

South Texas Waterways Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

13:30, 15 April 2021

Meeting was held Zoom

*Below is a list of attendees that announced their name/ presence via Zoom.

Xavier Valverde	Kurt Hallier	Jason Gunning	Jalyn Stineman
Joe Harrington	John Pasch	BJ Schulze	Citlalli Martinez
Danielle Hale	Howard Gillespie	John Williams	Jose Franco
Josh Johnson	Arip Ismael	Kevin Campbell	Kevin Miller
Kevin Gibson	Kris Lamb	Larry	Michael Richardson
Greg Payne	RJ Thomas	Richard Ludwig	Robert Hawn
Royce Clutter	T. Holland	T. Lewis	Toby Tschoepe
Margaret Brown	John Mueller	Mark McGinnis	Preston Bailey
Rene San Miguel	Peyton Heinze	Russell Cordo	Bobby Wingate
Clark Robertson	Andrew Smith	Bryan Ray	Sean Strawbridge
Dwayne McCullion	Jay Rivera		

A. Call to order/opening remarks by chairman

At 1334 Chairman of STWAC, Xavier Valverde, called the meeting to order. The quorum was present. Xavier Valverde thanked all for attending.

B. Administration

At 1335 a motion was made to approve the minutes from the January 21, 2021 meeting; the motion carried.

C. Coast Guard COTP Remarks

At 1336 CAPT Jason Gunning, U.S. Coast Guard Sector Air/ Station Corpus Christi Deputy Sector Commander, greeted those in attendance. He discussed the winter weather event of 2021, continuing COVID-19 precautions, port growth, and increasing commercial activities. He thanked everyone for their flexibility with the Mad Dog 2 ARGOS Floating Production Unit inbound transit and float-off from M/V BOKA VANGUARD. CAPT Gunning reminded everyone that hurricane season is approaching, so facilities and vessels should begin to prepare. He discussed the incident with the M/V RIVERSIDE allision, which is still under investigation, and mentioned that he looks forward to discussion regarding tug escorts in Ingleside, TX. CAPT Gunning thanked all in attendance in advance for their coordination with the Wings Over South Texas Airshow.

D. Presentations

At 1345 Russell Cordo, Harbormaster for the Port of Corpus Christi, began a presentation regarding the situation of the M/V RIVERSIDE's loss of propulsion and subsequent allision with the MODA Ingleside Energy Center dock. Mr. Cordo discussed known specifics about the situation as it occurred. Bryan Ray asked if the M/V RIVERSIDE was under tug assist when it lost power; Russell Cordo noted that it was not but a Signet tug was in vicinity at the time.

At 1350 Captain John Williams, Presiding Officer of the Aransas-Corpus Christi Pilots, began a presentation regarding tug escorts in the Ingleside area, specifically the area of the Corpus Christi Ship Channel between the intersection with the Intracoastal Waterway and intersection with the La Quinta Channel. John Williams briefly discussed the history of the waterways including evolution to present-day, and future plans for growth including two Very Large Crude Carrier (VLCC) capable docks at MODA. He mentioned that Flint Hills Ingleside is an export facility, although they do have capability to import. John Williams noted that Gulf Marine Fabricators recently completed a project to accommodate vessels up to 45' draft at two berths. He noted that what was once a Naval Station with light traffic, the area has become a major energy complex with three major terminals. John Williams mentioned examples of loss of propulsions in that area, and concerns from the Aransas-Corpus Christi Pilots about ability to regulate larger vessels' speed so as to not surge moored vessels. The Pilots have been discussing the area and aforementioned concerns prior to the M/V RIVERSIDE situation occurring. The Aransas-Corpus Christi Pilots implemented a one 60 T minimum tug escort requirement for all vessels over 700' LOA, 38' and over draft. While contentious to some, John Williams noted that the requirement is necessary for safety. Arip Ismail of AET asked if the tug escort requirement was temporary; John Williams noted that the requirement is not temporary. Captain Kurt Hallier of ConocoPhillips applauded the new tug escort requirement and suggested the use of a passing ship study from terminals impacted. John Williams mentioned that the Pilots are in discussion with MODA and Flint Hills Resources about a passing vessel analysis. Kurt Hallier recommended not setting a speed limit, but rather a targeted speed recommendation. John Mueller of Flint Hills Resources inquired about the resistance and contention. Joe Harrington of Valero noted that while he understands the tethered tug need, he would prefer the discussion with industry first before implementation, specifically if it involves increasing the cost of doing business in Corpus Christi. Joe Harrington noted that the Inner Harbor facilities have the burden of the additional cost and that the average is about 1.5 hours of additional tug use, as a result of the tug escort requirement. He also noted that dredging the channel away from MODA should be considered for the future. Clark Robertson, Chief Operating Officer of the Port of Corpus Christi, noted that anytime developments occur there are growing pains, but responding with urgency to safety concerns is important. John Williams noted that he understands Valero's position, but that Valero does benefit from this policy. He also stated that the primary responsibility of the Aransas-Corpus Christi Pilots is to safely move vessels within the waterways, and that he feels that the Pilots did their job by implementing this escort zone. John Pasch of Cheniere noted that as the Port grows there is more pressure to ensure safety, and that even if procedurally the decision was different, ultimately the tug escort requirement would have resulted in the same permanent rule change.

E. Committee Reports

At 1422 Russell Cordo gave a presentation on the Vessel Movement Committee. He noted that February was challenging due to the winter storm, but that the Port of Corpus Christi continues to see an increase in the larger class vessels.

At 1424 Andrew Smith of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers noted that maintenance dredging has completed in the La Quinta Junction. Dredge Mike Hooks is working Matagorda Ship Channel until at least August. Dredge Jonathan King Boyd is working the Intracoastal Waterway near Port O'Connor through May. Orion Marine continues to work in the Victoria Barge Canal. There is a jetty rehab project in Port Aransas. The Corpus Christi Ship Channel Improvement project is working on breakwater construction south of the channel near Pelican Island/ Placement Area 6. Work continues at Placement Area 10 near Ingleside. Work will start near Placement Area 13 in the La Quinta Channel. Richard Ludwig inquired about Brownsville; Andrew Smith will ask for updates. Kurt Hallier inquired about Phase 2 of the Corpus Christi Ship Channel Improvement Project; Andrew Smith said the work is ongoing on the breakwater, but that he expects the dredge to be here in September.

At 1431 Margaret Brown, U.S. Coast Guard Sector/ Air Station Corpus Christi Waterways Management, gave a presentation on the Waterway Suitability Assessment (WSA) Advisory Committee. The Coast Guard is in the process of reviewing Vopak's WSA and requests participants for an upcoming WSA meeting.

At 1432 Danielle Hale gave a presentation on the Marine Firefighting Committee. She noted that the last meeting on March 11, 2021 had good attendance with 20 people and she stated her appreciation for the members. Danielle Hale stated that the Training Ad Hoc Committee is refreshing the training materials and working towards scheduling an initial face-to-face delivery sometime this quarter. Regarding the Marine Firefighting Resource Guide, updates received were incorporated and an update will be released soon. There is ongoing discussion needed for where the document will be maintained. Committee members reviewed draft letter from the Captain of the Port, which will add additional tasks to the current five action items that the group is working toward. The Committee discussed identifying best practices from other ports and will start incorporating tabletop discussions and likely port scenarios as part of the in-person meetings. The Committee is talking through the response and communications pathways/methods needed for success. For training announcements, Danielle Hall stated virtual delivery of advanced ICS courses and noted that the Port of Corpus Christi is sponsoring a full-scale exercise planned for Fall 2021. A presentation was given on U.S. Fire Pumps and Lessons Learned from Golden Ray in Georgia and Naval vessel fire in San Diego, CA. The next Marine Firefighting Committee will be held May 13, 2021.

Regarding the Gangway Safety and Waterway Rescue Ad Hoc Committee, Xavier Valverde noted at 1436 that Russell Pickering stated that progress is being made on gangways, and there are improved gangways at the oil docks.

At 1438 Xavier Valverde begin a presentation on the Ports and Waterways Suitability Assessment (PAWSA) Mitigation Strategy Ad-Hoc Committee. The Committee accepted a task from the Coast Guard regarding looking at the 2019 PAWSA report. The strategies are: *Strategy 1:* Reduce impacts from loss of propulsion casualties by establishing escort zone for deep draft vessels at Harbor Island and Ingleside.

Strategy 2: To improve vessel maneuverability, establish minimum vessel trim requirements for transiting the area.

Strategy 3: Reduce the probability of vessel allisions and collisions by having STWAC develop vessel transit reference/ guidance for commercial users, that includes areas requiring special attention.

Strategy 4: To reduce the probability of vessel collisions, allisions and groundings, add another factor to the vessel meeting and movement Harbor Safety Committee guidelines.

Strategy 5: To enhance the ability of the waterway to safely manage traffic, establish one-way traffic windows throughout the entirety of the commercial channel

Chad Chambers no longer works for ADM and is therefore no longer the chair of the subcommittee, so Xavier Valverde is now the chair. The most recent meeting was April 8, 2021 and discussion continue on the strategies addressed in the PAWSA. All members recommended against establishing one-way traffic windows. Discussion about trim requirements and a reference guide continue. A few more meetings are needed for the rest of the tasks and recommendations will be placed on the STWAC agenda for the July 15, 2021 meeting.

Sean Strawbridge, CEO of the Port of Corpus Christi, noted that the Port Authority is in discussion with the USACE Galveston District about expediting the Corpus Christi Ship Channel Improvement Project dredging.

F. Old Business

Joe Harrington gave an update on the Brownwater/ Bluewater Symposium, and noted that there is hope to host the event on October 13, 2021.

G. New Business

1. At 1454 Margaret Brown introduced the following personnel applying for STWAC membership: Bryan Ray and Peyton Heinze. Their applications were approved for membership.
2. At 1456 Xavier Valverde noted that the October STWAC meeting is his last Full Committee meeting as STWAC Chairman. He encouraged everyone to consider participating and applying as a Chairman or as Steering Group member.
3. At 1502 Jalyn Stineman of Del Mar College noted that Del Mar College has recently received Coast Guard approval to host basic safety training. Del Mar College is also working on other courses, with potential for 20 of the highest in-demand maritime classes hosted in-house in Corpus Christi.

G. Adjourn

At 1509 the meeting was adjourned by Mr. Valverde.

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