



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900
Boston, MA 02114

Charles D. Baker
GOVERNOR

Karyn E. Polito
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

Matthew A. Beaton
SECRETARY

Tel: (617) 626-1000
Fax: (617) 626-1081
<http://www.mass.gov/envir>

Executive Office of Energy and Environment Affairs
Office of Coastal Zone Management

Notice of submission of a Request for a Notice to Proceed for the Town of Cohasset Municipal Harbor Plan pursuant to 301 CMR 23.00

In accordance with the applicable regulations at 301 CMR 23.00, the Town of Cohasset has submitted a Request for a Notice to Proceed to the Director of the Office of Coastal Zone Management to initiate the development of a Municipal Harbor Plan for the Cohasset Harbor waterfront.

Written comments on the proposed planning program will be considered. Comments must be received by 5:00pm on Friday, November 9, 2018 (30 days after publication of this notice in the Environmental Monitor). Comments should be addressed to:

Office of Coastal Zone Management
251 Causeway Street, Suite 800
Boston, MA 02114
Attention: Jason Burtner

Copies of the state regulation under which the proposed planning program will be evaluated (301 CMR 23.00) can be obtained at the State Bookstore, Room 116, State House, Boston, MA 02133, or at <https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2016/08/oq/301-cmr-23.pdf>

Notification Date: October 10, 2018

TOWN OF COHASSET
COHASSET TOWN HALL
41 HIGHLAND AVENUE
COHASSET, MA 02025



OFFICE OF THE PLANNING BOARD
Peter Matchak, Director of Planning
OFFICE: 781-383-4100 Ext: 5128
FAX: 781-383-0228

September 25, 2018

Bruce K. Carlisle
Director
Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
251 Causeway Street, Suite 800, Boston, MA 02114

Re: Town of Cohasset Municipal Harbor Plan

Dear Director Carlisle:

On behalf of the Town of Cohasset, Massachusetts, this memorandum and attached letter requests the issuance of a Notice to Proceed with the preparation of an update to the Municipal Harbor Plan (MHP) for the Cohasset Harbor pursuant to the provisions of 301 CMR 23.03.

The Town requests the attached notice to be advertised in the upcoming October 10, 2018, Environmental Monitor.

Sincerely,

Peter Matchak
Director of Planning

TOWN OF COHASSET
COHASSET TOWN HALL
41 HIGHLAND AVENUE
COHASSET, MA 02025



OFFICE OF THE PLANNING BOARD

Peter Matchak, Director of Planning
OFFICE: 781-383-4100 Ext: 5128
FAX: 781-383-0228

September 25, 2018

Bruce K. Carlisle
Director
Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
251 Causeway Street, Suite 800, Boston, MA 02114

Re: Town of Cohasset Municipal Harbor Plan

Dear Director Carlisle:

On behalf of the Town of Cohasset, Massachusetts, this letter requests the issuance of a Notice to Proceed with the preparation of an update to the Municipal Harbor Plan (MHP) for the Cohasset Harbor pursuant to the provisions of 301 CMR 23.03.

On February 2, 2017, the Town of Cohasset received an \$80,000 grant from the Seaport Economic Council to produce an MHP as part of its efforts to plan and set priorities for future harbor work. The planning process that leads to a completed MHP will determine strategies and actions to support commercial and recreational activity on the waterfront, while strengthening the local economy. The planning effort will identify strategies to redirect investment to support the existing lobster fleet and marine-related retail businesses, enhance public access to the waterfront, link economic development in the Harbor to the downtown, and create a more vibrant Harbor. The plan will also be aimed at identifying potential land uses, solutions for transportation and environmental issues, enhancing the existing character and beauty of the area, and establishing better links between the harbor and the neighboring downtown.

Attached to this letter is the Town's proposed program for the planning process for this MHP. The Town of Cohasset views their Harbor as uniquely situated to both protect the Town's marine and waterfront resources and promote new opportunities for mixed use development that will provide enhanced public access and other elements that will allow for greater enjoyment of the waterfront. However, the Harbor faces challenges, including limited area to accommodate multiple user needs, the need to provide for an active commercial fishing fleet while balancing the desire for recreational boating, and the critical need to address the impacts of climate change, including projections for sea level

rise that will affect not just the Harbor, but significant portions of the entire Town. The planning process for the MHP will examine the area consisting of Cohasset Harbor and its adjacent uplands, running from the Harbor entrance at Whitehead Point to its terminus at the site of the Cohasset Harbor Inn, or approximately 66 acres of land and 68 acres of water (134 acres in total).

The Town expects to identify potential substitutions and/or amplifications and any related offsets to the standards in 310 CMR 9.00 as part of this planning process but has not identified specific changes at this stage. The planning process will include a robust public engagement process to identify and examine the impacts of any proposed substitutions, amplifications, and offsets.

Please publish a notice of the filing of this request in the next edition of the Environmental Monitor and forward a copy to the undersigned. It may be stated in this notice that copies of the proposed planning program may be obtained by contacting me. Once the Town of Cohasset receives a copy of this notice, it will publish the same in a local newspaper of general distribution and forward copies to all agencies listed at 301 CMR 23.08(a) and (b).

Thank you for your attention to this request. Please contact me at 781-383-4100 Ext: 5128 with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "P. Matchak".

Peter Matchak
Town Planner

**TOWN OF COHASSET MUNICIPAL HARBOR PLAN
REQUEST FOR NOTICE TO PROCEED – PROPOSED PLANNING PROGRAM**

1. Description of the Harbor Planning Group and Consultants

The Cohasset Harbor Committee will be the Harbor Planning Group, overseeing the development of the MHP. The Harbor Committee was established by §30-62 of the Bylaws of the Town of Cohasset. The Board of Selectmen appoints the members according to the requirements of the bylaw; membership is defined as the following: two citizens-at-large for three-year terms, one representative of the Yacht Club, one representative of the Cohasset Center for Student Coastal Research, one representative of the Cohasset Maritime Institute, one representative of the Sailing Club, two representatives of the commercial fishermen, one independent member, and one representative of the Recreation Commission. The Harbor Master is an ex-officio member of the committee. The Board of Selectmen accepted applications in the spring of 2017 for open positions prior to appointing the current membership of the Committee.

Current membership is as follows:

Timothy C. Davis
Citizen-at-Large
Chairman

Elizabeth Baker
Yacht Club Representative

Lorren Gibbons, Harbormaster
Ex-officio

Sean M. Kenealy
Sailing Club Representative

George L. McGoldrick, Jr.
Citizen-at-Large

Matthew B. Marr
Commercial Fisherman Representative

Kimberly Joan Mulcahy
Recreation Commission Representative

Thomas P. Norton
Independent Member

Lisa Hewitt
Cohasset Maritime Institute (CMI)
CMI Representative

Susan Bryant
Cohasset Center for Student Coastal Research (CSCR)
CSCR Representative

The Harbor Committee has hired a consultant team to assist with the production of the MHP. Harriman is the lead consultant, with GEI and FXM Associates providing supporting data, analysis, and recommendations for waterfront infrastructure and sustainability and economic development, respectively.

Harriman
170 Milk Street, Suite 5
Boston, MA 02109
(617) 426-5050

Project Director:
Steven G. Cecil, AIA, ASLA, Principal

Project Manager:
Emily Keys Innes, AICP, LEED AP ND, Associate and Senior Urban Planner

GEI Consultants
3 Bent St.
Franklin, MA 02038
(508) 533.6666
Waterfront Infrastructure and Facilities
Ronald R. Bourne, P.E.
Principal / Project Manager
Climate Adaptation Planning
Samuel B. Merrill, Ph.D., Senior Practice Leader

FXM Associates
53 County Road, Box 660
Mattapoisett, MA 02739
(508) 758-2238
Economic Planning and Research
Francis X. Mahady, Principal

The Harbor Committee and its consultant team will engage Town staff from several departments, including the Department of Public Works, Police Department, Fire Department, and the Conservation Agent through interviews and discussions regarding the planning process, their experience within the study area, and issues that could be addressed through the Municipal Harbor Plan.

2. Harbor Planning Area

The Harbor contains three specific areas (see attached map):

- **Cohasset Harbor** – A large shallow bight located southwestward of the Minot’s Ledge Light and about six miles southeastward of Point Allerton. The Harbor is frequented by numerous yachts and fishing craft. A prominent lookout tower is near the summit of a hill eastward of the Glades, on the east side of the harbor.
- **Cohasset Cove** – The inner harbor, protected by a breakwater which extends about 0.1 mile northward from near the westerly end of Bassing Beach. The breakwater is partially covered at high water. A dredged channel leads southward from the outer harbor to an anchorage basin southward of the Cohasset Cove anchorage.
- **Bailey Creek** – A dredged anchorage area Located in the southeastern part of the inner Harbor.

3. Historical Narrative, Initiating the Harbor Planning Process, and Prior Planning Efforts

a. *Historical Narrative of Land and Water Use and Development in the Harbor Planning Area*

The waterfront and shoreline have a special place in the heritage and identity of Cohasset. Although the Town has 6.12 miles of shoreline, only 3.4% of that shoreline is publicly owned, creating the smallest percentage of public coastal frontage of any municipality in the South Shore region from Weymouth to Plymouth.

Cohasset Harbor has long been at the center of the Town's history. The area was first visited by English colonists in 1614, when Captain John Smith explored the coast of New England and was reportedly attacked by native Algonquins from what was later called John Smith Rocks. Native Americans used to spend summers in the harbor area hunting and fishing until they moved inland in the winter.

Fishing activities and shipbuilding continued during colonial times. The Town Pier on Government Island is about 100 years old. While the harbor was safe, ledge along the coast posed significant dangers to shipping, with reportedly 40 vessels sunk in a period of nine years before 1841. Minot's Ledge Light was built and completed in 1850, destroyed one year later by a major storm with the loss of two lightkeepers, who are memorialized in a monument on Lighthouse Lane in Government Island. Rebuilt and completed in 1860, Minot's was at the time the most expensive lighthouse built in the United States, and as an historic landmark still marks proximity to the harbor.

The Yacht Club, in 1892, added recreational boating to the existing fishing and shipbuilding activities. Today, recreational boating is the dominant summertime activity in the harbor, limiting the space available for commercial fishing and supporting activities. Finding a workable balance between commercial fishing and recreational boating was an important aim of the latest Harbor Plan, completed in 1980, and continues to be a priority for current harbor planning efforts.

Those Cohasset residents who do not live directly on the water gain physical access to the shoreline at Sandy Beach (owned by an association but open to all Town residents), Bassing Beach (also a private association for Cohasset residents located in Scituate) or the harbor area. Management of Cohasset Harbor is a delicate balance between its small size and multiple interests, including commercial fishing and water dependent uses, such as a historic Marine Railway, lobster pound, docks and piers; recreational boating and public access; its status as a scenic, historic, recreational, and natural resource; the desire for economic development, including boating and the hospitality business; the needs of nearby residential neighborhoods; and the ability of the Harbor to exacerbate or mitigate the impacts of climate change.

b. Reasons for Initiating the Harbor Planning Process

The Town's previous and current planning efforts, including the Cohasset Open Space and Recreation Plan (2009), Town of Cohasset Community Resilience Building Workshop Summary of Findings (2018), the planning process for an updated Cohasset Master Plan (in progress), and the work of the Harbor Committee recognizes Cohasset's Harbor and all associated waterways as invaluable resources with unrealized potential.

These studies have common themes for both opportunities and the inherent challenges in realizing those opportunities, including increasing waterway activities, supporting recreational and commercial maritime uses, identifying land use strategies and economic development opportunities, increasing public access and open space, and developing transportation options to adequately support these activities.

The Harbor today faces significant challenges, such as limited space to accommodate multiple and varied user groups, overlapping and competing uses, and vulnerability to climate change. The Harbor needs to support the existing fishing fleet and enhanced public access to the waterfront, while protecting its capacity to endure environmental pressures and projected sea level rise. The MHP will serve to generate a shared vision for the future, identify goals and objectives, and provide recommendations to protect the harbor and the benefit it represents for the Town and all its constituencies.

The Harbor Committee has identified four specific topics of concern, based on current conditions within the Harbor. These topics are as follows:

- **Commercial Fishing** – Preservation of the water dependent fishing fleet in Cohasset has strong support in the community and meets the goals of economic diversity and preservation of the Town’s historic character as a fishing village. In addition to the preservation of moorings for commercial fishermen, the Town needs to preserve the landside support system and infrastructure for the fishing fleet.
- **Recreational Boating** – Cohasset Harbor has been at capacity for some time with approximately 200 recreational and commercial boats, and the harbormaster maintains a long waiting list for slips and moorings. The only public boat launch is at the end of Parker Avenue.
- **Landside Development** – Not all the landside parcels are owned by the Town, and the proximity of residential and commercial interests in the Harbor has led to past contentious discussions about physical improvements and changes in use.
- **Coastal Infrastructure** – Sixteen structures within the Harbor, either publicly owned or of unknown ownership, including seawalls, bulkheads, wharfs, docks, and piers; these structures provide significant coastal protection.

The Board of Selectmen reappointed the Harbor Committee in July 2017 to begin the pre-planning process prior to hiring a consultant for the MHP process. The Harbor Committee developed objectives for this planning process based on previous plans and studies conducted for the Harbor and the Town.

The August 16, 2017 meeting of the Harbor Committee, posted by the Town Clerk, included an “Issues Analysis” for the harbor. The Committee’s description of the event notes that twenty-five people attended, although the names for the attendees, other than the Committee members, are no longer available.

The primary goal for the MHP planning process that emerged from that session was to make “Cohasset Harbor the best possible resource for the Town of Cohasset.” Ten areas of concern were identified as part of the analysis, including harbor access, shoreline development, commercial fishing fleet, environmental, and infrastructure issues. The following list of goals is based on this analysis and subsequent meetings and conversations. These goals may be expanded and will be further developed with public feedback and comments received during the MHP process.

- Support the Cohasset Commercial Fishing Fleet
- Support public use of and access to the harbor
- Identify and plan for appropriate improvements to landside and waterside infrastructure
- Support public use of the harbor, including support for those town and civic organizations that enable such use
- Improve the geographical relationship between the downtown and the harbor
- Identify and improve commercial landside and waterside commercial activity
- Integrate and improve harbor management and uses
- Identify and address improvements to ecosystem and environmental issues
- Provide recommendations for a recurring dredging plan (areas/frequency/dredge type/potential funding sources) Provide an action plan and steps to implement the MHP recommendations, identifying responsible entities, timeline, and available funding mechanisms

The Town has also identified a need to consider the relationship between the harbor, waterways, and the Town’s downtown area as part of this planning process.

c. Discussion of Prior Planning Efforts

Previous and concurrent planning processes that involve Cohasset Harbor include:

- **Comprehensive Plan** – The Town is updating its comprehensive plan with the assistance of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC).

The comprehensive planning process will run parallel to the MHP process, and the MHP consultant team will work with the Town and representatives of the Cohasset Master Plan Committee to coordinate MHP findings and recommendations with the Comprehensive Plan.

- **Open Space Plan** – Cohasset is in the process of updating its 2009-2016 Open Space & Recreation Plan with the help of consultants Beals & Thomas Inc. The MHP consultant team will work with the Town and representatives of the Cohasset Open Space & Recreation Committee to coordinate MHP findings and recommendations with the Open Space Plan.
- **Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program** – Cohasset was one of 71 communities to receive funding in 2018 to undertake the planning to identify the conditions under which Cohasset is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and develop and action plan to address those vulnerabilities. The MHP consultant team will work with the Town to incorporate findings from the vulnerability analysis into its recommendations and MHP action plan.
- **Cohasset Harbor Master Plan (1980)** – Cohasset has an existing Harbor Plan completed in 1980. The Town received a grant from NOAA through Massachusetts CZM to prepare this plan, which was completed prior to the adoption of 310 CMR 9.00 and 301 CMR 23.00. Although the contents are therefore not fully consistent with those regulations, the plan may provide useful information for this planning process. The current MHP process will build upon the 1980 Harbor Master Plan background and recommendations.
- **South Shore Coastal Infrastructure Inventory and Assessment Demonstration Project Report** – Inventory of existing infrastructure and the condition of that infrastructure.

4. Participation Program

Public engagement is a critical component of every planning process. Ensuring that people – residents, business owners, institutions, property owners, elected and appointed officials, and the Town itself – are engaged in the process and have tangible mechanisms for input that will be addressed/incorporated during the planning process helps build ownership so that the implementation of the plan begins once it is approved. The Harbor Committee recognizes that successful planning will involve early and continuing interaction with the public and coordination with the Town’s boards, committees, and officials with jurisdiction. In addition, the Harbor Committee and their consultant team will consult with the relevant state, regional, and federal agencies, including CZM and

MassDEP. The planning analysis used to develop goals, address potential issues, and assess alternatives will involve a thorough public participation process.

The consultant team led by Harriman worked with the Harbor Committee to develop a robust participation program, including a written public outreach and engagement plan, regular meetings of the Harbor Committee, two public meetings, two public outreach events (such as attendance at a previously scheduled community event or an open house), and stakeholder interviews.

To involve the public in the process and encourage attendance at the Harbor Committee meetings and the public workshops, the Town works with the Harbor Committee to develop physical outreach methods, such as flyers, and coordinate social media outreach.

- **Harbor Committee Meetings** – Held regularly and open to the public, the meetings of the Harbor Committee include an update of the MHP planning process and discussion with stakeholders regarding the existing conditions of the Harbor. The dates and times of all Harbor Committee meetings are posted on the Town website.
- **Public Engagement 1** – Held April 25 at Cohasset Lightkeeper's House. During the annual Cohasset Center for Student Coastal Research (CSCR) State of the Harbor community outreach and education event representatives from the Harbor Committee, and the consulting team, and Town staff and officials participated in a panel discussion of the ongoing planning efforts regarding Cohasset Harbor.
- **Public Meeting 1** – Held May 31 at the Cohasset Senior Center. This meeting introduced the planning process to the public and allowed for a discussion of perceived positive aspects, opportunities, constraints, and the community's vision within the study area. Comment cards were also distributed and collected for community members to provide additional feedback and ask questions.
- **Public Meeting 2** – A second public meeting is planned for mid-way through the planning process. The format will include a review of the planning process and existing condition analysis. The interactive exercises will allow for a discussion refining the community's vision for development and concepts and strategies for public waterfront access.
- **Public Engagement 2** – A second public engagement event is planned for the final stages of the planning process to solicit feedback from the community regarding draft harbor plan recommendations.
- **Public Hearing with Board of Selectmen** – During a public hearing with the Board of Selectmen, Town Staff, the Harbor Committee, and

consultant team will present the findings and recommendations from the planning process and the Municipal Harbor Plan to the Board of Selectmen for final approval.

The public meetings have been designed to appeal to the widest audience and attract the most people. The meeting structure includes an opening presentation that sets the base of information and framework for the discussion, question session, and interactive exercises. The interactive exercises are designed to guide discussion toward productive feedback that informs the direction of the MHP. Consideration was given during the venue selection and scheduling to ensure the meetings were accessible to the greater Cohasset community.

This MHP planning process will also include targeted stakeholder focus groups and interviews to engage local business owners, property owners, community and neighborhood organizations, commercial fishermen, and individuals familiar with real estate and development within the study area, and Town staff. This will engage the stakeholders in the planning process and enable a focused discussion of their experiences, concerns and vision for Cohasset Harbor and will also help the Harbor Committee and the consultant team prepare and test the goals, strategies, and actions for inclusion within the plan.

Stakeholders are not limited to those within Cohasset's borders. The Harbor Committee and the consultant team will also reach out to CZM, DEP, and other affected state agencies and to the Town of Scituate. Cohasset Harbor is divided by the town boundary between Cohasset and Scituate; Bassing Beach, the breakwater, and certain parcels adjacent to the Harbor are within Scituate's borders.

5. General Description of the Study Program and Planning Analysis

Pre-planning actions that have informed the planning process and this Request for Notice to Proceed include:

- Definition of the harbor boundaries
- In-person review of the existing conditions in the MHP study area
- Regular meetings and discussion with the Harbor Committee
- A pre-filing consultation meeting held with CZM on March 29
- Participation at CSCR's State of the Harbor community outreach and education event held on April 25
- Public meeting held on May 31

Issues identified throughout the planning process will be addressed and recommended actions will be developed through the public process, as noted above, and incorporated into the MHP.

The Proposed Study Program will occur in three phases:

- **Phase I: Data Collection and Analysis** – The data on existing conditions collected in this phase will form the basis for the public discussion of future opportunities and challenges.
- **Phase II: Public Outreach and Engagement** – The participation program described above will inform the planning analysis used to develop the goals, address potential issues, and assess alternatives – including any potential substitutions or amplifications to 310 CMR 9.00. A significant public outreach program will invite the community to define their vision and goals for the future of the harbor area and understand the impact of existing conditions on options for the future.
- **Phase III: Draft and Final Report; Approvals** – The recommendations of the draft plan will be presented to the Town, Harbor Committee, identified stakeholders, and the public for their review and feedback. Once all feedback has been received, the consultant team will prepare the final draft for submission into the municipal and state approval process.

In addition, the project team will:

- **Analyze existing conditions** – Through additional review of prior studies; our own overall assessment of conditions; and discussions with the community through public meetings, Harbor Committee meetings, and stakeholder interviews. This would also include review of land uses and zoning districts, ecological and environmental spatial data, watersheet usage and preview dredging operations, and existing Waterways Chapter 91 licenses.
- **Clarify goals and objectives** – The community vision developed through previous planning efforts and Harbor Committee meetings will be reviewed and refined through an ongoing discussion with the Town and community members at public meetings, Harbor Committee meetings, and stakeholder interviews. This will ensure the MHP's recommendations reflect the community's current values and goals within the regulatory framework.
- **Identify and refine issues** – Through discussions with community members at public meetings, Harbor Committee meetings, and stakeholder

interviews. This would include developing goals and policies, and discussing their potential outcomes and implications with the community to gather public input and feedback

- **Develop strategies for public access to the waterfront** – Issues around public access and open space will balance the needs of water-dependent activities and public access, supporting facilities, and potential zoning changes to enhance the vitality of the area. Strategies and recommendations will be evaluated with the Town and community members at public meetings, Harbor Committee meetings, and stakeholder interviews.
- **Consultation with agencies** – Based on the findings from the public participation program, the State, Town, and consultant team will review findings and determine if any substitutions or offsets will be pursued.
- **Develop and select substitutions and offsets** – Following the interagency consultation and based on the goals and objectives identified by the community and Town, the MHP may propose and justify changes to the dimensional requirements of Chapter 91 regulations.
- **Draft an action plan** – The MHP will include a plan providing short-, medium- and long-term actions and the steps required to implement the MHP. The action plan will assign responsibilities among the stakeholders and identify potential resources to assist during the implementation process, including public participation and a list of available funding mechanisms.

Initial Study Area (Red dotted line)

Tidelands Jurisdiction - MHP Planning Area

