

Dana Point Harbor Oversight Advisory Committee

Wednesday, May 7, 2025

MINUTES

Robert Langan, DPHOAC Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:45 p.m. Committee members not in attendance included Darcie Harris, Wendy Leavell, Shala O’Keefe, John Fellner, and Mike Frost (with John Gabbard attending in place of Mr. Frost).

PRESENTATIONS/UPDATES:

County of Orange CEO Real Estate Update: Christian Gagne, the Dana Point Harbor Oversight Manager for the County of Orange, was unable to attend due to a schedule conflict. In his place, Chief Real Estate Officer Mat Miller provided the committee with an update on the latest developments related to DPHP and the Dana Point Harbor Revitalization progress. He reported that the parking structure is now scheduled for completion and opening in late May or early June. DPHP is continuing to layer in landscaping, install equipment, and is currently awaiting signage permits from OC Development Services. Phase 3 of the Commercial Core construction is scheduled to begin in July/August. The relocation of existing tenants to the wharf area is in process.

Mr. Miller went on to report that the next slip rebuild will be Phase 10, located in the east island portion of the marina, will commence following the completion of Phase 7.1 in June. Although Phase 9, near the Harbor Patrol docks, was originally scheduled to follow, additional phasing coordination is needed, leading to the decision to proceed with Phase 10 instead. The “public” comment period for draft EIR for the proposed hotels concluded on April 28, 2025. A total of 4 comment letters were submitted, two of which were negative. Responses to the negative comments are currently being formulated, and the DPHP do not anticipate any adverse impact on the proposed hotels as a result. The draft Hotel EIR is scheduled to be presented to the Dana Point Planning Commission at their June 23rd meeting.

The proposed relocation of the Outriggers Canoe Club to the Baby Beach area has run into some issues from the City of Dana Point Planning department. They have determined that the CDP submitted by the County was incomplete and therefore have requested additional information, including assessments of public impact and view shed impact, and several construction related details such as a grading plan. As a result, the Baby Beach site is on hold until a determination can be made regarding the cost of providing the additional information to the City, especially considering the risk that the City may ultimately deny approval for the relocation to the Baby Beach area. An alternative site has been suggested in the parking lot adjacent to Cove Rd; however, it has several potential issues as well, including the potential loss of mandated public parking spaces. In addition, safety issues have been raised including the need to cross Dana Point Harbor Dr, to access the beach area for launching and retrieving canoes. Also, the Coastal Commission would likely need to become involved which would further delay the relocation of the Outrigger Club. Councilman John Gabbard, who was in attendance, said he would contact the Planning Department to determine if the original Baby Beach location could be moved forward. Susan Lieb, DPHP, advised the Committee that the Outriggers will not be displaced until a suitable solution has been identified and constructed.

Mr. Miller advised the Committee that Bellingham Marine’s proposal to design and construct the OCSEC docks is scheduled to go before the OC Board of Supervisors on June 24th for review and potential approval of the contract.

O.C. Parks Update: Michael Wilson, Deputy Director of OC Parks, advised the Committee on the ongoing upgrade projects to the OCSEC, including the Cove Room roof replacement project. He mentioned that the project is largely complete, except for the installation of a new skylight. The skylight completion is pending the receipt of parts necessary for the skylight replacement. Additionally, improvements underway include the installation of water bottle filling stations, general maintenance including upgrades to the lighting system, and various cosmetics improvements to the OCSEC structure. Mr. Wilson also reported that OC Parks is working with the OC Animal Control department to mitigate the coyote population in the harbor. This includes signage advising the public to keep their dogs on leash due to increased coyote activity. Lastly, he advised that any reorganization of the OCSEC space, recommended in the IDS study, would start in the Fall to avoid disrupting summer programs/activities already scheduled by OCSEC users.

Mr. Wilson then advised the Committee that several events are scheduled for the harbor including the May 18th Aquafest and Supervisor Foley’s June 14th “Flag Day” celebration.

-Orange County Supervisor Foley Update: Due to a prior meeting running late, Supervisor Foley, arrived after the meeting was already in session and did not have an update to provide, as pertinent items had already been covered in the update provided by Mr. Miller. However, Supervisor Foley requested that Mr. Miller provide the Committee an update on the Third-Party Market Study on Dana Point Harbor boat slip rates, being conducted by John Laurain of R.P. Laurain & Associates, as she had not been briefed on its status prior to the meeting.

Mr. Miller advised the Committee that the study was close to being finalized with a May 19th target date. He indicated that Mr. Laurain’s professional analysis had defined the geographically comparable market area primarily as marinas located within Orange County. This finding came as a surprise to many of the committee members, who felt the finding was inaccurate and requested further clarification. They noted that contrary to Mr. Laurain’s findings, conversations that they have had with other boat owners have indicated that there are boaters leaving Dana Point Harbor for marinas outside of Orange County due to the significant differences in slip rates.

Supervisor Foley requested Mr. Miller to follow up with Mr. Laurain for additional detail regarding the basis for the market scope and asked for more information regarding his position. She also requested that Mr. Laurain evaluate, if the inclusion of a few comparable marinas from the southern Los Angeles and north San Diego regions, would materially affect the market range he established. Finally, she requested Mr. Laurain present his report, along with this additional information, at the next committee meeting.

-Committee Member/Additional Updates:

Diane Wenzel provided the Committee with details regarding the upcoming Aquafest and encouraged everyone to attend.

Susan Lieb, DPHP, advised the committee that Coffee Importers would be opening at the Ocean Institute June 2nd.

Bob Langan adjourned the meeting at 6:51 p.m. after a motion, a second and a committee vote for the adjournment passed. The next meeting is scheduled for 6/4/25.

ACTION ITEMS:

1. NEW - Market Study report to the Committee with additional detail.
2. OPEN - Resolution of construction contract for OCSEC docks.
3. OPEN - Relocation of the White Sea Bass grow pens.
4. OPEN - Public benefit Analysis by DPHP and the County of Orange.