marina Park and 19th Street.

Secretary Scully asked how much of the J and H mooring fields would need to be relocated to access the remaining dredge material.

Public Works Administrative Manager Miller responded that little, if any, relocation of the J and H fields would be required. He added that the dredge bucket currently in use has a capacity of approximately 24 cubic yards, which he described as exceptionally large and highly efficient, equivalent to filling multiple dump trucks in a single scoop.

Commissioner Yahn then asked for clarification regarding dredging in the Turning Basin. He noted that the completed work appeared to focus on the perimeter areas near the docks and questioned whether the

central deepwater channel had also been dredged. He expressed concern that vessel traffic does not typically operate along the extreme edges and asked where the deepwater navigation channel is located within the basin and why the dredging pattern appeared limited to the perimeter areas.

Public Works Administrative Manager Miller explained that the authorized depth of the Turning Basin is minus 20 feet. He stated that approximately 85 to 90 percent of the Turning basin already meets or closely approaches that depth, which explains why dredging focused primarily on the perimeter. He noted that minor high spots existed along the edges of the basin, and although those areas were not significantly elevated, and noted that staff elected to address them while equipment was already mobilized.

Commissioner Yahn noted that the greatest concentration of unsuitable material is located in the channel area in front of Marina Park, which accounts for much of the remaining material being transported to the Port of Long Beach.

Public Works Administrative Manager Miller observed that portions of the map still show yellow and purple areas and estimated that roughly 25 percent of the remaining material may be located there, with the balance near Marina Park.

Commissioner Yahn whether there is any risk of exhausting available disposal capacity at the Port of Long Beach.

Public Works Administrative Manager Miller responded that disposal capacity at the Port of Long Beach is not a concern, as the Port requires far more material than the City is providing. He stated that the primary risk is timing and ensuring that all material reaches the Port within the required schedule.

Commissioner Miller then asked whether the City has any contractual deadline obligations with the Port of Long Beach and whether missing those dates would create risk.

Public Works Administrative Manager Miller explained that the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) does not specify exact delivery dates because construction schedules were unknown when the agreement was finalized. However, he noted that the agreement requires the City to comply with the Port of Long Beach's construction schedule, effectively obligating the City to meet the Port's timeline.

Commissioner Miller asked whether the current pace is sufficient.

Public Works Administrative Manager Miller stated that the schedule will be tight. He explained that staff is actively refining dredging logistics with the contractor to maximize efficiency, including fully loading scows to reduce trips. He noted that while the City is currently scheduled to meet the Port's deadline, unforeseen construction delays, either locally or at the Port, could affect the timeline. He concluded that staff is working to create additional schedule flexibility to reduce risk.

Public Works Administrative Manager Miller transitioned to the City-led dredging project at the Balboa Yacht Basin. He described the project as particularly challenging due to the confined space and need for highly precise dredging. He noted that there is very limited maneuvering room for the dredging barge within each fairway, requiring constant attention from operators. He explained that to avoid vessel conflicts, staff coordinated closely with boat owners whose vessels overhang into the fairways. He noted that those vessels were temporarily relocated either within the basin or to available slips at Marina Park, with assistance from Harbormaster Blank.

Public Works Administrative Manager Miller reported that more slips than expected were vacant or cleared, which allowed crews to dredge inside the slips themselves. He noted that, as a result, the project is removing more sediment than originally anticipated, which he described as a positive outcome. He stated that all dredged material from the Balboa Yacht Basin is being transported to the Port of Long Beach. He explained that by coordinating schedules with the Lower Bay dredging project, the City was

able to use the Port's excess capacity efficiently, aligning almost exactly with the basin's dredging volume.

Public Works Administrative Manager Miller explained that the equipment differs from the Lower Bay operation. He explained that the scows used in the basin have a capacity of approximately 300 cubic yards, compared to 3,000-cubic-yard scows used elsewhere. He noted that crews load and dispatch two scows nightly, typically departing around 5:00 p.m., transporting roughly 500 cubic yards per day to Long Beach. He explained that the scows return the following morning for refilling. He further explained that dredging within the basin uses a three-cubic-yard bucket, which he noted is appropriately sized for the confined marina environment. He commended basin tenants for their cooperation and patience, noting that staff provides regular email updates to keep stakeholders informed. He emphasized that while the project creates temporary inconvenience, staff has worked to minimize impacts. He also highlighted a key operational accommodation: each Friday evening, the dredging equipment vacates the fairways and relocates to a designated mooring-field area, allowing unrestricted weekend boating. He noted that dredging resumes the following Monday morning.

Secretary Scully inquired about the completion date.

Public Works Administrative Manager Miller indicated that the Balboa Yacht Basin dredging is expected to conclude in early February, plus or minus a few weeks.

Commissioner Miller asked whether the City's contract with Brink, managed through the Police Department, includes any applications for harbor operations, particularly given the technology's capabilities for drone monitoring, compliance, and surveillance.

Harbormaster Blank responded that the Brink contract is exclusive to the Police Department. However, he noted that the Police Department has extended support to Fire and Lifeguard operations for emergency responses. He described a recent demonstration in which a Brink drone simulated a harbor rescue by locating a person who had fallen from a kayak and was unable to reboard. He noted that the drone relayed telemetry to a nearby lifeguard and deployed a personal flotation device (PFD) carried within the drone's docking station. He explained that the drones are operated entirely by the Police Department, which holds the contract and technical expertise. He explained that while the system can respond to emergency calls on the harbor and ocean, it is not currently authorized or configured for routine harbor monitoring, surveying, or compliance activities. He confirmed that harbor operations are not included within the scope of the Brink contract.

Harbormaster Blank explained that the Harbor Department recently received two small consumer-grade drones as part of a holiday gift. He stated that staff have already used the drones successfully to observe debris and potential contamination spills. He noted that the Harbor Department has faced challenges identifying the source of certain spills, and that prior aerial assistance from the Huntington Beach helicopter highlighted the value of having in-house aerial capability to more quickly track contamination sources. He clarified that while the Harbor Department has conducted training drills using the drones, it has not yet deployed them in response to an actual contamination incident. He stated that the department will do so when such an event occurs. He emphasized that these drones provide limited but useful capabilities within the Harbor Department, while the Police Department maintains far more advanced and effective drone-based emergency response technology. He concluded by suggesting that expanded drone use for harbor operations may be worth future consideration by the Commission, noting that the technology offers significant potential benefits.

Harbormaster Blank presented a combined activity report for November and December, noting that the Harbor Commission did not meet in December and that the report therefore covered two months of activity. He stated that the Harbor Department continued to carry out its mission to keep the harbor clean, safe, and well-used. He noted that following recent storms, staff collected a significant volume of debris and responded to multiple contamination incidents. He reported that the response included recovery of a vessel shown in the presentation image, which is now in City custody and scheduled for removal,

response to an oil well disruption in West Newport that has since concluded, and investigation of a vessel in the J-Field containing diesel fuel, with an image shown of diesel present in the bilge. He emphasized that these incidents required extensive spill containment, spill response, and hazardous materials handling.

Harbormaster Blank reported that the Harbor Department has assumed responsibility for the maintenance and monitoring of the four trash skimmers operating in the harbor under City oversight. He stated that the vendor has been responsive and continues to ensure the skimmers perform as intended. He provided an update on the helical anchor trial program authorized by the Commission in November 2024. He reported that three helical anchor systems have already been deployed, two by the Harbor Department and one by a private individual. He added that arrangements are in place to deploy additional anchors later in the month, including two City moorings and one additional private mooring. He further reported that by the end of January, the program will include two City moorings, two private moorings, and two private aids to navigation utilizing helical anchor systems.

Harbormaster Blank reported that staff conducted late-night and early-morning navigation-light enforcement with positive results, including the interception of an unlit electric vessel near the Coast Highway Bridge. He noted that all patrol vessels have received recent upgrades, are fully operational, and have been hauled out within the past 90 days in compliance with risk-management requirements. He also reported that debris removal at the 19th Street pier resulted in the proper reporting and disposal of an edible CBD product. He reported that all public dock signage was updated by December 31 to comply with state regulations by changing references from "public pier" to "public dock." He further reported that the Christmas Boat Parade experienced increased participation and decorations compared to prior years, with no major incidents.

Harbormaster Blank reported continued coordination with the U.S. Coast Guard regarding unpermitted charter activity, noting improved compliance that benefits permitted operators. He also reported that threats were made against Harbor Safety Officers while performing their duties, which were documented and referred to the Newport Beach Police Department. In addition, he noted that a repeat offender was impounded at the Emerald Street public dock for ongoing violations. He concluded by noting staff support for the Christmas Boat Parade, including the use of his personal vessel as the final escort boat.

Harbormaster Blank advised that the State Lands Commission letter regarding tidelands management, issued in mid-December, has been posted on the Harbor Department and City websites. He noted that the letter is expected to be discussed at the City Council planning session scheduled for January 31. He also reported that updated training materials for Harbor Safety Officers have been implemented and are being well received, with interest from other agencies that have reviewed the program.

Harbormaster Blank further reported that he completed a detailed analysis of abandoned vessel abatement and related grant status, which is included in the written report. Finally, he noted that during the week between Christmas and New Year's, he and the Deputy Harbormaster conducted a field visit to the entrance of San Diego Harbor, where they observed multiple abandoned and sunken vessels along the breakwater, as shown in the accompanying image. He explained that neither the Port of San Diego nor the City of San Diego currently have the resources or legal framework necessary to address the abandoned and derelict vessels located just outside the San Diego Harbor entrance. He noted that these vessels routinely break loose during adverse weather events and are subsequently abandoned, creating ongoing navigational hazards. He stated that the vessels shown in the images have remained in place since he first observed them in July and continue to pose safety concerns.

Harbormaster Blank explained that the chart shown was prepared in response to public comments questioning the City of Newport Beach's efforts related to abandoned and derelict vessel removal. He noted that since assuming the role of Harbormaster, the City has removed four vessels in 2020, forty-two in 2021, six in 2022, twenty-four in 2023, and thirty-two in 2024. He reported that only five vessels were removed in the most recent year due to funding limitations. He added that the cumulative cost of abandoned vessel removals over the past six years exceeds \$500,000. He further explained that

abandoned vessel removal is legally complex, as vessels remain private property until they are formally abandoned or surrendered, requiring the City to follow a defined legal process before acting. He noted that once those conditions are met, removal can proceed provided funding is available.

Harbormaster Blank also reported on the City's successful award of \$100,000 through the SAVE Grant for the upcoming two-year cycle, noting that the full amount could be expended immediately based on the current inventory of abandoned vessels in Newport Harbor. He highlighted that statewide SAVE Grant funding is disproportionately allocated, with approximately 62 percent awarded to Northern California agencies and 38 percent to Southern California agencies. He noted that Newport Beach was the only Southern California agency to receive the highest grant award in the most recent funding cycle.

Harbormaster Blank reported that the only other agencies to receive top tier SAVE Grant awards were Richardson's Bay and the Contra Costa County Sheriff's Office, both located in Northern California. He noted that within Orange County, the City of Oceanside was the only other agency to receive any funding during this grant cycle, receiving \$8,000. He noted that no other Orange County jurisdictions received state funding for abandoned vessel abatement.

Harbormaster Blank reported that the Port of San Diego and San Diego Lifeguards together received \$100,000, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department received \$44,500, and the cities of Redondo Beach and Long Beach each received \$50,000. He explained that his broader review of Southern California abandoned vessel funding was prompted by an inquiry from a resident regarding a sunken and abandoned vessel in a Catalina Island cove under Los Angeles County jurisdiction. He advised the resident to contact the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, noting that neither the City of Avalon, the Catalina Island Conservancy, nor the Santa Catalina Island Company appeared positioned to address the issue. Based on this review, he concluded that Newport Beach is taking significantly more proactive action than any other Southern California agency in addressing abandoned and surrendered vessels within its harbor.

Harbormaster Blank clarified that the prior discussion summarized the detailed funding context shown on the slide. He noted that the vessel depicted on the right-hand side of the slide has generated numerous public inquiries due to its unfurled sails during recent severe weather. He reported that the vessel is currently under impound by the Orange County Sheriff's Harbor Patrol and is therefore under their jurisdiction. He stated that the City has no authority to act on the vessel beyond documenting and reporting its condition. He further reported that the vessel has remained in its current condition for more than two weeks, that no corrective action has been taken to date, and that he has not been informed of the Sheriff's Department's plan for removal or remediation.

Harbormaster Blank reported receiving a detailed letter of appreciation from a harbor constituent regarding the navigation lights installed on private aids to navigation in May and July of last year. He noted that the project was lengthy and challenging and is summarized in the written staff report. He explained that the constituent also inquired about the process used to complete the work and asked whether additional lighting could be installed elsewhere. In response, he noted that staff initiated a survey of the 27 authorized private-aid lighting locations. He reported that preliminary findings indicate that approximately 13 locations require repair or replacement, and staff plans to address those needs by the end of the month.

Harbormaster Blank described what he characterized as the most unusual inquiry of the month, received via email shortly before the Christmas Boat Parade. He explained that the request sought permission to anchor a floating platform with a structure on it for five nights during the parade in order to host promotional events serving alcohol. He further explained that the requester initially proposed placing the platform within dredging laydown areas, which was denied, and subsequently proposed using the East Public Anchorage. He explained the anchorage requirements, including vessel operability, onboard residency, and the 72-hour time limit, which did not meet the requester's needs. He noted that the requester then asked about obtaining a permit the day before the parade began. He advised that there

was insufficient time to evaluate the engineering and safety implications of the platform and suggested the individual reapply for consideration in a future year.

Harbormaster Blank reported on Harbor Department statistics for November, December, and the full calendar year. He advised that in November, staff responded to approximately 2,100 calls for service, with 1,957 calls mapped, reflecting broad coverage throughout the harbor. He noted that December saw a lower overall call volume, which was notable given the activity associated with the Christmas Boat Parade. He further noted that this was likely due to inclement weather and a general reduction in harbor activity during the month. He reported that the Harbor Department responded to a total of 26,513 calls for service, with 23,482 of those mapped. He reported that August was identified as a particularly high-activity month and stood out as an anomaly, which staff will consider when preparing for similar conditions in the coming year.

Harbormaster Blank also reported that harbor amenity usage during October, November, and December were tracked consistently with prior years. He noted that the harbor amenity map continues to be actively maintained and was most recently updated to reflect new and upgraded public dock configurations. He reported on Harbor Department permitting activity for calendar year 2025, comparing it to 2024. The data showed a significant increase in overall permitting activity in 2025; a trend staff expects to continue into 2026. He noted that not all permit applications are approved. He explained that for harbor events, 88 permit applications were approved and issued, 7 were denied, 5 were canceled, and 2 remained pending at year-end. For Rhine Wharf permits, 42 were issued, 1 was denied, and 4 were pending. For marine activity permits, 65 were issued, 2 were denied, 5 remained in process, 11 were withdrawn, and 4 were closed.

Harbormaster Blank also reported that mooring permit transfers transitioned to the City's eGov system in mid-December. More than 25 transfers have already been processed using the new system, which allows permittees to complete transactions at their own pace without scheduling requirements. He explained that staff anticipates being able to report detailed mooring permit statistics directly from the eGov platform going forward. He concluded by reviewing anchorage usage, noting that active utilization throughout November, followed by continued but slightly reduced usage in December.

Commissioner Yahn thanked Harbormaster Blank for the comprehensive two-month report and asked for clarification on the reasons permit applications are denied.

Harbormaster Blank explained that the most common basis for denial is insufficient parking to support the proposed customer load. He added that at least one application was denied because the applicant lacked the required U.S. Coast Guard licensing to operate as proposed.

Commissioner Yahn also asked about insurance requirements for marine activity permits.

Harbormaster Blank responded that insurance thresholds vary by activity. He explained that small, non-passenger services such as hull cleaning typically require approximately \$300,000 in liability coverage, while large charter operators carrying passengers may be required to carry up to \$10 million in liability insurance, with the City named as additionally insured.

Commissioner Svrcek asked whether the Harbor Department used an outside consultant to secure grant funding for abandoned and derelict vessel removal.

Harbormaster Blank responded that no outside consultant was used. He stated that the Harbor Department's Management Analyst handled the grant application, follow-through, award, and execution internally, and noted that Management Analyst Shintaku should be commended for her work.

Secretary Scully asked whether the Harbor Department was involved in the recent fatal fishing incident near the end of the breakwater.

Harbormaster Blank explained that the department provided very limited assistance, participating briefly in a survey and search effort on one day. He noted that the primary response and ongoing efforts were conducted by the Newport Beach Police Department, Newport Beach Lifeguards, and the Orange County Sheriff's Harbor Patrol.

Secretary Scully then asked whether additional coordination with the Orange County Sheriff's Department was warranted regarding a vessel currently impounded by the Sheriff's Harbor Patrol and whether there were steps the City could take to help move the matter forward.

Harbormaster Blank advised that he has directed concerned residents regarding the impounded vessel to contact the Orange County Supervisor representing the district and request that the Sheriff's Department address the issue. He stated that the Harbor Department has no authority over the Sheriff's operations and no insight into their resources, priorities, or internal decision-making, and that direct intervention by the City would likely be ineffective.

Secretary Scully asked for clarification on references in the written report regarding increased Coast Guard activity in Newport Harbor.

Harbormaster Blank explained that Coast Guard Sector Los Angeles–Long Beach has established a new Port Security Unit (PSU), responsible for waters from Ventura to Dana Point. He noted that the unit's mission includes detecting human trafficking, illicit material trafficking, and enhancing port security. He further explained that the PSU supports local assets, including the Coast Guard Narwhal assigned to Newport Beach, and conducts additional recreational vessel inspections while monitoring for suspicious activity. He stated that the City should expect to see this unit operating in Newport Harbor, typically in smaller vessels with standard military-style Coast Guard uniforms.

Secretary Scully asked whether the Coast Guard would be enforcing California Boater Card requirements.

Harbormaster Blank responded that the Coast Guard does not enforce state boater card requirements but has already been observed stopping recreational vessels to conduct safety and compliance inspections.

Secretary Scully commented on conditions observed near San Diego Harbor and expressed concern regarding the accumulation of abandoned and derelict vessels near a major deep-water port.

Secretary Scully opened public comments. Hearing none, Secretary Scully closed public comments.

There was no further action taken on this item, and it was received and filed unanimously.

7. MOTION FOR RECONSIDERATION

None.

8. MATTERS WHICH COMMISSIONERS WOULD LIKE PLACED ON A FUTURE AGENDA FOR DISCUSSION, ACTION, OR REPORT (NON-DISCUSSION ITEM)

None.

10. DATE AND TIME FOR NEXT MEETING – Wednesday, February 11, 2026 at 5 p.m.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for February 11, 2026 at 5:00 p.m.

11. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business coming before the Harbor Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

DRAFT