



CITY OF NEWPORT BEACH HARBOR COMMISSION AGENDA

City Council Chambers-100 Civic Center Dr, Newport Beach CA 92660

Wednesday, March 11, 2026 - 5:00 PM

Harbor Commission Members:

Ira Beer, Chair
Marie Marston, Vice Chair
Steve Scully, Secretary
Bob Miller, Commissioner
Rudy Svrcek, Commissioner
Gary Williams, Commissioner
Don Yahn, Commissioner

Staff Members:

Paul Blank, Harbormaster
Cynthia Shintaku, Management Analyst

The Harbor Commission meeting is subject to the Ralph M. Brown Act. Among other things, the Brown Act requires that the Harbor Commission agenda be posted at least seventy-two (72) hours in advance of each regular meeting and that the public be allowed to comment on agenda items before the Commission and items not on the agenda but are within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Harbor Commission. The Chair may limit public comments to a reasonable amount of time, generally three (3) minutes per person.

The City of Newport Beach's goal is to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in all respects. If, as an attendee or a participant at this meeting, you will need special assistance beyond what is normally provided, we will attempt to accommodate you in every reasonable manner. Please contact Paul Blank, Harbormaster, at least forty-eight (48) hours prior to the meeting to inform us of your particular needs and to determine if accommodation is feasible at (949) 270-8158 or pblank@newportbeachca.gov.

Questions and comments may be submitted in writing for the Harbor Commission's consideration by sending them to harborfeedback@newportbeachca.gov. To give the Harbor Commission adequate time to review your questions and comments, please submit your written comments no later than 5 p.m. the day prior to the Harbor Commission meeting. All correspondence will be made part of the record.

NOTICE REGARDING PRESENTATIONS REQUIRING USE OF CITY EQUIPMENT

Any presentation requiring the use of the City of Newport Beach's equipment must be submitted to the Harbor Department 24 hours prior to the scheduled meeting.

1) **CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

2) **ROLL CALL**

3) **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

4) **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Public comments are invited on non-agenda items. Speakers must limit comments to three (3) minutes. Before speaking, we invite, but do not require, you to state your name for the record. The Harbor Commission has the discretion to extend or shorten the speakers' time limit on non-agenda items, provided the time limit adjustment is applied equally to all speakers. As a courtesy, please turn cell phones off or set them in the silent mode.

5) **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

5.1) **Draft Minutes of the February 11, 2026 Harbor Commission Regular Meeting**

[2.11.2026 Harbor Commission Meeting Minutes Draft](#)

6) CURRENT BUSINESS**6.1) The Interesting Story of the Newport Harbor Kelp**

Captain Nancy Caruso, Marine Biologist and Founder of Get Inspired will provide information on the story of how kelp in Newport Harbor came to be, its interesting story and how it is being studied by USC and others as a possible savior for California's kelp forests.

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.

[Staff Report](#)**6.2) General Plan Update: Final GPUSC/GPAC Draft Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Element**

At its meeting on November 12, 2025, the Harbor Commission reviewed recommendations from the ad hoc subcommittee that reviewed the draft Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Element, ultimately forwarding the input to the General Plan Update Steering Committee (GPUSC) and General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) for review and consideration.

The GPUSC/GPAC held a special joint meeting on December 3, 2025, to review comments on the General Plan Update from City Boards, Commissions, and Committees, and to provide direction to City staff and Dudek, the City's consultant, on how to incorporate responsive revisions, as deemed appropriate. The GPUSC/GPAC held another special joint meeting on January 21, 2026, and supported the comprehensive set of revised draft elements moving forward as the "Final GPUSC/GPAC Draft General Plan Update." This includes the revised Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Element, which is now being presented to the Harbor Commission for review and consideration.

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. Review the Final GPUSC/GPAC Draft Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Element, which has been revised to incorporate the Commission's input from October 2025. The Commission may provide additional input and should conduct a

vote to consider recommending the City Council adopt it as part of the comprehensive General Plan Update anticipated in May or June 2026.

[Staff Report](#)

[Attachment A](#)

[Attachment B](#)

6.3) Review and Discuss Proposed Elimination of Mooring Length Adjustment Process

Several applications to adjust mooring lengths are received by the Harbor Department annually. Some desire to eliminate the process of mooring length adjustments has been expressed. The Commission will discuss whether mooring length adjustments should be considered going forward.

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. Review and discuss the proposed elimination of mooring length adjustments
3. Provide direction to staff regarding the adoption of a recommendation to eliminate mooring size adjustments.

[Staff Report](#)

6.4) Discussion of Potential Safety Requirements for Small Vessel Rental Customers

The Harbor Commission will conduct a discussion regarding potential safety requirements for single-day small vessel rental customers operating in Newport Harbor. The purpose of this discussion is to explore practical and enforceable measures that could improve safety for renters, other harbor users, and the general public. Topics include renter orientation and education, life jacket availability and use, operator age or competency considerations, standardized harbor rules and navigation awareness, and potential technology-based or operational best practices. The Commission's feedback will help inform whether staff or the Newport Harbor Safety Committee should further evaluate or develop recommended guidelines or requirements for future consideration.

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; or
3. Provide direction to staff and/or the Newport Harbor Safety Committee regarding potential safety guidelines or requirements for single-day small vessel rental concession operators and their customers in Newport Harbor.

[Staff Report](#)

[Attachment A - Florida Boating Safety Education Requirements](#)

[Attachment B - Georgia Rental Boat Requirements](#)

[Attachment C - Harbor General Rules Signage](#)

[Attachment D - Harbor Map Sticker](#)

6.5) Ad Hoc Committee Updates

Several ad hoc committees have been established to address short term projects outside of the Harbor Commission objectives. This is the time the ad hoc committees will provide an update on their projects.

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.

[Staff Report](#)

6.6) Harbor Commission 2024 Objectives

Each ad hoc committee studying their respective Objective within the Commission's 2024 Objectives, will provide a progress update.

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.

[Staff Report](#)

[Attachment A-2024 Goals and Objectives](#)

6.7) Harbormaster Update - February 2026 Activities

The Harbormaster oversees the City Harbor Department and is responsible for the management of the City's mooring fields and Balboa Yacht Basin marina, support for the Harbor Commission, municipal code enforcement on the harbor, events and marine activities permitting, safety and rescue operations, management of the Marina Park visitor serving marina, marine sanitation pump out equipment and public pier maintenance, water quality monitoring and maintenance, impound and disposition of abandoned and unclaimed vessels and public relations and information dissemination on and about Newport Harbor as well as several special projects.

This report will update the Harbor Commission and the public on the Harbor Department's recent 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.

[Staff Report](#)
[Attachment A](#)

7) **MOTION FOR RECONSIDERATION**

A motion to reconsider any action taken by the Harbor Commission must be made at the same meeting or the subsequent meeting at which the action was taken and may only be made by one of the Harbor Commission members who voted with the prevailing side.

8) **COMMISSION ANNOUNCEMENTS (NON-DISCUSSION ITEMS)**

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

10) **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, April 8, 2026 at 5 p.m.**

11) **ADJOURNMENT**

NEWPORT BEACH HARBOR COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
City Council Chambers – 100 Civic Center Drive, Newport Beach
Wednesday, February 11, 2026
5 p.m.

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

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

2. ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Ira Beer, Chair
Marie Marston, Vice Chair
Bob Miller, Commissioner
Rudy Svrcek, Commissioner
Don Yahn, Commissioner
Gary Williams, Commissioner

ABSENT: Steve Scully, Secretary

Staff Members: Paul Blank, Harbormaster
Matt Cosyion, Deputy Harbormaster
Cynthia Shintaku, Management Analyst

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – Led by Vice Chair Marston

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS (NON-AGENDA ITEMS)

Chair Beer opened public comments.

Adam Leverenz offered public comment and apologized in advance for the frequency of his remarks during the meeting. He reported that, at the previous City Council meeting, the Council voted to form an ad hoc committee to address the State Lands report on tidelands management in Newport Beach. He noted the committee consists of two council members, including a former Harbor Commissioner, and stated that several individuals expressed concern during the Council meeting. He emphasized the importance of early stakeholder engagement, suggesting that involving stakeholders sooner could reduce conflict, costs, and potential litigation.

Coeli Hylkema, identifying herself as a mooring permit holder, addressed the Commission regarding proposed changes to the City's mooring permit system. She described the personal financial sacrifices many permit holders made in order to purchase boats and acquire mooring permits, noting that for decades permits had been obtained through purchase and transfer from existing permit holders under procedures regulated by the City. She stated that many individuals paid significant sums for permits with the understanding that transferability would allow them to later recoup those costs.

Ms. Hylkema expressed concern that the City now intends to revoke general public mooring permits and replace them with higher-cost, City-owned mooring licenses, which she characterized as unaffordable for many current permit holders. She also responded to public statements suggesting that permit transfers involve improper profit or the sale of public tidelands, noting that permit holders acknowledge they do not own the underlying tidelands as reflected in Title 17. She referenced recent findings by the State Lands Commission regarding the City's historical regulation of permit transfers and concluded by stating that permit holders did not anticipate facing the current situation when pursuing boat ownership and harbor access.

Chair Beer closed public comments.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Draft Minutes of the January 14, 2026 Harbor Commission Regular Meeting

Chair Beer opened public comments. Seeing none, Chair Beer closed public comments.

Commissioner Svrcek moved to approve the January 14, 2025 Harbor Commission Regular Meeting minutes, as amended. Seconded by Commissioner William. The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

Ayes: Miller, Svrcek, William, Yahn
Nays: None
Abstain: Martson, Beer
Absent: Scully

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.

Chair Beer reported that the Newport Beach Harbor Department has partnered with community organizations to advance ecological health within Newport Harbor, including research into the restoration of native Olympia oysters to improve water quality, expand habitat diversity, and strengthen shoreline resilience. He noted that Mr. James Ulcickas of Bluewater Grill has been a longtime supporter of sustainable aquaculture and that his contributions have been significant to regional sustainability programs.

Ms. Kaysha Kenney, Marine Restoration Director for Orange County Coastkeeper, presented an overview of Coastkeeper's Living Shorelines Program and its regional oyster restoration initiatives. She described Coastkeeper's mission to maintain waters that are swimmable, drinkable, and fishable, and explained that the Living Shorelines Program began in Upper Newport Bay around 2015 through partnerships with California State University, Fullerton, and California State University, Long Beach.

Ms. Kenney stated that the Olympia oyster, the only oyster native to the West Coast, is significantly smaller than the non-native Pacific oyster and serves as an ecological "bioengineer" by filtering water, creating habitat for marine species, and stabilizing shorelines. She explained that restored oyster beds support crabs, octopus, seahorses, and other species, and reduce erosion by acting as natural breakwaters. She reported that four restoration sites established in 2017, along Pacific Coast Highway, Westcliff, the De Anza Peninsula, and Shellmaker near the Back Bay Science Center, were built using biodegradable coconut coir structures filled with recycled oyster shells. She explained that these structures encourage natural Olympia oyster recruitment. She noted that sites have since experienced degradation due to increased human activity, and Coastkeeper is evaluating adaptive management strategies, including adding shell material and exploring subtidal bed construction, subject to permitting by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Ms. Kenney described Coastkeeper's Shell String program, which engages harbor residents who have private docks to care for juvenile Olympia oysters grown on wire "oyster condos" filled with clean recycled shells. She explained that participants deploy the shell strings from spring through fall, periodically monitor them, and return them to Coastkeeper for counting and placement onto restoration beds. She

noted that the program has been successful in Alamitos Bay and Huntington Harbor and will launch in Newport Harbor for the first time in 2026.

Ms. Kenney summarized the Shells for Shorelines restaurant partnership, which collects oyster shells for reuse in restoration. She reported that Bluewater Grill has contributed over 3,500 pounds of shell, The Cannery approximately 1,500 pounds, and Newport Harbor Yacht Club recently joined the program. She reported that countywide, more than 18,000 pounds of shells have been recycled since June 2024.

Commissioner Miller commended Coastkeeper's work, noting that he had been unaware of the program until reviewing the agenda. He highlighted a shell stringing event on February 21st. He asked how the Commission could best assist, including whether outreach efforts could involve local schools, Scouts, or cleanup programs. He also inquired about challenges in recruiting restaurants.

Ms. Kenney responded that recruiting additional restaurants remains a primary need and that Commissioner support in promoting the shell string program within the permitted West Lido Channel area would be particularly valuable. She thanked Harbormaster Paul Blank for his assistance in participant recruitment. She emphasized the program's labor-intensive nature but noted that efforts are made to minimize the restaurant's burden.

Commissioner Miller asked about the relative difficulty of obtaining restaurant participation versus securing dock locations for shell strings, and requested clarification on who determines where the strings may be placed.

Ms. Kenney explained that placement is regulated by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife due to the marine protected area designation in Upper Newport Bay, and that Coastkeeper's strong working relationship with the agency enabled approval for piloting the program in Newport Harbor. She added that restaurant recruitment is currently the program's biggest hurdle.

Vice Chair Marston expressed appreciation for the informative presentation.

Commissioner Williams praised Ms. Kenney's evident passion for the project and asked to be kept informed of future opportunities to support the program.

Commissioner Svrcek asked about the difference between native Olympia oysters and the larger oysters observed on bulkheads.

Ms. Kenney explained that the larger Pacific oysters are non-native but not considered invasive, while they offer ecological benefits, Coastkeeper focuses on restoring the native species to preserve ecological balance. She noted that restoring the Olympia oyster is their focus.

Chair Beer inquired if the Olympia oysters are a protected species.

Ms. Kenney confirmed that Olympia oysters are not a protected species but advised against harvesting them from harbor waters due to the risks of contamination.

Chair Beer opened public comments. Seeing none, Chair Beer closed public comments.

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

6.2 Abandoned Vessel Abatement Program - Final update on vessels New Beginnings and Haven

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 Approve the 2026 Harbor and Beaches Master Plan and recommend staff forward to the Finance Committee for consideration.

2. Receive and file.

Deputy Harbormaster Matt Cosylyon introduced the presentation and explained that the Harbor Department is responsible for identifying, preventing, and removing derelict or abandoned vessels from Newport Harbor. He noted that while discussions of code enforcement are typically presented at a broad, programmatic level, the Department elected to provide a detailed account of two recent vessel abatements due to significant public interest in code-enforcement activities on the harbor.

Deputy Harbormaster Cosylyon explained that the term “abandoned vessel” encompasses both traditional circumstances, vessels left without any known owner, as well as situations in which an identified boat owner voluntarily surrenders the vessel to the City. He noted that in Newport Harbor, the latter scenario is more common. He explained that many such vessels belong to former mooring permittees or individuals who frequently use public anchorage areas but lack the financial means to maintain their vessels. He reported that in 2025, three vessels fell into this “owner-surrendered” category. He reported that the total estimated destruction cost for the three vessels recently impounded, including New Beginnings and Haven, plus an additional vessel soon to be removed, is approximately \$53,000 to \$54,000, excluding staff time and interim maintenance expenses. He further explained that, given that the City received only \$100,000 in Surrendered and Abandoned Vessel Exchange (SAVE) grant funding for the current cycle, these abatements represent a significant draw on available resources.

Deputy Harbormaster Cosylyon then provided a detailed chronology of the first vessel, New Beginnings, a 58-foot Hatteras formerly owned by a mooring permittee and liveaboard who faced ongoing financial challenges. He reported that after relinquishing his mooring, the owner frequently used City marinas, public docks, and anchorage areas, often arriving from and returning to other harbors. He explained that the vessel’s final voyage began on October 10, when it sought refuge in the East Anchorage during inclement weather and a small craft advisory. He reported that the vessel was inoperable, taking on water, and at immediate risk of sinking.

Deputy Harbormaster Cosylyon reported that on October 13, New Beginnings was towed to the Harbor Department marina under emergency conditions. He noted that from October 14 through 16, Harbor Department staff, the Orange County Sheriff’s Department, the United States Coast Guard, the Department of Fish and Game, and TowboatUS collaborated to dewater the vessel and contain oil discharging from the bilge. Lastly, a City-hired diver patched hull breaches to slow water intrusion, requiring continued daily inspections and dewatering by staff.

Deputy Harbormaster Cosylyon explained that the Harbor Department allowed the owner additional time to sell the vessel to avoid impoundment. He further explained that when no buyer emerged, the City impounded the vessel on October 23. He reported that on October 24, the Coast Guard assisted with hazardous-material removal, including approximately 350 gallons of diesel fuel, over 1,000 pounds of marine batteries, and multiple containers of hazardous waste. Lastly, he reported that demolition occurred between January 16 and 22, after which the vessel was fully removed from the harbor.

Deputy Harbormaster Cosylyon next summarized the abatement of the second vessel, Haven, a 38-foot Owens Flagship owned by an individual residing in Europe. He explained that the owner had purchased the vessel with the intention of transporting it overseas, but was unable to identify a viable and cost-effective shipping method. He further explained that the vessel was kept at a local shipyard until the owner ceased communication, prompting the shipyard to request a private-party impound. He reported that the Harbor Department impounded the vessel on June 8. He emphasized that between June and December, staff made repeated attempts to contact the owner, who ultimately agreed on December 10 to pay the impound fee and surrender the vessel. Lastly, he advised that the vessel was removed and destroyed on January 22.

Deputy Harbormaster Cosylyon outlined several challenges commonly associated with abandoned-vessel cases. He noted that vessel owners in these circumstances typically have limited financial means and lack local support networks, leading to deferred maintenance and eventual vessel deterioration. He explained that these individuals frequently delay responding to City communications, increasing the risk and cost associated with impoundment. He then discussed lessons learned, including the importance of thoroughly inspecting vessels upon impoundment; promptly removing hazardous materials; coordinating earlier with state and federal partners, particularly the Coast Guard; improving documentation to support potential cost recovery; expanding the pool of City-approved salvage contractors to reduce expenses; and standardizing policies to avoid prolonged compliance extensions that can increase City costs.

Commissioner Svrcek asked how many abandoned vessels the City removes annually.

Deputy Harbormaster Cosylyon responded that, excluding small items such as kayaks or tenders, the City averages two to three large-vessel abatements per year.

Commissioner Svrcek commended the Department's handling of the substantial hazardous material found aboard the vessels.

Commissioner Yahn asked about a recent vessel that had grounded in Laguna Beach before being brought into Newport Harbor.

Deputy Harbormaster Cosylyon confirmed that the vessel was transferred to Basin Marine Shipyard and subsequently moved out of the harbor. He added that the tow duration from Laguna Beach necessitated a temporary stop in Newport before it continued on to Long Beach.

Vice Chair Marston asked whether the City could take more proactive steps to identify problem vessels in advance.

Deputy Harbormaster Cosylyon responded that staff communicate with other Southern California harbors to track vessels of concern and conduct seaworthiness inspections when vessels seek to rent moorings. He noted that, however, public anchorage use presents challenges, particularly when boaters face financial hardship.

Chair Beer inquired about the City's ability to track staff time and other costs associated with prolonged abatement efforts.

Deputy Harbormaster Cosylyon stated that staff time could be calculated, although in the New Beginnings case, such costs were not recoverable due to the circumstances of the impound.

Chair Beer opened public comments.

Ms. Hylkema commented on the financial challenges faced by vessel owners and questioned whether proposed mooring fee increases would lead to additional abandoned vessels.

Chair Beer closed public comments.

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

6.3 Action on Recommended Revisions to NBMC

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. Consider a proposal from subcommittee responsible for the current Harbor Commission Objective 1 on potential revisions to the Newport Beach Municipal Code (NBMC) related to the harbor; and
3. If agreed to, direct staff to return at a future Harbor Commission meeting with a resolution to forward the recommended revisions to the City Council for their consideration and adoption.

Chair Beer introduced the item and explained that the Harbor Commission is evaluating proposed harbor-related revisions to the Municipal Code. He stated that the proposed changes originated from multiple sources, including public comments received at Harbor Commission and City Council meetings, written submissions to staff, stakeholder discussions, and a prior subcommittee review of municipal code provisions relating to harbor use and operation. He noted that these recommendations were produced by the subcommittee assigned to Objective One: to conduct a review of Title 17 and other harbor-related code sections and to recommend updates.

Commissioner Yahn, chair of the subcommittee, presented a detailed summary of the committee's work. He expressed appreciation for the contributions of Harbormaster Blank and Deputy Harbormaster Cosyion as well as fellow subcommittee members Commissioner Miller and Commissioner Williams. He explained that Title 17 is considered a living document. He further explained that since the Harbor Department was formed more than ten years ago, the City has continued to refine Title 17 to better reflect operational realities. He noted that past efforts focused on removing antiquated provisions and modernizing regulations, and the present review continues that work.

Commissioner Yahn outlined the proposed revisions, summarizing the purpose and intent of each. He reported that the revisions addressed matters including the authority for review of mooring specifications; the process for suspending and reinstating marine activities permits; prohibitions relating to fish-cleaning waste on public docks; updated definitions of commercial activity; clarification of restrictions on renting, leasing, or loaning moorings; the inclusion of Newport Harbor within existing municipal-code prohibitions related to human waste; refinements to mooring-permit conditions; updates to public-hearing notification requirements to prevent unnecessary noticing across harbor waters; clarification regarding vessel cleaning and the removal of human and animal excreta; requirements ensuring alignment between mooring-permit holders and vessel ownership; and additional regulations concerning marine sanitation devices and overnight occupancy. He concluded by noting that the subcommittee had thoroughly examined each issue, incorporating input from staff and the public.

Chair Beer commended Commissioner Yahn and the subcommittee for its extensive effort required to consolidate and evaluate the proposed revisions.

Harbormaster Blank offered a clarification regarding Revision No. 2. He noted that a previous version referenced a seven-day period for requesting an appeal hearing following a suspension of more than three days. He explained that, at the most recent subcommittee meeting, the committee directed staff to revise this period to thirty days.

Commissioner Miller also thanked the public for attending the stakeholder meeting, stating that community input was valuable, with some suggestions incorporated and others considered but not implemented.

Commissioner Williams expressed pride in the committee's work and emphasized that each topic had been debated extensively. He commended the collaborative process.

Commissioner Svrcek stated that he had no additional comments and complimented the completed work.

Vice Chair Marston expressed appreciation for the extensive work completed and inquired about the next steps in the process.

Chair Beer explained that, following Commission action, a resolution would be drafted and returned to the Commission for approval before being forwarded to the City Council.

Chair Beer noted that regarding the prohibition on renting, leasing, or loaning moorings, he asked whether the term "occupied" should be included to provide broader coverage.

Commissioner Williams responded that the committee had considered the term but determined that "occupied," unlike "rented" or "loaned," could apply to temporary or emergency use and might introduce ambiguity.

Chair Beer then asked whether the Municipal Code already includes language requiring that any vessel occupying a mooring must be registered to the mooring permittee.

Harbormaster Blank displayed the applicable code-definition slide and confirmed that the code clearly defines "assigned vessel," requires alignment between the vessel and mooring assignment, and that staff monitors mooring fields daily for compliance.

Chair Beer opened public comments.

Joe Ferrigno, a resident of Grand Canal, expressed concern about receiving a notice requiring him to remove either his dock or his moorings, which he stated had existed for decades. He argued that many neighboring properties have both docks and moorings and that enforcing removal would constitute a loss of property value.

Chair Beer thanked him for his comments and noted that the matter did not fall directly under the scope of the current agenda item.

Adam Leverenz commented on several proposed revisions. Regarding Revision No. 1, he suggested clarifying that mooring specifications approved by the Harbor Master must be "in compliance with" standards established by the Harbor Commission rather than merely "referencing" them. He also sought clarification on whether residential pier subletting falls under commercial activity. On Revision No. 5, he cautioned that enforcement regarding alleged mooring loaning must account for the City's free day-use mooring policy to avoid mistakenly accusing permittees of violations. He also raised concerns about language implying widespread suspicion of subletting without evidence, and he questioned how the code would address vessel ownership when multiple parties jointly own a vessel, but only two names may appear on a mooring permit. He further expressed concern that the wording on sanitation devices could inadvertently prohibit the use of portable marine sanitation devices.

Jim Mosher offered several recommendations. He suggested using broader terminology, such as "waterway" rather than "Newport Harbor" in the section addressing human waste, in order to align with the other general references within Title 10. He also recommended reconsidering the noticing-radius language, observing that excluding intervening waterways may inadvertently reduce notice coverage. He further suggested that the City, rather than applicants, generate notice lists to ensure consistency and reliability. Finally, he recommended clarifying that the prohibition on improvised waste-containment methods applies specifically to human or domestic-animal waste, since many types of incidental waste on vessels may reasonably require improvised containment. He referenced that the provision immediately below the referenced section addresses the prohibition on loaning a mooring. He indicated that the

language is confusing because it appears to allow certain activities with the written permission of the Harbormaster, but does not specify the conditions under which such permission would be granted. He further observed that the following page seems to indicate that only yacht club permittees may engage in renting or similar activities, which raises questions about how the two provisions align.

Bill Kenney, representing the Newport Harbor Foundation, expressed support for the proposed revisions and commended the Commission and subcommittee for their extensive work. He asked the Commission to adopt the recommendations and forward them to the City Council.

Chair Beer closed public comments.

Harbormaster Blank informed the Commission that staff were familiar with Mr. Ferrigno's situation and that his concerns would be documented for future review during subsequent Municipal Code update cycles.

Commissioner Williams expressed interest in incorporating Mr. Mosher's proposed clarification regarding human waste.

Commissioner Yahn stated support for including the improved language, noting that it reflected the committee's intent.

Chair Beer observed that, in practice, City staff routinely prepares noticing maps and lists. He suggested retaining the verbiage that noticing is the applicant's responsibility. The applicant can use City provided services if requested, but this will be at the applicant's expense.

Commissioner Yahn moved to adopt the recommended revisions to Title 17, including the verbal amendments regarding human or domestic animal waste. Seconded by Commissioner Williams. The motion carried by the following roll call vote:

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

Chair Beer directed staff to return at a future Harbor Commission meeting with a resolution incorporating the approved revisions for final Commission consideration prior to transmission to the City Council.

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)

Commissioner Yahn provided an update on the Balboa Ferry Ad Hoc Committee. He reported that the ferry-operating family is actively pursuing grant funding to support ongoing improvement efforts. He stated that the family has secured approximately \$8 million in combined grant commitments from the California Air Resources Board (CARB) and the South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD). He noted

that both state agencies have confirmed their grant participation, characterizing the progress as significant and ongoing.

Harbor Commission Objectives Ad Hoc- Commissioners Beer, Scully and Miller (8-13-2025)

Chair Beer stated that the revised objectives will be discussed in the next meeting.

Chair Beer opened public comments. Hearing none, Chair Beer closed public comments.

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)
No update.

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).

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).

Chair Beer reported that the matter has been referred to a newly formed City Council ad hoc committee, which will review the recent written recommendations from the State Lands Commission and provide recommendations to the City Council. He recommended that, in light of this action, the item should be considered closed with respect to the Harbor Commission's objectives unless it is reopened at the request of the City Council. The dais agreed unanimously.

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)

Chair Beer reported that dredging efforts throughout Newport Harbor are progressing very well.

Commissioner Miller remarked that constituents have observed noticeable improvements in water clarity following dredging operations, particularly around Balboa Island.

Chair Beer opened public comment.

Adam Leverenz addressed the Commission and stated that, based on the previously discussed revisions to Title 17, it is clear that both the Commission and the public share a concern for preventing human waste from entering the harbor. He urged the Commission to restore restrooms as a formal objective in future goalsetting. He stated that additional restroom facilities are needed, noting the potential for development at Lower Castaways and referencing an existing public dock that he characterized as “beautiful” but unusable due to the absence of restrooms. He concluded by stating that he intends to continue raising the issue at Commission meetings until restroom facilities are reinstated as an objective.

Ms. Coeli Hylkema commented on the same topic, explaining that she resides near the Fun Zone and within a short distance of the local public library. She noted that, over the years, they had allowed numerous individuals, often parents with young children, into their home due to the lack of nearby restrooms. She echoed the need for additional public restroom facilities.

Mr. Mosher addressed the Commission and noted that there had been no Harbor Commission representative at the most recent meeting of the Water Quality/Coastal Tidelands Committee. He reported that several retirements had occurred within the Public Works Department and that Public Works Administrative Manager Miller now serves as the staff liaison to that committee. He reported that at that meeting Public Works Administrative Manager Miller provided presentations regarding the dredging project and the City’s eelgrass efforts.

Chair Beer closed public comment.

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

6.6 Harbormaster Update – January 2026 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.

Harbormaster Blank presented the monthly update and provided an overview of Harbor Department activities for January 2026. He reported significant effort devoted to maintaining water quality and responding to pollution concerns. He stated that containment operations associated with the discharge incident at Marcus Avenue have concluded and confirmed that the two vessels are now fully removed. He noted that staff also conducted an extended investigation into a reported unpermitted liveaboard; the investigation determined that the report was unfounded. In addition, he reported that Harbor Safety Officers prevented the potential sinking of a permitted vessel in the J Field when they located and corrected a failed hose clamp on a raw-water intake that was rapidly flooding the engine room. He reviewed several images included in the staff report, noting the documentation of a sheen tracked to the Lido Peninsula, hazardous materials deposited at the Municipal Yard for compliant disposal, the vessel associated with the false liveaboard report, and the vessel saved from sinking through prompt dewatering by Harbor Safety Officers.

Harbormaster Blank provided a comprehensive update on dredging operations. He reported that the Lower Bay Project has moved from Mariner’s Mile into the East Anchorage, which is now closed and identified on the Local Notice to Mariners. He explained that the dredging equipment was redeployed to the east end of Lido Isle to begin cutting a trough that will allow access toward Marina Park to remove

unsuitable material scheduled for transport to the Port of Long Beach. He noted that this work must be completed by May, and discussions are underway regarding the possible addition of a second dredge. He advised that as dredging progresses, certain moorings in the F Field and two moorings near Newport Harbor Yacht Club will require temporary relocation.

Harbormaster Blank reported that dredging at the Balboa Yacht Basin has been completed and that the equipment is being demobilized and prepared for redeployment to a private dredging project for the Lido Isle Community Association. He stated that the overall Lower Bay dredging project is anticipated to be completed later this year or early next year, subject to weather and operational conditions. He further reported that the updated project cost is approximately \$16 million, significantly below the original estimate of \$22 million.

Turning to harbor safety efforts, Harbormaster Blank noted continued enforcement of navigation-light requirements during both nighttime and low-visibility conditions. He described a joint training exercise with the Newport Beach Fire Department to test standpipe functionality at Marina Park, which included simulating a vessel fire. He also reported that Harbor Safety Officers assisted an exhausted paddleboarder who required help returning to the 19th Street dock. He noted that additional safety efforts included repairs to private aids-to-navigation lighting and department-wide stability-training exercises developed by a new staff member.

Harbormaster Blank then discussed activities related to harbor enjoyment and stewardship. He reported that the department responded to a notable increase in unauthorized use of moorings, with more such incidents in January than during all of 2025. He addressed a complaint regarding a Grand Canal property found to have a pier platform and three moorings, which is not permitted in that area. He reported that a survey revealed other properties in similar noncompliance, and future code modifications may be necessary to align regulations with current conditions. He noted that Harbor Safety Officers recovered a set of keys from the harbor bottom, which were successfully returned to their owner through coordinated identification efforts with Dana Point Harbor. He also reported the installation of updated dock-signage packages, including time-zone signage and serialized cleat-number plates, and ongoing refinishing of dock finials removed during punch-list work on recently rebuilt public docks.

Harbormaster Blank highlighted additional operational matters, including Council-level discussions regarding the management of the Balboa Yacht Basin. He reported that the Harbor Department's analysis indicates it can manage the facility at a significantly lower cost than external bidders, leading to approximately \$150,000 in annual savings and nearly \$1 million over a five-year term. He also described two notable contacts received during the month: a request that he personally resolve an out-of-service playground slide at Marina Park, and an inquiry from the Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) involving a vessel seeking an ABC license without a Marine Activities Permit, which enabled staff to identify a potential unpermitted charter operation.

Harbormaster Blank reviewed monthly operational statistics, noting 2,427 calls for service, with 2,200 of those mapped. He provided data on harbor amenity usage, permitting activity, anchorage occupancy, and pump-out utilization. He stated that January anchorage activity remained strong despite weather conditions and noted the inclusion of new permit categories, small harbor operator registrations, and mooring-permit transfers in the department's tracking system. He emphasized that the accomplishments outlined in the report are attributable to the Harbor Department's dedicated staff, noting that he wished to give them full credit for their work.

Commissioner Svrcek praised the department's consistent recovery of hazardous materials and debris and requested an annual report quantifying debris collection, which Harbormaster Blank agreed to provide.

Commissioner Williams expressed appreciation for the staff's ongoing efforts and, out of curiosity, referenced a widely circulated social media video depicting a billfish swimming in the harbor. He noted that several members of the public suggested the sighting was attributable to improved water quality and

dredging activities, and he requested the Harbormaster's perspective on whether the appearance was coincidental or potentially supported by scientific factors. He added that the sighting generated significant public attention.

Harbormaster Blank acknowledged that the sighting received considerable attention and described the experience as thrilling. He noted that the fish appeared to be an adolescent rather than a fully mature adult. He stated that he is not a water quality scientist, angler, or marine biologist, and therefore could not provide a definitive explanation. He indicated that while it is possible the fish was introduced from a private aquarium, he preferred to believe it entered the harbor naturally, similar to dolphins, potentially attracted by clean water and calmer conditions. He stated that staff would remain attentive to any further sightings and report additional information as available.

Commissioner Yahn asked about the cost reductions in the dredging project and whether the Confined Aquatic Disposal (CAD) element contributed to the decreased estimate. He also inquired whether all participating entities had reduced their participation amounts, noting that the City's contribution is reflected at \$5 million. He also asked what the original funding intent had been and whether any participating agencies would realize a surplus or windfall as a result of the reduced overall budget.

Harbormaster Blank explained that the savings resulted from contractor pricing and timing, not from any decision regarding the CAD component. He also clarified that the City's financial contribution was primarily associated with early design costs and did not change following the updated project estimate.

Vice Chair Marston commended staff on the recovery of the lost keys and inquired about the number of vessels requiring dewatering.

Harbormaster Blank attributed the higher number to heavy rainfall in January.

Chair Beer opened public comments.

Mr. Mosher asked why dredging equipment could not go directly to Marina Park to remove unsuitable material.

Harbormaster Blank explained that while scows can reach the area when empty, they cannot safely exit when loaded; therefore, a dredged trough is necessary.

Jessie, a liveaboard boater, commented that rain often causes vessels to take on water and suggested that boat owners should keep pumps onboard to address emergencies immediately.

Chair Beer 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)

Commissioner Miller reported attending the Wake Up Newport breakfast featuring Police Chief Dave Minor. He noted that the City's drone program, operated jointly by the Police Department, Fire Department, and Brink, the City's contracted provider, offers significant potential benefits for harbor management. He stated that numerous applications could be developed for harbor operations, including observational capabilities, safety deployment, spill detection, and harbor mapping. He recommended that the matter return to the Commission as a future agenda item.

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

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

11. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business coming before the Harbor Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 6:54 p.m.

DRAFT



NEWPORT BEACH

Harbor Commission Staff Report

March 11, 2026
Agenda Item No. 6.1

TO: HARBOR COMMISSION

PREPARED BY: Paul Blank, Harbormaster
pblank@newportbeachca.gov
(949) 270-8158

TITLE: The Interesting Story of the Newport Harbor Kelp

ABSTRACT:

Captain Nancy Caruso, Marine Biologist and Founder of Get Inspired will provide information on the story of how kelp in Newport Harbor came to be, its interesting story and how it is being studied by USC and others as a possible savior for California's kelp forests.

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

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS:

There is no fiscal impact related to this item.

DISCUSSION:

The Harbor Commission will receive a presentation from Captain Nancy Caruso, marine biologist, educator, and founder of Get Inspired, a Southern California-based nonprofit organization dedicated to ocean conservation, marine science education, and community-based habitat restoration.

Captain Caruso has more than two decades of experience in marine ecology, with particular expertise in nearshore reef systems, kelp forest ecology, and citizen science initiatives. She is widely recognized for her leadership in engaging coastal communities in hands-on restoration and monitoring efforts throughout Southern California, including projects focused on kelp forest recovery and marine biodiversity enhancement.

Her presentation, "*The Interesting Story of the Newport Harbor Kelp*," will provide the Commission and public with historical and scientific context regarding kelp presence within Newport Harbor, including discussion of environmental conditions that influence

kelp recruitment, growth cycles, and persistence in enclosed harbor systems. The presentation is expected to address:

- The ecological role of kelp in coastal and harbor environments;
- Factors affecting kelp establishment and survival, including water quality, circulation, temperature, and substrate conditions;
- Observations of kelp occurrence within Newport Harbor over time; and
- Opportunities for community engagement, education, and habitat stewardship.

As the Harbor Commission continues its oversight responsibilities related to water quality, dredging, eelgrass management, mooring fields, and overall harbor health, understanding the dynamics of native marine vegetation — including both eelgrass and episodic kelp recruitment — this presentation will provide valuable ecological context for policy discussions and long-term planning.

Captain Caruso's work emphasizes collaboration among scientists, local governments, harbor users, and community volunteers to advance practical, science-based conservation efforts. Her perspective will offer the Commission insight into broader coastal ecological trends while highlighting the unique characteristics of Newport Harbor's marine environment.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

Staff recommends the Harbor Commission find this action is not subject to 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.

NOTICING:

The agenda item has been noticed according to the Brown Act (72 hours in advance of the meeting at which the Harbor Commission considers the item).



NEWPORT BEACH

Harbor Commission Staff Report

March 11, 2026
Agenda Item No. 6.2

TO: HARBOR COMMISSION

PREPARED BY: Ben Zdeba, AICP, Acting Deputy Community Development Director
bzdeba@newportbeachca.gov
949-644-3253

TITLE: General Plan Update: Final GPUSC/GPAC Draft Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Element

ABSTRACT:

At its meeting on November 12, 2025, the Harbor Commission reviewed recommendations from the ad hoc subcommittee that reviewed the draft Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Element, ultimately forwarding the input to the General Plan Update Steering Committee (GPUSC) and General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) for review and consideration.

The GPUSC/GPAC held a special joint meeting on December 3, 2025, to review comments on the General Plan Update from City Boards, Commissions, and Committees, and to provide direction to City staff and Dudek, the City's consultant, on how to incorporate responsive revisions, as deemed appropriate. The GPUSC/GPAC held another special joint meeting on January 21, 2026, and supported the comprehensive set of revised draft elements moving forward as the "Final GPUSC/GPAC Draft General Plan Update." This includes the revised Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Element, which is now being presented to the Harbor Commission for review and consideration.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

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. Review the Final GPUSC/GPAC Draft Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Element, which has been revised to incorporate the Commission's input from October 2025. The Commission may provide additional input and should conduct a vote to consider recommending the City Council adopt it as part of the comprehensive General Plan Update anticipated in May or June 2026.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact related to this item.

BACKGROUND:

The General Plan is a State-mandated, long-term policy document that guides a community’s physical development and informs local decision-making on land use, housing, transportation, infrastructure, parks, and related issues over a 20- to 30-year horizon. Newport Beach’s General Plan was last comprehensively updated in 2006, prompting the City Council to initiate a full review in 2019; however, the effort temporarily shifted to address the unprecedented 6th Cycle Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) and complete the Housing and Circulation Elements.

As that work concluded, the City resumed the comprehensive update and, in the middle of 2022, the City Council established the three-member General Plan Update Steering Committee (GPUSC), chaired by Nancy Gardner, to guide the process and report to the City Council. In early 2023, the City Council also formed the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC), a 24-member community-based body chaired by Jeremy Evans and Arlene Greer, which organized subcommittees to support efficient and focused review of each General Plan element. This included the *Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Subcommittee*, composed of GPAC Members Nicholas Acevedo, Virginia Anders-Ellmore, Dennis Baker, Jim Carlson, Lynn Hackman, Amber Snider, Debbie Stevens, and Paul Watkins, with GPAC Member Curtis Black serving as the Subcommittee’s Chair.

The General Plan Update effort has been broken into four primary phases, as described in Table 1 on the following page. Phase 3 (California Environmental Quality Act) is nearing completion with Phase 4 (Hearings) in progress. It is anticipated that the entire process will be completed by June 2026.

Table 1, General Plan Update Process			
Phase 1 (Background Analysis + Visioning)	Phase 2 (Policy Development + General Plan Amendment)	Phase 3 (California Environmental Quality Act)	Phase 4 (Hearings)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Engagement and Outreach Plan • Research and Data Analysis • Online Survey • GPAC + GPUSC Meetings • Pop-up Events • Paid Advertisements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of General Plan • Online Survey • GPAC+GPUSC Meetings • Community Workshops • Paid Advertisements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual Open House • In-Person Open House • GPAC + GPUSC Meetings • Environmental Analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City Boards, Commissions, and Committees • City Council Adoption
Completed late 2024	Completed late 2025	Open houses completed late 2025; Environmental analysis in progress	In progress

To get to the point of having initial drafts of the General Plan Elements available for review, City staff worked extensively with the GPAC Subcommittees, the GPAC, and the GPUSC. This started with the review of existing conditions and background analysis reports for each element. These documents are considered a “snapshot in time” to identify

current condition in Newport Beach under each topical area as well as what needs to be addressed from a State requirement standpoint. Each subcommittee then worked on identifying a potential refresh for the individual elements and helped to create “ideas to support” them. These ideas were shared with the community through digital engagement on the City’s website for the effort (<https://www.newportbeachca.gov/gpupdate>), as well as at community workshops.

Based on the feedback received, City staff alongside consultant Dudek refined the ideas shared as actual goals and accompanying policy statements in furtherance of each. The draft goals and policies were then shared with internal City staff from various departments for review prior to finalizing them as initial draft elements.

These initial drafts were then reviewed by the Subcommittees, as well as the full GPAC and the GPUSC prior to being shared with the City’s boards, commissions, and committees for further input, and then advertised for additional public input from the broader community late last year.

At a special joint meeting of the GPAC and the GPUSC on December 3, 2025, those Committees reviewed 56 comments received on various draft elements from six different City Boards, Commissions, and Committees, as well as 69 comments received from community members. Based on guidance received at that meeting, City staff returned to another special joint meeting on January 21, 2026, with a comprehensive set of revised draft elements. By a vote of 25 ayes to 1 nay, the GPAC and the GPUSC voted to move the draft forward as the Final GPUSC/GPAC Draft General Plan Update.

This draft, including the Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Element, represents the culmination of three years of diligent work by the GPAC, its subcommittees, the GPUSC, and engaged community members. Notably, the GPAC and the GPUSC combined for 57 meetings held in accordance with the Ralph M. Brown Act and 47 public meetings of the various Subcommittees.

DISCUSSION:

The City’s currently adopted Harbor and Bay Element is important and unique to Newport Beach but not required. It serves to place emphasis on Newport Harbor as not only a community asset but a regional asset and sets forth a decision-making framework for its maintenance and enhancement. While not exhaustive, the following list presents highlighted updates of the refreshed and renamed Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Element. The updated Element includes:

- ✓ incorporating direct goal and policy support related to “beaches,” which has also been added by name;
- ✓ enhancing goal and policy support for Upper Newport Bay;
- ✓ helping to sure multi-faceted and well-integrated public coastal access;
- ✓ minimizing risk of displacement from coastal hazards; and
- ✓ placing an emphasis on the economic strength and vitality of the beaches and harbor.

At the Harbor Commission's meeting on August 13, 2025, the Community Development Department presented and introduced the initial draft element to the Commission. Although some initial feedback was shared during that meeting, it was noted that the Commission had already formed an ad hoc subcommittee to track the General Plan Update, consisting of Commissioners Scully, Marston, and Yahn, as appointed in October 2024. The Ad Hoc Subcommittee met to review and compile comments, which were presented and reviewed at the Commission's meeting on November 12, 2025, and subsequently forwarded to the GPAC and GPUSC for consideration.

Prior to this meeting, the Element was brought to the Parks, Beaches & Recreation Commission for review and consideration. By a unanimous vote (6 ayes, 0 nays, 1 absent) the Commission recommended its approval.

The purpose of this item is to share the draft Element, as revised by the GPAC and GPUSC to incorporate the Commission's feedback from November 2025 (Attachment A). Attachment B is a table of the comments provided by the Commission along with a note on how each comment is addressed. City staff recommends the Commission review the updated drafts, provide any additional input, and conduct a vote to recommend the City Council adopt them as part of the comprehensive General Plan Update in May or June 2026.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

Staff recommends the Harbor Commission finds the action of making a recommendation to the City Council is 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, Chapter 3, because it has no potential for resulting in physical change to the environment, directly or indirectly. An addendum to the Program Environmental Impact Report for the City of Newport Beach General Plan Housing Element Implementation Program is being prepared and will be provided for the City Council's action on the General Plan Update.

NOTICING:

The agenda item has been noticed according to the Brown Act (72 hours in advance of the meeting at which the Harbor Commission considers the item).

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A – Final GPUSC/GPAC Draft Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Element
Attachment B – Table of Harbor Commission Comments and Revisions

Attachment A

Final GPUSC/GPAC Draft Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Element

Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Element



HARBOR, BAY, & BEACHES

PURPOSE

The Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Element guides the preservation and enhancement of water-dependent recreational and commercial activities and uses along the beaches and in Newport Bay, which includes Upper Newport Bay and Newport Harbor in Lower Newport Bay.

OVERVIEW

The Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Element builds on the adopted General Plan’s vision of balancing the needs of residents, businesses, and visitors while ensuring that Newport Bay and Newport Harbor are accessible and preserved, offer recreational opportunities, and support the local economy. The harbor, bay, and beaches in Newport Beach support substantial economic opportunities and activity that are vital to the City’s economy. The Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Element addresses a wide range of topics, including land and water uses; harbor coordination and administration; the economic value of the harbor, bay and beaches; public access to coastal resources; and coastal ecosystems.

The Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Element is coordinated with the Natural Resources Element, Recreation Element, Safety Element, and Land Use Element to support the preservation of water-dependent recreational and commercial activities.

GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

Land and Water Use

Diversity of Land Uses

Newport Beach offers a diversity of water use opportunities to support recreation on Newport Bay and the wider Pacific Ocean. Recreational and boating activities include sailing, use of motorized and human-powered vessels, and other activities. Vessels can be used for cruising, racing, and other competitive activities, or for angling. Angling can also be enjoyed from many public docks and other locations throughout Newport Harbor. Vessels can be secured to docks, slips, or mooring buoys in the harbor. There are also vessel storage facilities in off-water locations. As of 2024, Newport Harbor featured approximately 1,200 moorings spread across 10 offshore fields,¹ the Balboa Peninsula, Balboa Island and Lido Isle, and in West Newport. There are 15 public docks and one commercial public wharf within the harbor.^{2,3} There are approximately 1,100 docks and several commercial marinas.⁴ Additionally, dry storage facilities are available for boats on trailers, stands, and racks at various locations. Recreational and commercial use of Newport Bay and Newport Harbor depend on prioritizing water quality and safety, as well as coastal-dependent uses and coastal-related uses, such as chandleries;⁵ service yards; boating launches, storage, and rentals; tourism-serving uses and recreation; habitat; and scenic areas. Scenic areas

¹ Nguyen, Lilly. “Pilot Program for Mooring Changes to Go to State Coastal Commission.” *Los Angeles Times*, May 24, 2023.

² City of Newport Beach. “City Celebrates Opening of New Public Dock, Welcomes First Electric Patrol Vessel Among U.S. Public Agencies.” News release, August 27, 2024.

³ City of Newport Beach. “Commercial Rhine Wharf Use Permit.”

⁴ California State Lands Commission. Assembly Bill 691 Summary – Newport Beach.

<https://slcprdwordpressstorage.blob.core.windows.net/wordpressdata/2022/09/ab691-summary-newportbeach.pdf>

⁵ A chandlery is a store or business selling maritime supplies.

and visual resources are further discussed in the Natural Resources Element and are shown in Figure NR-4, Viewpoints and Corridors. Visual resources include viewpoints and corridors that provide scenic views and are considered to be of public importance.

Recreational, commercial, water-dependent, and tourism-serving uses contribute to the local economy, resident and visitor activities, and the character of the community. Attracting tourism while preserving the unique character of coastal neighborhoods is key to maintaining Newport Beach’s charm and appeal. This includes maintaining architectural components that match Newport Beach’s character, as well as protecting coastal-dependent uses, local businesses, and coastal resources. By supporting a tourism industry that celebrates Newport Beach’s cultural and historical resources and community feeling, the City of Newport Beach (City) can create an attractive environment for residents and visitors alike.

Goal HBB-1: Local businesses and water-dependent commercial uses in the Newport Harbor area that are preserved to maintain and enhance the economic activity charm of the waterfront community

Policy HBB-1.1: Water-Dependent Uses. Preserve and enhance the following uses that contribute to the diversity and charm of Newport Bay, including Upper Newport Bay, and the balance among them:

- Water-dependent and water-related recreational activities, such as boating, sailing, wind surfing, angling, kayaking, rowing, paddle boarding, and swimming.
- Water-dependent and water-related commercial activities, such as passenger/sightseeing boats, passenger fishing boats (“day boats”), boat rentals and sales, entertainment boats, boat/ship repair and maintenance (shipyards), and harbor maintenance facilities.
- Water-enhanced commercial uses, such as restaurants and retail stores.
- Water-related public recreation and education areas and facilities, such as beaches, piers, view parks, and related public areas providing access to and views of Newport Harbor.
- Coastal residential communities. (Imp. 2.1, 14.3, 14.6, 21.1, 24.1)

Policy HBB-1.2: New Development. Site and design new development to avoid significant impacts to existing and potential water-dependent and water-related uses. (Imp. 2.1, 7.1, 8.1)

Policy HBB-1.3: Land Use Considerations. Consider the impact on water-dependent and water-related land uses when reviewing proposals for land use changes, considering both the subject property and adjacent properties. (Imp. 2.1, 14.6, 24.1)

Policy HBB-1.4: Marine Support Uses. Encourage the preservation and enhancement, including new innovations, to existing marine support uses (such as ferry service, fuel docks, and shipyards) serving the needs of existing waterfront uses and the boating community, and encourage the evaluation of impediments to access, such as bridges across City-controlled roads, that may prevent on-land transportation of tall loads. (Imp. 2.1, 14.3, 14.6, 21.1)

Policy HBB-1.5: Private Services. Accommodate private-sector uses, such as vessel assistance and fueling, that provide emergency support, environmental enhancement, and other services that are not provided by the public sector and that are essential to the operation of a working harbor. (Imp. 21.3, 21.4)

Policy HBB-1.6: Property Reuse. Discourage reuse of properties that result in the significant reduction of water-dependent commercial uses. Allow the reuse of properties that ensure water-dependent uses remain, especially in those areas with adequate infrastructure and parcels suitable for redevelopment as an integrated project. (Imp. 2.1, 14.3, 24.1)

Policy HBB-1.7: Use Operations. When establishing land use regulations, consider the operational characteristics of land uses that support Newport Harbor and whether such uses can be or should be relocated to inland locations and/or if technological advances will eliminate the need for such support uses in the foreseeable future. (Imp. 2.1, 14.3, 21.1)

Policy HBB-1.8: Boating. Support continued operation of passenger/sightseeing boats, passenger fishing boats (day boats), and long-term boat rentals and sales. (Imp. 2.1, 21.1)

Policy HBB-1.9: Short-Term Rentals. Support continued short-term rental of boats, wave runners, stand-up paddle boards, and other human-powered watercraft, and require vendors to provide formal training that includes safety briefings. (Imp. 2.1, 21.1, 21.3)

Policy HBB-1.10: Entertainment and Tour Boats. Support continued operation of entertainment and tour boats subject to reasonable regulations designed to ensure that the operations do not have unreasonable adverse impacts on the environment or land uses surrounding the harbor, such as unsafe navigation, impaired water quality, reduced visual quality, excessive noise, unsafe street traffic conditions, or parking shortages. (Imp. 14.3, 21.3)

Goal HBB-2: Minimized risk of displacement by coastal hazards

Policy HBB-2.1 (S-1.1): Sea-Level Rise Plan. Adopt a Sea-Level Rise Plan consistent with Senate Bill 272 (2023) and update the Local Coastal Program, including the Land Use Plan and Implementation Plan, as necessary. Establish and maintain shoreline protection reserves to implement early actions identified in the Sea-Level Rise Plan. The Sea Level Rise Plan should at least consider the following:

- Preservation of private property rights;
- Preservation and migration of inter-tidal habitats;
- Preservation of public access; and
- Protection and retrofit of critical infrastructure, such as water and wastewater infrastructure. (Imp. 5.1, 5.2, 30.1)

Policy HBB-2.2: Emergency Preparedness. Provide information to at-risk property owners about emergency and disaster preparedness and best practices. (Imp. 29.1)

Policy HBB-2.3: Data Collection. Collect king tide and related flood monitoring data to identify location, severity, and frequency of flooding by working with non-profits, educational institutions, and other informed sources, such as (but not limited to) the Newport Bay Conservancy and Back Bay Science Center. (Imp. 10.5)

Goal HBB-3: A harbor, bay, and beaches that attract tourism and maintain the character of coastal neighborhoods

Policy HBB-3.1: Waterfront Public Spaces. Encourage the preservation of public spaces and beaches along the waterfront, to the extent reasonable. Prioritize preservation efforts of public spaces and beaches with adjacent public water access and docking facilities that serve as identity and activity “centers” of Newport Harbor for special events of community/regional interest. (Imp. 20.1, 20.2, 20.3, 21.3)

Policy HBB-3.2: Design and Character. Preserve and/or enhance existing water-enhanced, water-related, and water-dependent commercial uses and marine-oriented commercial areas through building improvements and programs that preserve the design and character of Newport Harbor. (Imp. 2.1, 24.1)

Goal HBB-4: Sufficient coastal infrastructure that protects coastal-dependent and public recreational uses while matching the character of the surrounding development and protecting coastal and visual resources

Policy HBB-4.1: New Bulkhead Siting and Design. Balance private property rights, natural harbor tidal and current forces, other coastal processes (such as erosion and accretion), and harbor aesthetics with other public access policies when considering siting and design for new or renovated bulkhead permits. (Imp. 2.1, 5.1)

Policy HBB-4.2: Beach Profile. Permit and design bulkheads and groins, when allowed, to protect the character of the existing beach profiles and restore and/or sustain eroded beach profiles found around Newport Harbor and island perimeters. (Imp. 2.1, 5.1)

Policy HBB-4.3: Structures Impacting Visual Resources. Limit structures bayward of the bulkhead line to piers, floats, groins, appurtenances related to marine activities, and public walkways. (Imp. 2.1, 5.1)

Policy HBB-4.4: Abandoned Vessels. Employ City, County of Orange, State, and Federal regulations and resources to promptly remove derelict, abandoned, or unseaworthy vessels from City-controlled tidelands. (Imp. 14.3, 14.6, 21.1, 21.4)

Policy HBB-4.5: Launch Ramp Facility. Support the continued use of the launch ramp facility through coordination with the County of Orange, and consider opportunities for the siting and development of a new launch ramp facility owned by the City. (Imp. 14.3, 21.4)

Policy HBB-4.6: Vessel Fueling. Coordinate with fuel dock owners to develop strategies for the long-term preservation of vessel fueling stations. (Imp 21.4)

Harbor Coordination and Administration

Administration of Newport Harbor and Newport Bay involves coordination among various government agencies and internal City departments. The Harbor Department is responsible for many of the harbor-related programs and services in Newport Beach, providing essential services such as daily harbor patrols, coordinating the use of anchorages and mooring fields, renting available slip space and moorings, and managing the guest marina and Marina Park. The Harbor Department's role is vital for supporting the local marine-dependent economy while also supporting residents, businesses, and visitors through coordinated safety efforts and on-the-water support, and generating revenue for the Harbor Department budget and the Tidelands Fund. The Harbor Department supports both the daily operations and long-term sustainability of Newport Harbor

Additionally, several commissions and committees handle administrative and advisory tasks, including advising the City Council, reviewing decisions, and managing permits. These are listed below.

Harbor Commission. One of the Harbor Commission's primary charges under Newport Beach City Charter Section 713 is to advise the City Council on all matters related to Newport Harbor, including improvements and vessel regulation.

Parks, Beaches, and Recreation Commission. Per Newport Beach City Charter Section 709, the Parks, Beaches, and Recreation Commission advises the City Council on parks, beaches, recreation, and street trees. It helps plan and promote recreational programs, establishes policies for park and beach development, and manages trees and shrubs, subject to City Council authority.

Water Quality/Coastal Tidelands Committee. The Water Quality/Coastal Tidelands Committee advises the City Council on water quality and habitat protection in Newport Bay and the ocean. It strengthens regulations,

implements the Tidelands Infrastructure Capital Plan, and recommends educational initiatives about Newport Bay and the ocean.

California Department of Parks and Recreation. The California Department of Parks and Recreation owns and has delegated to the City the development, operation, control, and maintenance of Corona del Mar State Beach, a popular spot for surfing and diving. The park features a 0.5-mile-long sandy beach enclosed by rocky cliffs.

Goal HBB-5: Coordination among City, County of Orange, State, and Federal agencies having regulatory authority of Newport Harbor and Newport Bay

Policy HBB-5.1: Harbor Standards and Regulations. Periodically review and update, as appropriate, all Newport Harbor planning, design, engineering, and environmental criteria, standards, requirements, and processes. (Imp. 9.1, 21.1, 21.4)

Policy HBB-5.2: Harbor Maintenance Equipment and Facilities. Provide harbor access for harbor maintenance equipment and facilities, including for dredging; dock demolition, repair, and construction; mooring services; debris and spill management equipment; and general harbor construction, maintenance, and repair. (Imp. 14.3, 14.6, 21.1, 21.4)

Policy HBB-5.3: Interagency Cooperation. Work with other applicable controlling agencies within Newport Harbor and/or Newport Bay to define an area that can support harbor maintenance facilities and equipment. (Imp. 14.3, 14.6, 21.1, 21.4)

Policy HBB-5.4: Harbor Patrol. Coordinate with the Orange County Sheriff's Department on patrol of Newport Harbor to provide consistent, effective, and well-coordinated law enforcement on the water. (Imp. 14.3)

Policy HBB-5.5: Coastal Resilience. Ensure that the Water Quality/Coastal Tidelands Committee has adequate representation of experts in coastal resilience to ensure that this topic remains a priority for the City. (Imp. 29.3)

Goal HBB-6: Maintenance and enhancement of deep-water channels to ensure they remain navigable by boats

Policy HBB-6.1: Sediment Management. Develop a comprehensive sediment management program that provides for safe navigation and improved water quality. (Imp. 5.2, 21.2, 30.1)

Policy HBB-6.2: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Coordination. Coordinate with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in its maintenance and delineation of Federal navigational channels within Newport Harbor in the interest of providing safe navigation. (Imp. 14.12)

Policy HBB-6.3: Permit Processing. Secure blanket permits or agreements through the regulatory agencies to expedite permit processing for residential and commercial dock owners in Newport Bay. (Imp. 14.6, 14.11)

Policy HBB-6.4: Sediment Management Funding. Develop a sediment management funding plan to identify long-term funding pursuit strategies to support deep-water channels. (Imp. 5.2, 30.1)

Policy HBB-6.5: Streamlined Dredging. Evaluate opportunities to streamline City-led dredging efforts. (Imp. 21.4)

Goal HBB-7: Protection and restoration of beaches and dunes

Policy HBB-7.1 (S-1.4): Nature-Based Solutions. Encourage the use of nature-based solutions for beach and dune preservation and restoration as alternatives to traditional hard infrastructure, to the extent feasible.

Nature-based solutions could include options such as dune restoration and sand replenishment and nourishment. (Imp. 5.2, 8.1, 21.2)

Policy HBB-7.2: Beach Replenishment. Develop and implement a comprehensive sand replenishment program to assist in maintaining beach width and elevations. Analyze monitoring data to determine sand replenishment and nourishment priorities, and try to use sand replenishment and nourishment as shore protection, in lieu of more permanent, hard shoreline armoring options. (Imp. 8.1, 21.2)

Policy HBB-7.3: Beach Erosion Thresholds. Monitor and analyze beach width and elevation data to establish beach erosion thresholds at which backshore development becomes unreasonably exposed to wave runup flooding risks. (Imp. 28.1)

Policy HBB-7.4 (S-1.5): Emergency Use of Coastal Facilities and Equipment. During Emergency Operations Plan updates, reevaluate protocols for the coordinated emergency use of public and private coastal facilities and equipment (i.e., partnerships for allowed use of docks) in advance of flood, storm, pollution, dredging, vessel sinking, and other potentially hazardous events to supplement existing safety and rescue operations. (Imp. 28.2)

Policy HBB-7.5: Shoreline Protection Thresholds. Establish and maintain action thresholds for beach width and elevation that, when exceeded, trigger actions such as defined nourishment, dune management responses, and budget requests. Identify structural armoring enhancements such as groins, jetties, and artificial reefs to advance sand and beach retention while maintaining surfing function. (Imp. 5.2, 30.1)

Economic Value of Newport Harbor, Bay, and Beaches

The City manages an interconnected 47.4-mile-long shoreline system composed of bay and ocean beaches, vital dunes, and the navigational waters of Newport Harbor and the tidal wetlands of Upper Newport Bay⁶. Newport Harbor is among the largest recreational boat harbors on the West Coast, with more than 9,000 recreational boats and a thriving coastal industry that includes maritime-related businesses (e.g., shipyards, fueling facilities, boat rentals, charters, ferry services), food and beverage establishments, retail stores, and hotel industries that service the community and visitors. The beaches serve an estimated 8 million visitors, swimmers, and surfers each year. Beach and boating users are vital to the local economy.

As further detailed in the Harbor and Bay Element Existing Conditions and Background Analysis, Newport Harbor, Bay, and beaches, provides significant economic benefits to both the City and the County of Orange. Based on visitor spending patterns, these areas are estimated to account for slightly more than 30% of all direct tourism-related spending (nearly \$400 million annually) in Newport Beach. This includes spending on accommodations, entertainment, restaurants, retail, and other amenities during their stay, which, for day-trip visitors, is estimated to average slightly less than 4 hours.

Further, based on an analysis of maritime and visitor-serving industries that are in Newport Beach due to the presence of the harbor, bay, and beaches it is estimated that these areas create \$547.4 million in direct economic output annually. This level of economic activity supports approximately 4,440 direct jobs with earnings of \$195.8 million annually. The harbor, bay, and beaches are also estimated to support approximately 5,900 indirect jobs, or 1,500 additional indirect jobs, in Orange County. It is estimated that these areas create \$787 million in total economic output to the County of Orange's economy.

Administration and management of the harbor, bay, and beaches requires coordination among departments, a balance of public investment with revenue, and provision of well-maintained public facilities. Efficient and

⁶ City of Newport Beach. 2026. Demographics and Statistics. <https://www.newportbeachca.gov/i-am-a/visitor/about-newport-beach/demographics-and-statistics>

effective management policies will maintain the City’s ability to provide high-quality services that are accessible to a broad range of people and business.

Goal HBB-8: Well-managed and economically productive harbor, bay, and beaches

Policy HBB-8.1: Marinas and Dry Boat Storage. Protect and, where feasible through the use of new designs and technology, enhance marinas and expand dry boat storage facilities. (Imp. 2.1, 21.1)

Policy HBB-8.2: Berthing and Mooring. Provide a variety of berthing and mooring opportunities, including lower-cost recreational boating, throughout Newport Harbor, reflecting state and regional demand for various slip sizes and affordability. (Imp. 2.1, 21.1)

Policy HBB-8.3: Anchorages. Maintain anchorages in designated Federal areas that minimize interference with safe navigation and where shore access and support facilities are available. (Imp. 2.1, 21.1)

Policy HBB-8.4: Piers. Authorize, pursuant to permit, license, or lease, new and existing piers and docks bayward of waterfront residential properties, subject to appropriate conditions that ensure compatibility with residential uses. (Imp. 2.1, 21.1)

Policy HBB-8.5: Vacant Moorings. Facilitate access to vacant moorings for temporary rental use. (Imp. 2.1, 21.1)

Policy HBB-8.6: Mooring Transfers. Foster public access to moorings by enforcing and refining the derelict boat ordinance and regulating permitted transfers by permit holders. (Imp. 2.1, 21.1)

Policy HBB-8.7: Live-Aboard Vessels. Allow “live-aboard” vessels, subject to a reasonable maximum number of renewable annual permits, and provide for regulation and vessel inspection. (Imp. 2.1, 21.1)

Policy HBB-8.8: Economic Assessment. Conduct regular assessments at least every 5 years of the economic viability of the harbor, bay, and beaches to track potential changes. (Imp. 1.2, 12.2, 21.4)

Goal HBB-9: Cost-efficient servicing and managing of Newport Harbor

Policy HBB-9.1: Tidal Revenue. Explore revenue options to receive a reasonable rate of return from all tideland users to recapture related City investment, services, and management costs. (Imp. 30.2)

Policy HBB-9.2: Supplemental Funding. Provide alternative and supplemental Newport Harbor funding, including seeking Federal and State grants, loans, or partnership agreements, for boater safety, education, maintenance, and capital improvements of Newport Harbor. (Imp. 30.2)

Policy HBB-9.3: Tideland Leases and Permits. Review the administration of tidelands leases and permits; consider accepted best management practices to assist in redevelopment, maintenance, and financing of waterfront developments; and reflect reasonable value in the lease rates. (Imp. 30.2)

Policy HBB-9.4: Cost Recovery. Review costs and procedures to receive reasonable cost recovery for permit processing. (Imp. 21.1)

Policy HBB-9.5: Efficient Harbor Management. Support efficient Newport Harbor management through the use of emerging technologies such as smart buoys, online mooring rentals, vessel tracking, and other technologies, to the extent feasible. (21.2)

Public Access to Coastal Resources

Newport Beach has a well-established system of accessways to ocean beaches and Newport Bay, including public beaches, parks, shoreline trails, walkways, and boardwalks. The City protects public access from adverse impacts due to new development, per the California Coastal Act.

Higher tides and storm surges from sea-level rise can accelerate erosion of sandy beaches, which can often be mitigated through sand nourishment and replenishment. This increased erosion may impact public access to many beach areas, and thus, in extreme cases, to public beach access within Newport Beach. Additionally, unmitigated bluff erosion, which may increase due to sea-level rise, may cause loss and damage to development, including roads, sidewalks, and beach and harbor access points in Corona del Mar and Newport Coast. The possibility of this occurring is greatest in long-term, worst-case sea-level rise scenarios.

Higher sea levels can also lead to increased risk of coastal flooding during consequential storms, which can temporarily impede access to the beach and harbor. Low-lying beach access points may be threatened by significant sea-level rise. The General Plan Safety Element includes maps and additional detail on sea-level rise, potential coastal flooding, and beach erosion.

Access to coastal resources provides recreational, health, and economic benefits. The harbor, bay, and beaches should be valued for the passive and active recreational opportunities they provide, and reasonable access should be provided and maintained for current and future generations. Enhanced reasonable recreational opportunities and user amenities should be available at appropriate locations to enhance the user experience. The types and locations of amenities will consider the needs for both passive and active coastal experiences. As active mobility opportunities are provided, safe pedestrian access should always be prioritized.

Goal HBB-10: Safe and accessible beach and harbor access points

Policy HBB-10.1: Public Access. Provide adequate public access to the shoreline, beach, coastal parks, trails, and Newport Bay; acquire additional public access points and consider new vertical access points to these areas and provide parking, where possible. (Imp. 2.1, 5.1, 20.2)

Policy HBB-10.2: Public Access Facilities. Ensure that new or improved public access facilities are compatible with existing permitted land uses and with the availability of supporting infrastructure, such as parking and restrooms. (Imp. 2.1, 21.1)

Policy HBB-10.3: Access Assessment. Assess beach and harbor access points that are at risk of impacts from coastal hazards, and create long-term management plans to maintain or replace them with similar access. (Imp. 5.2)

Policy HBB-10.4: Facility Accessibility. Maintain and enhance existing infrastructure to support accessibility for a range of users with varied abilities, including enhanced restrooms, parking, bike racks, and other supportive infrastructure. (Imp. 30.1)

Policy HBB-10.5: Marine Safety. Provide for marine safety, such as lifeguards, harbor patrol, on-the-water fire suppression, police, and traffic and parking enforcement through dedicated funds for the Harbor Department and other applicable departments. (Imp. 23.1, 21.4)

Goal HBB-11: Multiple, well-connected coastal access options

Policy HBB-11.1: Provision of Visitor Facilities. Maintain the provision of guest slips, moorings, vessel waste pump-out stations, and anchorages in Newport Harbor. Coordinate with the Orange County Parks Department to provide such facilities where appropriate and feasible within Orange County tidelands. (Imp. 14.3, 21.4)

Policy HBB-11.2: Public Water Transportation. Enhance and maintain public water transportation services and expanded public water transportation uses and land support facilities. (Imp. 16.12)

Policy HBB-11.3: Coastal Transportation. Promote opportunities to expand water transportation modes, such as water-based shuttle services and water taxis, and land-based transportation modes aimed at increasing coastal access, such as the Balboa Peninsula Trolley. (Imp. 16.12)

Policy HBB-11.4: Navigation Tools. Improve accessibility to coastal areas and represent neighborhood character through the use of navigation tools such as physical wayfinding signage, real-time maps, QR codes, and other applicable methods. (Imp. 21.6)

Policy HBB-11.5: Wayfinding. Assess potential improvements to wayfinding in coastal areas highlighting visitor resources. (Imp. 21.6, 16.13)

Upper Newport Bay

Upper Newport Bay, nestled in the heart of Newport Beach, is one of the largest remaining wetlands in the region, spanning approximately 700 acres.⁷ This area provides sanctuary to a diverse array of fish, birds, reptiles, plants, and other species. Also known as the Back Bay, this estuarine ecosystem is a popular destination for migratory birds, offering numerous birdwatching opportunities. The Upper Newport Bay State Marine Conservation Area, covering just over 1 square mile, includes lagoons, tidal flats, and coastal marsh habitats. It protects a variety of small mammals, fish, birds, crustaceans, and other creatures, including some endangered species, and provides residents and visitors opportunities for recreation. This area is vitally important as a rest stop for migratory birds, with up to 30,000 birds visible in a single day during winter migration periods⁸.

Management of this ecological reserve balances conservation with public access, governed by policies that protect sensitive habitats while promoting educational and recreational opportunities. Public access considerations include trails, walkways, and educational facilities that allow visitors to experience this ecological treasure while minimizing environmental impacts. Upper Newport Bay exemplifies the delicate balance between preserving critical habitat and providing meaningful public access to natural coastal resources.

Goal HBB-12: Protection of the visual and ecological resources of Upper Newport Bay

Policy HBB-12.1: Public Access. Maintain public use in Upper Newport Bay Nature Preserve and Ecological Reserve to the extent that such use is consistent with the preservation of sensitive resources. (Imp. 2.1, 23.1)

Policy HBB-12.2 (NR-11.1): Interagency Coordination. Continue interagency coordination with relevant entities involved in the protection and preservation of Upper Newport Bay. (Imp. 14.3, 14.6, 14.7, 14.8, 14.13, 14.14, 14.15)

Policy HBB-12.3 (NR-12.1, S-6.1): Stormwater Drainage. Preserve, where possible, natural watercourses or provide naturalized drainage channels within Newport Beach. Where feasible, implement restoration and rehabilitation opportunities. (Imp. 1.1, 5.2, 7.5)

Policy HBB-12.4 (NR-12.2, S-6.2): Stormwater Management Coordination. Continue to coordinate the needs of stormwater pollution management with the overlapping (and sometimes competing) needs for habitat management, flood management, capital improvement projects, development, aesthetics, and open space needs. (Imp. 14.15, 19.1)

Policy HBB-12.5: Supplemental Funding. Provide alternative and supplemental Upper Newport Bay funding, including seeking Federal and State grants, loans, or partnership agreements for boater safety, education, maintenance, and capital improvements of the estuary and conservation areas. (Imp. 17.2, 23.7, 29.1, 29.3)

Policy HBB-12.6: Visual Resources Maintenance. Protect and manage visual and scenic resources by maintaining scenic resource inventories, protection plans, regulations, and other tools. (Imp. 5.2, 10.1)

⁷ Newport Bay Conservancy. 2024. "Bay Management." <https://newportbay.org/the-bay/bay-management/>.

⁸ California Department of Fish and Wildlife. 2026. "Upper Newport Bay State Marine Conservation Area." <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Conservation/Marine/MPAs/Upper-Newport-Bay>.

Policy HBB-12.7: New Visual Resources. Encourage new public and private development to create new public viewpoints that provide views of Upper Newport Bay. (Imp. 2.1, 5.2)

Policy HBB-12.8: Reduce Pollution. Minimize pollution in Upper Newport Bay through support of actions and infrastructure that reduce trash, such as the Newport Bay Trash Interceptor. (Imp. 10.3, 16.15)

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City Boards, Commissions, and Committees Feedback
GPAC/GPUSC Revisions from December 3, 2025

Table 1, Harbor Commission Feedback – Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Element

Element	Goal	Comment(s)	GPAC/GPUSC Revision
Harbor, Bay, and Beaches	HBB-1: Local businesses and water-dependent commercial uses in the Newport Harbor area that are preserved to maintain and enhance the economic activity charm of the waterfront community	<p>HBB-1.2.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarify if new development is private, public or both and also whether it is at any time or only post-development. For example, a public use (i.e., Marina Park) could be redeveloped 25 years from now and it would affect water use during construction. <p>HBB-1.4.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The phrase “...bridges across City-controlled roads...” is unclear. Consider adding a reference to modern mooring technology (e.g., helix anchors) and mooring field optimization to improve safety, environmental impact, and capacity. <p>HBB-1.9.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the definition of a “small” boat? It should include personal watercraft and manual and human-powered craft. We should be more proactive than “teach customers how to safely operate the watercraft” entails — should this be more formal training, safety briefings, or informational materials? Support continued short-term rental of boats, wave runners, stand up paddle boards and other human power watercraft while encouraging vendors to teach customers how to safely operate. 	<p>See Pages HBB-2 and HBB-3 for all comments in this row.</p> <p>HBB-1.2 (New Development) is carried forward from an existing adopted policy. No change is needed, as it is not related to construction, it is related to siting and design.</p> <p>No change to HBB-1.4 (Marine Support Uses). “City-controlled roads” is intended to place emphasis on public rights-of-way regulated by the City (i.e., not managed by Caltrans or another entity).</p> <p>Policy 1.9 (Short-Term Rentals) revised as follows: “Support continued short-term rental of boats, wave runners, stand-up paddle boards, and other human-powered watercraft, and require vendors to provide formal training that includes safety briefings.”</p>

City Boards, Commissions, and Committees Feedback
GPAC/GPUSC Revisions from December 3, 2025

Table 1, Harbor Commission Feedback – Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Element

Element	Goal	Comment(s)	GPAC/GPUSC Revision
Harbor, Bay, and Beaches	HBB-2: Minimized risk of displacement by coastal hazards	HBB-2.1. The bullets need more clarity on what the intent is. Also, the list seems limited.	See Page HBB-3. Policy HBB-2.1 (Sea Level Rise Plan) revised to include more context and to clarify intention to comply with Senate Bill (SB) 272, with bulleted list presented as minimum considerations for the Sea Level Rise Plan.
Harbor, Bay, and Beaches	HBB-3: A harbor, bay, and beaches that attract tourism and maintain the character of coastal neighborhoods	HBB-3.1. It is unclear how more waterfront could be created. What does the word “reasonable” mean here?	See Page HBB-3. Policy HBB-3.1 (Waterfront Public Spaces) revised to clarify intent by rewording as “preservation of public spaces and beaches along the waterfront.” Reasonable is an intentional term used throughout the General Plan that is meant to be subjective, adding flexibility to the policy.
Harbor, Bay, and Beaches	HBB-4: Sufficient coastal infrastructure that protects coastal-dependent and public recreational uses and view corridors while matching the character of the surrounding development and protecting coastal and visual resources	HBB-4. Clarify what are believed to be the current “view corridors”.	See Pages HBB-1 and HBB-2. Reference added to Natural Resources Element and its Figure NR-4, which identifies coastal viewpoints and corridors that provide scenic views. Much of this Figure is unchanged; however, it has been expanded to include additional viewpoints and view roads in the Newport Coast area. Figure NR-4 is enclosed with this table for reference.

City Boards, Commissions, and Committees Feedback
GPAC/GPUSC Revisions from December 3, 2025

Table 1, Harbor Commission Feedback – Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Element

Element	Goal	Comment(s)	GPAC/GPUSC Revision
Harbor, Bay, and Beaches	HBB-5: Coordination among City, County of Orange, State, and Federal agencies having regulatory authority of Newport Harbor and Newport Bay	HBB-5.3. The “other controlling agencies” should be named.	See Page HBB-5. Policy HBB-5.3 (Interagency Coordination) revised as follows: “Work with other <u>applicable</u> controlling agencies within Newport Harbor and/or Newport Bay to define an area that can support harbor maintenance facilities and equipment.” This change provides flexibility, as such entities/agencies can change over time.
Harbor, Bay, and Beaches	HBB-6: Maintenance and enhancement of deep-water channels to ensure they remain navigable by boats	Goal HBB-6. Maintenance and enhancement of deep-water channels should include a long-term sediment management funding plan. Without funding language, dredging goals may be hard to achieve. HBB-6.3. Has “HBB-7.1” repeated twice and should be incorporated in HBB-7.1. Confusing wording.	See Page HBB-5. New Policy HBB-6.4 (Sediment Management Funding) added as follows: “Develop a sediment management funding plan to identify long-term funding pursuit strategies to support deep-water channels.” Repeated reference removed.

City Boards, Commissions, and Committees Feedback
GPAC/GPUSC Revisions from December 3, 2025

Table 1, Harbor Commission Feedback – Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Element

Element	Goal	Comment(s)	GPAC/GPUSC Revision
Harbor, Bay, and Beaches	HBB-7: Protection and restoration of beaches and dunes	<p>HBB-7.1. This is listed twice. Clarify who is being encouraged and what traditional infrastructure would be reduced. This is unclear. Also, should the specific locations of sand replenishment and nourishment and dune restoration be named?</p> <p>HBB-7.2. What is the expected source of the sand?</p>	<p>See Pages HBB-5 and HBB-6 for all comments in this row.</p> <p>Policy HBB-7.1 (Nature-Based Solutions) revised as follows: “Encourage the use of nature-based solutions for beach and dune preservation and restoration as alternatives to traditional hard infrastructure, to the extent feasible. Nature-based solutions could include options such as dune restoration and sand replenishment and nourishment.”</p> <p>No change to Policy HBB-7.2 (Beach Replenishment). Specific locations and sand sources are too granular for the General Plan level. These details are best vetted through an implementing action like the preparation of a sea level rise plan or similar.</p>

City Boards, Commissions, and Committees Feedback
 GPAC/GPUSC Revisions from December 3, 2025

Table 1, Harbor Commission Feedback – Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Element

Element	Goal	Comment(s)	GPAC/GPUSC Revision
Harbor, Bay, and Beaches	HBB-8: Well-managed and economically productive harbor, bay, and beaches	<p>HBB-8.1. explain how expansion of existing marinas might be possible.</p> <p>HBB-8.2. Explain what is meant by “lower-cost” recreational boating.</p> <p>HBB-8.3. Consider changing the word “provide” to “maintain” as there likely isn’t space for additional anchorages in federal areas.</p> <p>HBB-8.5. Who would the temporary use be provided by?</p> <p>HBB-8.7.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain what the term “reasonable” means. How are the renewable annual permits in compliance with State Lands Commission? • This is on “Live Aboard permits”, shouldn’t we change “Reasonable maximum number” for a live-aboard permit and tie it to a specific percentage of moorings as it is today? 	<p>See Page HBB-7 for all comments in this row.</p> <p>Policy HBB-8.1 (Marinas and Dry Boat Storage) revised for clarity as follows: “Protect and, where feasible through the use of new designs and technology, enhance marinas and expand dry boat storage facilities.”</p> <p>No change to Policy HBB-8.2 (Berthing and Mooring). Modified from existing adopted Policy HB 5.2. “Lower-cost recreational boating” was included in response to community input during outreach and engagement and supported by the GPAC/GPUSC.</p> <p>Policy HBB-8.3 (Anchorage) revised as suggested.</p> <p>No change to Policy HBB-8.5 (Vacant Moorings). This is carried over from existing adopted Policy HB 5.5 (Temporary Rental of Moorings).</p> <p>No change to Policy HBB-8.7 (Live-Aboard Vessels). This is carried over from existing adopted Policy HB 5.7 (Live Aboard Vessels). The Policy should remain vague for flexibility for future for General Plan purposes.</p>

City Boards, Commissions, and Committees Feedback
GPAC/GPUSC Revisions from December 3, 2025

Table 1, Harbor Commission Feedback – Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Element

Element	Goal	Comment(s)	GPAC/GPUSC Revision
Harbor, Bay, and Beaches	HBB-9: Cost-efficient servicing and managing of Newport Harbor	<p>HBB-9. Consider adding language about adopting technology for harbor management (smart buoys, online mooring rentals, vessel tracking) to improve efficiency and user experience. This is in process today.</p> <p>HBB-9.1. Explain what the term “reasonable” means.</p> <p>HBB-9.3. “reasonable value for the lease rates” should be “fair market value per State Lands Commission”. Are the “waterfront developments” public, private or either? Under “Public Access to Coastal Resources”, the term “worst case” is stated in reference to sea level rise. There have been numerous sea level studies that have a wide range in theories about the total rise over time. As such, worst case should be better defined. Which study should be cited?</p>	<p>See Page HBB-7 for all comments in this row.</p> <p>New Policy HBB-9.5 (Efficient Harbor Management) added as follows: “Support efficient harbor management through the use of emerging technologies such as smart buoys, online mooring rentals, vessel tracking, and other technologies, to the extent feasible.”</p> <p>No change to HBB-9.1 (Tidal Revenue). Reasonable is intentionally subjective to provide flexibility in implementation. This is adapted from existing adopted Policy HB 12.1 (Tideland Revenue).</p> <p>No change to HBB-9.3 (Tideland Leases and Permits). Reasonable is intentionally subjective to provide flexibility in implementation. This is adapted from existing adopted Policy HB 12.3 (Tideland Leases and Permits).</p>

City Boards, Commissions, and Committees Feedback
GPAC/GPUSC Revisions from December 3, 2025

Table 1, Harbor Commission Feedback – Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Element

Element	Goal	Comment(s)	GPAC/GPUSC Revision
Harbor, Bay, and Beaches	HBB-10: Safe and accessible beach and harbor access points	Harbor – HBB-10.5. Expand on this to commit to funding and include the Harbor Department and on the water fire suppression.	See Page HBB-8. Policy HBB-10.5 (Marine Safety) revised as follows: “Provide for marine safety, such as lifeguards, harbor patrol, on the water fire suppression, police, and traffic and parking enforcement through dedicated funds for the Harbor Department and other applicable departments.”
Harbor, Bay, and Beaches	HBB-11: Multifaceted and integrated coastal access	HBB-11. Expand wayfinding beyond signage to include digital tools (apps, QR codes, real-time maps) for visitor navigation which is in effect today. HBB-11.1. suggest changing the word “encourage” to “maintain”. HBB-11.3. It is not clear where a marine terminal could be located in Newport Harbor. Does this HBB apply?	See Pages HBB-8 and HBB-9 for all comments in this row. New Policy HBB-11.4 (Navigation Tools) added as follows: “Improve accessibility to coastal areas and represent neighborhood character through the use of navigation tools such as wayfinding signage, real-time maps, QR codes, and other applicable methods.” Policy HBB-11.1 (Provision of Visitor Facilities) revised as suggested. Policy HBB-11.3 (Marine Terminals) has been omitted entirely.

City Boards, Commissions, and Committees Feedback
GPAC/GPUSC Revisions from December 3, 2025

Table 1, Harbor Commission Feedback – Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Element

Element	Goal	Comment(s)	GPAC/GPUSC Revision
Harbor, Bay, and Beaches	HBB-12: Protection of the visual and ecological resources of Upper Newport Bay	HBB – 12.1. Maintain public use in Upper Newport Bay Nature Preserve and Ecological Reserve to the extent that such use is consistent with the preservation of sensitive resources including monitoring and maintenance of Newport Bay Trash Interceptor.	See Page HBB-10. New Policy HBB-12.8 (Reduce Pollution) added as follows: “Minimize pollution in the Upper Newport Bay through support of actions and infrastructure that reduce trash such as the Newport Bay Trash Interceptor.”
Harbor, Bay, and Beaches	Not Specified	There should be something in this document to maintain the relationship with the County for the launch ramp facility as there are no other launch ramps in the harbor., Could consider identifying a new launch ramp location owned by the City. If the County were to end the lease arrangement, how would vessel launching be possible?	See Page HBB-4. New Policy HBB-4.5 (Launch Ramp Facility) added as follows: “Support the continued use of the launch ramp facility through coordination with the County of Orange; and consider opportunities for the siting and development of a new launch ramp facility owned by the City.”
Harbor, Bay, and Beaches	Not Specified	There should be something in the document to maintain the relationship with fuel dock owner(s). If those owner(s) decided to redevelop their property into something other than a fuel station, how would vessel fueling be possible?	See Page HBB-4. New Policy HBB-4.6 (Vessel Fueling) added as follows: “Coordinate with fuel dock owners to develop strategies for the long-term preservation of vessel fueling stations.”
Harbor, Bay, and Beaches	Not Specified	Consider adding a section that defines the City Harbor Department’s current role and the need to maintain this.	See Page HBB-4. Prefacing narrative under “Harbor Coordination and Administration” has been revised to include the following: “The Harbor Department is responsible for many of the harbor-related programs and services in the City, providing essential services such as

City Boards, Commissions, and Committees Feedback
 GPAC/GPUSC Revisions from December 3, 2025

Table 1, Harbor Commission Feedback – Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Element

Element	Goal	Comment(s)	GPAC/GPUSC Revision
			daily harbor patrols, coordinating the use of anchorages and mooring fields, renting available slip space and moorings, and managing the guest marina and Marina Park. Their role plays a vital role in supporting the local marine-dependent economy while supporting residents, businesses, and visitors alike through coordinated safety efforts, on-the-water support, and generating revenue for the Harbor Department budget and the Tidelands Fund. The role and function of the Harbor Department supports both the daily operations and long-term sustainability of the harbor.”
Harbor, Bay, and Beaches	Not Specified	There is no mention of the Harbor Department’s current role in managing the harbor, coordinating safety, providing on-the-water support, and generating revenue for the Harbor Department budget and the Tidelands Fund. Including these functions would acknowledge the Department’s importance in daily operations and long-term harbor sustainability.	See previous response.
Harbor, Bay, and Beaches	Not Specified	The Orange County Sheriff’s Harbor Patrol role is mentioned only indirectly through safety policies. Consider adding a specific policy on collaboration between the City and the Sheriff’s Department to ensure consistent, effective, and well-coordinated law enforcement on the water.	See Page HBB-5. New Policy HBB-5.4 (Harbor Patrol) added as follows: “Coordinate with the Orange County Sheriff’s Department on Harbor Patrol to provide consistent, effective, and well-coordinated law enforcement on the water.”
Harbor, Bay, and Beaches	Within the “Economic Value of the Harbor” Section	The data is from 2018. Should we obtain later data and add a note that this data will be updated every X years to maintain relevance?	See Pages HBB-6 and HBB-7. Prefacing narrative revised to clarify data reference.

Prepared by Ben Zdeba, Acting Deputy Community Development Director

City Boards, Commissions, and Committees Feedback
GPAC/GPUSC Revisions from December 3, 2025

Table 1, Harbor Commission Feedback – Harbor, Bay, and Beaches Element

Element	Goal	Comment(s)	GPAC/GPUSC Revision
			<p>Additionally, new Policy HBB-8.8 (Economic Assessment) added as follows: “Conduct regular assessments at least every 5 years of the economic viability of the harbor, bay, and beaches to track potential changes.”</p>





NEWPORT BEACH

Harbor Commission Staff Report

March 11, 2026
Agenda Item No. 6.3

TO: HARBOR COMMISSION

FROM: Paul Blank, Harbormaster
pblank@newportbeachca.gov
(949) 270-8158

TITLE: Review and Discuss Proposed Elimination of Mooring Length Adjustment Process

ABSTRACT:

Several applications to adjust mooring lengths are received by the Harbor Department annually. Some desire to eliminate the process of mooring length adjustments has been expressed. The Commission will discuss whether mooring length adjustments should be considered going forward.

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) Review and discuss the proposed elimination of mooring length adjustments
- 3) Provide direction to staff regarding the adoption of a recommendation to eliminate mooring size adjustments.

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS:

There is no fiscal impact related to this item.

DISCUSSION:

The Harbor Department continues to evaluate several applications for mooring length adjustments annually. Evaluating the applications involves surveys of the field conditions around the applicant's mooring, review of the mooring length history, and a general plan to improve the layout, safety, and navigability of the mooring fields.

Some desire has been expressed to eliminate the ability to file an application requesting a mooring length extension. Commissioners will discuss the process and effects of granting or denying size adjustment applications. Commissioners will discuss whether the current process and practices should continue, be amended, or be eliminated.

The relevant sections of the City Municipal Code are 17.60.040 (M), which reads:

M. Request to Extend Mooring Length.

1. General. Mooring permittees shall not moor vessels that exceed their permitted maximum mooring length. If an offshore mooring permittee wishes to moor a vessel that requires an extension in mooring length, they may request an extension up to the established length of their mooring row. A request for an extension that would exceed the established length of their mooring row shall require the permittee to relocate to a larger mooring row. In no case shall mooring lengths exceed the established mooring row lengths.
2. Application.
 - a. Filing and Review of Request. An offshore mooring permittee shall file a written request for extension of mooring length with the Harbor Department on a form prescribed by the Harbormaster, together with the filing fee required by the City's fee schedule adopted by resolution of the City Council.
 - b. Application Requirements. An application for extension of mooring length shall include the following information in addition to such other information as may be required by the Harbormaster:
 - i. The full identification of the applicant and the vessel for which the extension of mooring length is sought, certifying that the applicant and the assigned vessel have complied with (or in the event the vessel identification is unknown, applicant will certify that such unidentified vessel prior to occupying the mooring space will comply with) all of the applicable United States Coast Guard license, inspection, and certification requirements, and certifying that the applicant has read and is otherwise familiar with all of the applicable rules and regulations promulgated by the City, including, but not limited to, the provisions of this title;
 - ii. Such plans and specifications as may be required by the Harbormaster for such mooring to accommodate the proposed longer vessel; and
 - iii. Detailed information regarding the vessel including make, model, year, LOA, beam, dimension, vessel ID, and if the vessel identification is not known at the time of making an application, the LOA and adjusted LOA (including bowsprits, swim steps, or stern-mounted dinghies) of the proposed vessel for which the applicant seeks approval. The LOA as published by the manufacturer of a particular vessel shall be used to determine the required mooring size of a particular vessel, and the size of the specification for the chains, weights, and tackle necessary to secure a vessel on a particular mooring for a permittee. Adjusted LOA shall be used to determine the maximum vessel length that can fit in any particular slip, side-tie, or mooring row.
3. Action on Extension Request. For extension requests that require relocation to a larger mooring, a mooring of appropriate size must be available within the

same mooring field. The H and J fields shall be considered as one field for the purpose of relocations. As used herein, an available mooring includes one that is occupied by a permittee whose permitted maximum mooring length is shorter than the established length of its mooring row by five feet or more. The Harbormaster may approve the extension request only after making the findings set forth in Section [17.05.140](#)(D)(1) and making the following findings:

- a. There have been no changes in the conditions or circumstances of the existing offshore mooring permit so that there would have been grounds for denial of the original offshore mooring permit or grounds for revocation thereof at the time an application for extension of mooring length is filed;
 - b. The proposed extension of mooring length will not:
 - i. Impede or obstruct the fairways or channels or prevent or obstruct the passage of other vessels between the rows;
 - ii. Impede, obstruct or prevent other mooring permittees from safely navigating in and out of adjacent moorings or moorings in other rows connected by the same fairway to the row of the permittee's vessel;
 - iii. Result in vessel(s) encroaching into the fairway or extending beyond the outer boundaries of the mooring area or row; or
 - iv. Violate the established length of the row or mooring area in which the vessel will be moored;
 - c. The applicant and the assigned vessel have complied with all of the appropriate United States Coast Guard license, inspection, and certification requirements for the assigned vessel and all of the applicable rules and regulations promulgated by the City, including, but not limited to, the provisions of this title.
 - i. Example of relocation to an available mooring. Permittee A wishes to upgrade their vessel "Atlantis" (forty (40) foot LOA), which is in a forty (40) foot row, with "Atlantis II" (forty-two (42) foot LOA). A will need to relocate to a mooring in a longer row since the mooring length cannot be extended at its current location. Permittee B's vessel "Barnacle" (forty-one (41) foot LOA) is in a forty-five (45) foot row. Permittee C's vessel "Calypso" (forty (40) foot LOA) is in forty-five (45) foot row. Permittee D's vessel "Doldrums" (forty (40) foot LOA) is in a forty-five (45) foot row. B has a permitted mooring length of forty-one (41) feet; C's permitted mooring length is forty (40) feet; and D's permitted mooring length is forty-one (41). All four moorings are in the same mooring field. C's mooring is the only available mooring to which A can relocate.
4. Conditions of Approval. If the Harbormaster approves a request for extension of mooring length, such approval shall be conditional and contingent upon the following requirements:
- a. The mooring permittee must occupy the approved mooring with their vessel within twelve (12) months following the date of approval;
 - b. Transferable mooring permits shall not be sold or transferred for a period of twelve (12) months following the date of occupancy of the

- approved mooring. The sale or transfer of said permit shall comply with the requirements of subsections (B)(3), (E) and (F) of this section; and
- c. The requestor shall cover all costs associated with modifying the length of their mooring, or in the case of a relocation moving their vessel to the available mooring and moving the displaced vessel from the available mooring. The costs shall include, but not be limited to, the moving of mooring anchors and tackle and resizing of mooring tackle to meet applicable mooring standards (e.g., chain size).
5. Noncompliance with subsection (M)(4)(a) or (b) of this section shall result in rescission of the approval to extend mooring length. Within thirty (30) days of the rescission, the permittee who requested the extension shall at its sole expense return the mooring to its prior maximum length or in the case of a relocation return their vessel and the displaced vessel to their prior assigned mooring locations or other mooring locations as deemed appropriate by the Harbormaster. Violation of subsection (M)(4)(b) of this section shall be grounds for revocation of the mooring permit. (Ord. 2023-22 § 767, 2023; Ord. 2023-8 §§ 6—11, 2023; Ord. 2022-9 §§ 7, 8, 2022; Ord. 2022-4 § 2, 2022; Ord. 2020-5 § 1 (Exh. 1) (part), 2020; Ord. 2018-17 § 58, 2018; Ord. 2017-7 § 3, 2017; Ord. 2013-11 § 175, 2013; Ord. 2010-26 § 5, 2010; Ord. 2008-2 § 1 (part), 2008)

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

Staff recommends the Harbor Commission find this action is not subject to 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 a physical change to the environment, directly or indirectly.

NOTICING:

The agenda item has been noticed according to the Brown Act (72 hours in advance of the meeting at which the Harbor Commission considers the item).



NEWPORT BEACH

Harbor Commission Staff Report

March 11, 2026
Agenda Item No. 6.4

TO: HARBOR COMMISSION

FROM: Paul Blank, Harbormaster
pblank@newportbeachca.gov
(949) 270-8158

TITLE: Discussion of Potential Safety Requirements for Small Vessel Rental Customers

ABSTRACT:

The Harbor Commission will conduct a discussion regarding potential safety requirements for single-day small vessel rental customers operating in Newport Harbor. The purpose of this discussion is to explore practical and enforceable measures that could improve safety for renters, other harbor users, and the general public. Topics include renter orientation and education, life jacket availability and use, operator age or competency considerations, standardized harbor rules and navigation awareness, and potential technology-based or operational best practices. The Commission's feedback will help inform whether staff or the Newport Harbor Safety Committee should further evaluate or develop recommended guidelines or requirements for future consideration.

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; or
3. Provide direction to staff and/or the Newport Harbor Safety Committee regarding potential safety guidelines or requirements for single-day small vessel rental concession operators and their customers in Newport Harbor.

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS:

There is no immediate fiscal impact associated with this discussion item. Any future programmatic changes or requirements would be evaluated separately for fiscal impacts prior to implementation.

BACKGROUND:

Single-day small vessel rentals—including electric boats, small motorized vessels, personal watercraft, kayaks, paddleboards, and similar watercraft—are a popular recreational activity in Newport Harbor. These rentals allow residents and visitors to enjoy the harbor without owning a vessel, but they also introduce safety and operational challenges due to the high proportion of inexperienced or first-time operators.

California law generally requires vessel operators to possess a California Boater Card, demonstrating completion of an approved boating safety course. However, California Harbors and Navigation Code Section 678.11(c)(5) provides an exemption for individuals operating a vessel rented for 30 days or less. As a result, most single-day rental customers in Newport Harbor are not required to hold a Boater Card and may have little or no prior boating education.

Rental operators typically provide a brief verbal orientation, written instructions, or both prior to departure. The depth and consistency of these orientations vary by operator and vessel type. Over recent years, the Harbor Department has responded to incidents, near-misses, and complaints involving rental vessels, including collisions, grounding incidents, navigation rule violations, congestion-related conflicts, and improper or inconsistent use of required safety equipment.

These trends have prompted interest in whether additional, standardized, or enhanced safety measures could reduce risk while preserving access to recreational boating opportunities.

DISCUSSION:

The purpose of this agenda item is to initiate a policy-level discussion with the Harbor Commission regarding potential safety improvements specific to single-day small vessel rental customers. Because state law limits mandatory Boater Card requirements for short term renters, any local approach would likely focus on supplemental education, operational standards, and best practices rather than formal licensing.

The following discussion areas are provided to help frame Commission input:

1. Standardized Renter Safety Orientation
 - Requiring a minimum set of topics to be covered during renter orientations, regardless of operator or vessel type.
 - Core topics could include harbor speed limits, no-wake zones, right-of-way rules, ferry and commercial traffic awareness, anchoring and mooring restrictions, emergency procedures, and environmental protections.
 - Consideration of a short, standardized checklist or acknowledgement signed by the renter confirming completion of the orientation.

2. Use of Short Educational Media

- Development or adoption of a brief City-approved safety video (e.g., 5–10 minutes) tailored to Newport Harbor conditions.
- Videos could be viewed on-site, via QR code, or online prior to rental, reinforcing consistent messaging across operators.
- Content could be customized by vessel type (electric boats, personal watercraft, paddleboards).

3. Life Jacket Availability and Usage

- Ensuring consistent availability of properly sized U.S. Coast Guard–approved life jackets for all rental customers.
- Exploring policies that encourage or require life jacket use for children, non-swimmers, or operators of certain vessel types.
- Enhanced emphasis during orientations on when and why life jackets should be worn, even when not legally required.

4. Operator Age and Competency Considerations

- Discussion of minimum operator age standards by vessel type.
- Consideration of enhanced orientation or supervision requirements for younger or first-time operators.
- Exploration of voluntary competency self-assessments or knowledge checks prior to departure.

5. Harbor-Specific Rules and Wayfinding

- Improved distribution of harbor-specific rules through laminated onboard cards, maps, or decals.
- Use of simple visual aids showing traffic patterns, high-congestion areas, ferry routes, and restricted zones.
- Evaluation of existing harbor signage and opportunities to better support rental customers unfamiliar with the harbor layout.

6. Technology-Based Safety Tools

- Use of GPS-based geofencing on rental vessels to limit access to restricted or high-risk areas.
- Speed-limiting technology in sensitive zones.
- Real-time alerts or reminders for no-wake zones and traffic separation areas.

7. Incident Tracking and Operator Coordination

- Improved data collection on rental-related incidents and near-misses to identify trends.
- Periodic coordination meetings with rental operators to share safety concerns, incident data, and best practices.
- Encouraging a collaborative approach between the City and operators to continuously improve safety outcomes.

8. Public Education and Expectations

- Reinforcing to renters that Newport Harbor is an active working harbor with ferries, commercial operators, rowing programs, and emergency response vessels.
- Aligning messaging so renters understand they are entering a shared, regulated waterway—not a closed recreational lagoon.

The Harbor Commission’s discussion can help determine which, if any, of these concepts warrant further evaluation by staff or the Newport Harbor Safety Committee for potential development into formal guidelines or future policy recommendations to the City Council.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

Staff recommends the Harbor Commission find this action is not subject to 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.

NOTICING:

The agenda item has been noticed according to the Brown Act (72 hours in advance of the meeting at which the Harbor Commission considers the item).

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A – Florida Boating Safety Education Requirements

Attachment B – Georgia Rental Boat Requirements

Attachment C – General Harbor Rules Signage

Attachment D – Harbor Map Sticker



FAQs About Boating Safety Education Requirements

Expand All

Collapse All

I was born on or after Jan. 1, 1988, and want to operate a boat in Florida. Do I need a license? ⊖

To operate a motorboat of ten (10) horsepower or greater requires anyone who was born **on or after Jan. 1, 1988**, to successfully complete [an approved boating safety course](#) and obtain a Boating Safety Education Identification Card issued by the FWC.

Florida does not have a "boating license." The [Boating Safety Education Identification Card](#) is proof of successfully completing the educational requirements and is valid for life.

Are there any exemptions to the boating safety educational requirements for people born on or after Jan. 1, 1988? ⊖

Yes, the following is a list of exemptions.

- A person licensed by the U.S. Coast Guard as a master of a vessel.
- A person operating on a private lake or pond.
- An operator who is accompanied onboard by a person who is least 18 years old and possesses the required [Boating Safety Education Identification Card](#), provided that person is attendant to and responsible for the safe operation of the vessel.
- An operator who is accompanied onboard by a person who is exempt from the educational requirements, provided that person is attendant to and responsible for the safe operation of the vessel.
- A nonresident who has in his or her possession proof that he or she has completed a NASBLA-approved boater safety course or equivalency examination from another state AND a photographic I.D.
- A person is operating a vessel within 90 days after the purchase of that vessel and has available for inspection aboard that vessel a bill of sale meeting all the requirements as established in [Chapter 328.46\(1\)](#), Florida Statutes.
- A person operating a vessel within 90 days after completing an approved boating safety course, as required in [Chapter 327.395\(1\)](#), and has a photographic I.D. and a boater education course completion certificate showing proof of having completed the required boating safety education course. The course completion certificate must provide the student's first and last name, date of birth, and the date the course was successfully completed. (Effective Oct. 1, 2011.)

I will be visiting Florida from another state and want to rent a personal watercraft. What boating safety educational requirements apply to me? 

As a nonresident, you must comply with the requirement that anyone born on or after Jan. 1, 1988, must have either successfully completed a boating education course approved by the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators (NASBLA) or have passed a course equivalency or [temporary certificate examination](#) and have in your possession a boating education ID card and a photo identification card before operating a vessel with a motor of 10 HP or more in Florida.

In addition, you would also be exempt if you met any of the other conditions for exemptions listed in the previous question.

I am an 18-year-old boater who just passed an approved online boating safety course and received a printed certificate of course completion. Do I still need a boating safety card? 

Yes. In addition to successfully completing an approved boating safety course, you must have an FWC-issued Boating Safety Education Identification Card AND a photo ID in your possession to operate a motorboat of 10 horsepower or more.

Effective Oct. 1, 2011, a course completion certificate for an approved course - along with a photo ID - can be used for up to 90 days from date of issue to operate a motorboat of 10 horsepower or more. To meet the legal requirement, the course completion certificate must have your first and last name, your date of birth and the date you successfully completed the course. You must have the certificate with you - along with a photo ID - while operating the boat. The course completion certificate can be used for **up to 90 days** and it **is not a permanent** replacement for the Boating Safety Education ID Card.

Learn how to get a [Florida Boating Safety Education ID Card](#) after successfully completing an approved Florida boating safety course.

I am 26 years of age and will be visiting Florida for a few days, but I don't have a Boating Safety Education Identification Card. How can I rent a boat? 

If you are visiting from another state and you do not meet any of the conditions to be exempt from the boating safety education requirements, you can rent a boat by getting and carrying a [temporary certificate](#) along with your photo ID.

Vendors authorized by the FWC to offer the temporary certificate exam are located throughout the state. Individuals who pass the online exam will be issued a certificate that is valid for up to 90 days.

Learn how to obtain a [temporary course completion certificate](#).

I received a temporary certificate from an FWC contractor. Can I send my temporary certificate to your office and exchange it for a Boating Safety Education Identification Card? 

No. The temporary certificate allows an individual to only temporarily meet Florida's boating education requirements. It is valid for 90 days from the date it is issued. It is not a substitute for a Boating Safety Education Identification Card.

If I am required to have a Boating Safety Education Identification Card to operate a boat and I just completed an approved boating safety course, can I operate my boat while I am waiting to receive my permanent card?

Yes, a course completion certificate and your photo ID can be used temporarily as proof of meeting Florida's boating safety education requirement.

To meet the legal requirement, the course completion certificate must have your first and last name, your date of birth and the date you successfully completed the course. You must have the certificate with you, along with a photo ID, while operating the boat. The course completion certificate can be used for up to 90 days. It is not a permanent replacement for the Boating Safety Education ID Card.

Learn how to get a [Florida Boating Safety Education ID Card](#) after successfully completing an approved Florida boating safety course.

[Boater Education](#)

[Boating Safety Education Identification Card](#)

[Boating Safety Courses](#)

[FAQs About Boating Safety Education Requirements](#)

[Boating Accident Statistical Reports](#)

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Pursuant to section 120.74, Florida Statutes, the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has published its **2022 Agency Regulatory Plan**.



Rental Boat Requirements

Rental Boat Education Law

Code Section 52-7-8.3

No person shall rent, lease, or let for hire any vessel ten horsepower or more to any person under 16 years of age.

On or after July 1, 2014, a person 16 years of age or older may rent or lease any vessel ten horsepower or more if such person has completed a boating education course approved by the department.

This subsection shall not apply to:

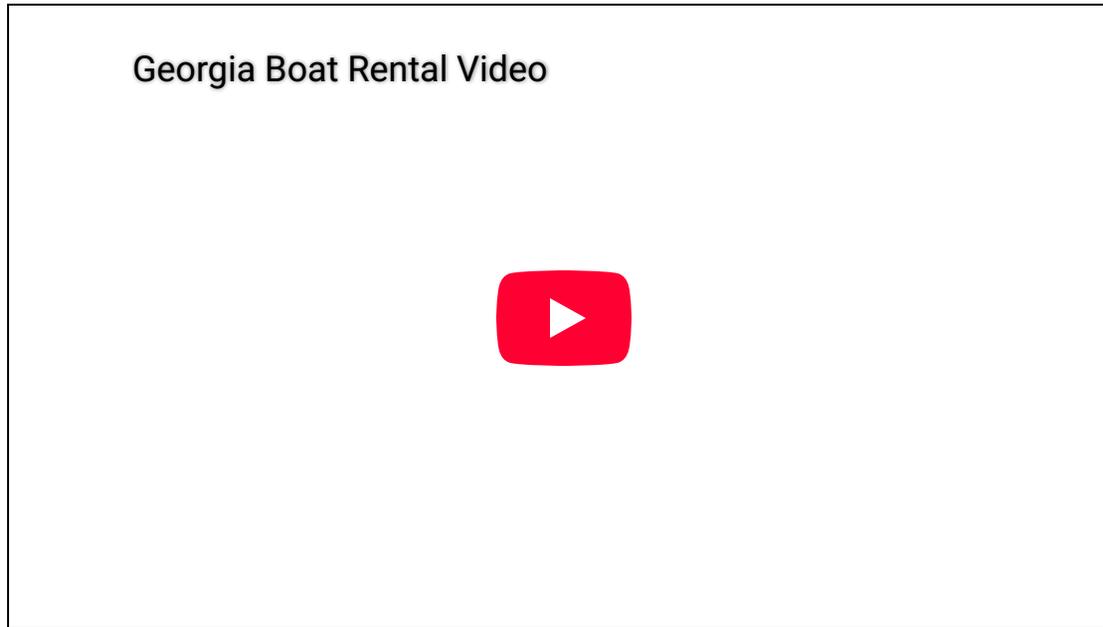
- any person licensed by the United States Coast Guard as a master of a vessel.
- a resident or nonresident who has in his or her possession proof that he or she has completed a National Association of State Boating Law Administrators approved boater education course or equivalency examination from another state.

Renters will be required to watch a ten-minute boater education video, which you can access by clicking here (<https://youtu.be/8tLpiXdBNYA>) or the link at the bottom of this page, and sign an orientation safety checklist before operating any rented vessel 10 horsepower or greater.

This is required for all operators of a rented vessel.

We encourage ALL boaters to take a Boater Education Course. You may attend a 6 hour class or take it online. You may save on your boat insurance. Anyone born after January 1, 1998 is required to complete this course before operating any vessel. Please click here for more information on Boating Education. ([boating-education](#))

Boater Education Video for boat renters (<https://youtu.be/8tLpiXdBNYA>)



ABOUT US

Law Enforcement Division

(<https://gadnrle.org/division>)

Georgia DNR

(<https://gadnr.org>)

Web Policies

(<https://gadnr.org/webPolicies>)

Accessibility

Info 

2019 Weekly Reports

(<https://gadnrle.org/2019-weekly-reports>)

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL

RESOURCES LAW ENFORCEMENT DIVISION

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Social Circle, GA 30025

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ref=hl) 

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(<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/GADNR/subscriber/new>)



(<http://www.exploregeorgia.org/>)



General Harbor Rules

- The speed limit is 5 mph and NO WAKE
- Children under 13 must wear life jackets/PFDs at all times
- Swim only in designated areas
- Public urination is prohibited
- Avoid transiting through congested mooring fields
- Powerboats give way to sailboats and manually powered crafts
- Operating a vessel at a Blood Alcohol Concentration $\geq 0.08\%$ is illegal
- Slow down near docks and moored boats

For harbor information and services, scan:



Harbor Department

Contact via VHF Channel 17 or call 949-270-8159

City of Newport Beach Harbor Department



Newport Harbor Map



General Rules

- The speed limit is 5 mph and NO WAKE
- Children under 13 must wear life jackets at all times
- Swim only in designated areas
- Public urination is prohibited
- Avoid transiting through congested mooring fields
- Powerboats give way to sailboats and manually powered crafts
- Operating a vessel at a Blood Alcohol Concentration \geq 0.08% is illegal
- Slow down near docks and moored boats

Harbor Department: Located at Marina Park, 1600 W. Balboa Blvd.

Available daily from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Contact via VHF Channel 17 or call 949-270-8159



NEWPORT BEACH

Harbor Commission Staff Report

March 11, 2026
Agenda Item No. 6.5

TO: HARBOR COMMISSION

FROM: Paul Blank, Harbormaster, 949-270-8158
pblank@newportbeachca.gov

TITLE: Ad Hoc Committee Updates

ABSTRACT:

Several ad hoc committees have been established to address short term projects outside of the Harbor Commission objectives. This is the time the ad hoc committees will provide an update on their projects.

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.

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS:

There is no fiscal impact related to this item.

DISCUSSION:

The Harbor Commission has two established ad hoc committees at this time to provide further review of issues that have arisen outside the adoption of the Harbor Commission Objectives or at the request of City Council. This is the time the Ad Hoc Committees will update the Harbor Commission on their progress.

The Ad Hoc Committees are:

- Balboa Ferry Ad Hoc – Commissioners Scully, Svrcek and Yahn (05-10-2023)
- ~~General Plan Update to the Harbor and Bay Element Ad Hoc – Commissioners Scully, Marston and Yahn (10-09-2024) completed 1-14-26.~~
- Harbor Commission Objectives Ad Hoc- Commissioners Beer, Scully and Miller (8-13-2025)
- ~~Public Dock Utilization Ad Hoc – Commissioners Beer, Svrcek and Williams. (04-10-2024) completed 6-11-2025.~~

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

Staff recommends the Harbor Commission find this action is not subject to 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.

NOTICING:

The agenda item has been noticed according to the Brown Act (72 hours in advance of the meeting at which the Harbor Commission considers the item).



NEWPORT BEACH

Harbor Commission Staff Report

March 11, 2026
Agenda Item No. 6.6

TO: HARBOR COMMISSION

FROM: Paul Blank, Harbormaster, 949-270-8158
pblank@newportbeachca.gov

TITLE: Harbor Commission 2024 Objectives

ABSTRACT:

Each ad hoc committee studying their respective Objective within the Commission's 2024 Objectives, will provide a progress update.

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.

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS:

There is no fiscal impact related to this item.

DISCUSSION:

The Harbor Commission periodically prepares objectives and devises workplans to accomplish those objectives. The cycle for objective setting is roughly each calendar year. The Harbor Commission adopted objectives for 2024 at their meeting in October of 2023. They also agreed to assignments of responsibility for the objectives in various functional areas. This is the time when Commissioners will report progress against their objectives.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

Staff recommends the Harbor Commission find this action is not subject to 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.

The agenda item has been noticed according to the Brown Act (72 hours in advance of the meeting at which the Harbor Commission considers the item).

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A – Harbor Commission 2024 Objectives

Newport Harbor Commission Purpose & Charter

Newport Harbor supports numerous recreational and commercial activities, waterfront residential communities and scenic and biological resources. The Harbor Commission's charge under Section 713 of the Newport Beach City Charter is to advise the City Council on the diverse uses of Newport Harbor and its waterfront. The Charter specifies:

There shall be a City Harbor Commission of seven members which shall have the power and duty to:

- (a) Advise the City Council on all matters relating to proposed harbor improvements and the use of Newport Harbor.
- (b) Advise the City Council on all matters pertaining to the use, control, operation, promotion, and regulation of all vessels within Newport Harbor.
- (c) Approve, conditionally approve, or disapprove applications on all permits where the City of Newport Beach Municipal Code assigns the authority for the decision to the Harbor Commission.
- (d) Make recommendations to the City Council for the adoption of regulations and programs necessary for the ongoing implementation of the goals, objectives, and policies of the Harbor and Bay Element of the General Plan.
- (e) Advise the City Council, Planning Commission and City Manager on land use and property development applications referred to the Harbor Commission by the City Council, Planning Commission, or the City Manager.
- (f) Serve as an appellate and reviewing body for decisions on permits and other harbor-related administrative matters where the City of Newport Beach Municipal Code assigns such authority to the Harbor Commission.
- (g) Perform such other duties relating to Newport Harbor as the City Council may require. (As amended effective December 14, 2020)

Harbor Commission – Objectives

The following objectives are intended to support the mission of the Harbor Area Management Plan and the two most essential responsibilities of the Harbor Commission: (1) Ensuring the long-term welfare of Newport Harbor for all residential, recreational, and commercial users; (2) Promoting Newport Harbor as a preferred and welcoming destination for visitors and residents alike.

These updated objectives are subject to the review and approval of the Commission, and final approval by the Newport Beach City Council. Harbor Commission ad hoc committees, as established by the Commission, bear principal responsibility for coordinating the Commission's efforts, along with staff support, in achieving these Objectives.

2024 Newport Beach Harbor Commission Goals and Assignments

1. Conduct annual review of Title 17 and recommend updates to City Council where necessary (Commissioner Miller, Williams, Yahn).
2. Collaborate with the Water Quality/Coastal Tidelands Committee to partner on areas within the Harbor that both Commission/Committees intersect (Commissioners: Svrcek, Scully).
- ~~3. Successful implementation of the mooring reconfiguration initiative, including design, testing, permitting, execution, and monitoring (Commissioner: Beer).~~
- ~~4. Collaborate with Parks, Beaches, and Recreation Commission and Staff to evaluate the best use for Lower Castaway and make a recommendation to City Council (Commissioners: Marston, Svrcek).~~
5. Work with staff to identify opportunities to add additional Harbor Services (~~Restrooms~~, additional pump out stations, dock space, Shore Boat Service, Boat Launch Ramp, ~~and development of the mobile app~~) and items on the Harbor Master Plan (Commissioners: Marston, Yahn).
6. 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).
7. 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).
- ~~8. Work with City Staff on an update of the market Rent to be charged for onshore and offshore moorings (Commissioner: Beer).~~
- ~~9. Evaluate establishing day moorings off Big Corona Beach (Commissioner: Williams).~~
10. 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: Miller, Svrcek).



NEWPORT BEACH

Harbor Commission Staff Report

March 11, 2026
Agenda Item No. 6.7

TO: HARBOR COMMISSION

FROM: Paul Blank, Harbormaster
pblank@newportbeachca.gov
(949) 270-8159

TITLE: Harbormaster Update – February 2026 Activities

ABSTRACT:

The Harbormaster oversees the City Harbor Department and is responsible for the management of the City’s mooring fields and Balboa Yacht Basin marina, support for the Harbor Commission, municipal code enforcement on the harbor, events and marine activities permitting, safety and rescue operations, management of the Marina Park visitor serving marina, marine sanitation pump out equipment and public pier maintenance, water quality monitoring and maintenance, impound and disposition of abandoned and unclaimed vessels and public relations and information dissemination on and about Newport Harbor as well as several special projects.

This report will update the Harbor Commission and the public on the Harbor Department’s recent 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.

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS:

There is no fiscal impact related to this item.

DISCUSSION:

The following is a summary of Harbor Department activities for February 2026. The summary of activities is organized referencing the department’s mission of keeping Newport Harbor clean, safe, and well-enjoyed.

Clean

Harbor Safety Officers (HSOs) and Code Enforcement Officers (CEOs) responded to several environmental and cleanliness-related issues throughout the month, demonstrating continued vigilance in protecting harbor water quality and aesthetics.

- A rental vessel customer was observed discharging human excreta into the harbor. The rental concession was subsequently contacted with the specifics of the vessel and time of violation. A citation was issued to the customer
- A significant amount of debris was removed from the harbor including a four-foot-long log which constituted a hazard to navigation (clean and safe!)
- Dockmasters and HSOs responded quickly and contained a diesel leak in the marina at Marina Pak
- HSOs operated the trash-collecting rover as part of debris collection efforts and gave the device needed cleaning and maintenance
- A sea lion was encouraged to vacate a moored vessel in the H field. It is an unusual time of year to be observing sea lions hauled out in the harbor and an unusual location for them to haul out. Sea lions are now a year-round challenge in all areas of the harbor
- HSOs spent significant effort dewatering vessels throughout the harbor but particularly at the public docks as a result of significant rainfall in the month (43 vessels for the month)
- A review of our track tracking statistics indicates that HSOs removed 3,405 pounds of debris from the harbor year-to-date, while our “Good Samaritan” partner removed 7,297 pounds of debris. Comparisons to prior calendar years can be found in Attachment A
- Additional suspected unpermitted live-aboards were investigated both during and outside the Harbor Department's normal hours of operation
- A call to our colleagues in the Police Department received a swift response when it was reported that two motorcycles were illegally parked and blocking access to the Harbor Department Spill Response Trailer
- A mooring permittee and owner of the assigned vessel received a Notice of Violation for unsanitary conditions aboard the vessel
- The Harbormaster was observed building skills as an unmanned aerial vehicle pilot. The purpose of building these skills is to quickly trace observed signs of discharge to their source
- A vessel at a private slip was observed sitting low in the water and was reported to the registered owner after a bit of research. The registered owner was very grateful for our observations and quick reporting

Safe

Significant efforts were expended to maintain and improve the safety of the harbor, with an emphasis focused on navigation safety, infrastructure integrity, and code compliance.

- HSOs performed a significant number of mooring assists during the month, especially related to the severe weather. HSOs advise that there is a good case to be made for the use of spreader or sand lines to improve the safety of mooring maneuvers in adverse weather conditions
- HSOs untangled mooring tackle for several permittees and sub-permittees
- Struggling and stranded paddleboarders were assisted from 12th Street back to their point of embarkation at Marina Park
- HSOs assisted a commercial tow provider with safely mooring a sunken vessel they had in tow onto a Marina Park mooring while the disposition of the vessel was determined
- Unpermitted construction on a residential dock was observed and stopped
- A vessel broke free of its mooring in the C field and was subsequently relocated to a Marina Park mooring when it was determined the vessel was inoperable. It is precisely to avoid circumstances like this that vessel operability requirements exist for assigned vessels on moorings. The vessel owner received a NOV
- A sailboat from the City recreation program was observed in the ocean. After HSOs checked with recreation program leadership, the vessel operators were advised to sail the vessel directly back into the harbor and they complied
- HSOs assisted with a request on a broken mooring in the Grand Canal
- Several small tenders and kayaks were better secured to their associated moored boats
- Another vessel assigned to a mooring in the A field broke loose and was resecured
- During the Harbor Department's annual "All Hands" meeting, an excellent set of tabletop exercises was conducted. The exercises involved devising appropriate responses to five emergency scenarios when an HSO was the first responder on scene
- Two double-berthing violations were observed during after-hours patrols and resulted in NOVs
- HSOs observed a dinghy experiencing engine failure and then safely escorted it to the nearest Public Dock
- HSOs installed protective cages around several of the solar lights on various Private Aids to Navigation throughout the harbor in an attempt to better protect them from damage
- Barge and tug traffic control was provided several times and included stopping and re-routing participants in a collegiate rowing regatta

Well-enjoyed

Significant efforts were expended to maintain and improve the enjoyment of the harbor while minimizing impacts to safety and navigation.

- A small vessel found adrift near the Washington Street public dock was collected, identified, and returned to its owner
- An offshore mooring permittee with a new vessel brought it to his mooring without informing the Harbor Department. As part of the usual activity of "mooring Checks", the unauthorized use of the mooring was identified.

Subsequent communication with the permittee revealed that the vessel was his. The permittee was advised of the requirements for proof of registration, proof of insurance, and a vessel inspection before the vessel could be assigned to and occupy the mooring. The permittee quickly complied with all the requirements and was grateful for our diligence in this regard

- The project to refinish the public dock final remains in progress
- A mooring permittee in the J field claimed to be unaware of the vessel length restrictions at the Central Avenue public dock, although they are clearly marked on the dock and signage at the top of the gangway. HSOs politely provided education regarding the applicable regulations, and the permittee embarked to another point of access to upland amenities appropriate for his vessel

Odds and Ends

Significant efforts were expended to address harbor-related matters other than cleanliness, safety, and enjoyment.

- Two City moorings in the C field were converted to helical anchor systems with dynamic tackle and made sand line style moorings. These moorings are part of the mooring license program. The sand lines style requires only one float on the west end of the mooring, so fairways are less cluttered. HSOs have observed and reported good things about the new arrangement for these moorings, and they performed well during the recent episodes of severe weather
- A representative of the Harbor Department attended a recent meeting of the US Coast Guard Auxiliary post in Newport. We are in discussions with them on collaborative endeavors
- Several disparaging remarks have been made about the functionality and usability of the Balboa Marina Public Dock in recent public meetings. Those remarking about the public dock are likely not familiar with the 2013 Harbor Commission Study of public docks that resulted in several recommendations about how the existing public docks could be better maintained and utilized. That study also identified five locations at which additional public docks would best serve mariners in Newport Harbor. The new public docks at Central Avenue and Balboa Marina were identified in that 2013 study as locations adjacent to amenities mariners most want to access when they come ashore in Newport Harbor
- The most amusing call of the month came from a waterfront resident who is also an offshore mooring permittee. The offshore mooring has been vacant for several months and was used to accommodate one of the vessels temporarily displaced by current dredging activities. The permittee was not pleased about the mooring being used for this purpose. The permittee was advised of the opportunity to assign a vessel to the mooring and then occupy it, which they subsequently did. The assigned vessel they selected is a kayak, which now occupies the mooring.

Another vacant mooring was found to accommodate the vessel displaced by the dredging. During one of the several severe weather incidents in February, the permittee noticed the kayak had come loose from one end of the mooring. The permittee called to ask us to collect it and secure it to their private, residential dock. We explained we would secure it properly to the mooring, but could not bring it to their dock.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

Staff recommends the Harbor Commission find this action is not subject to 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 a physical change to the environment, directly or indirectly.

NOTICING:

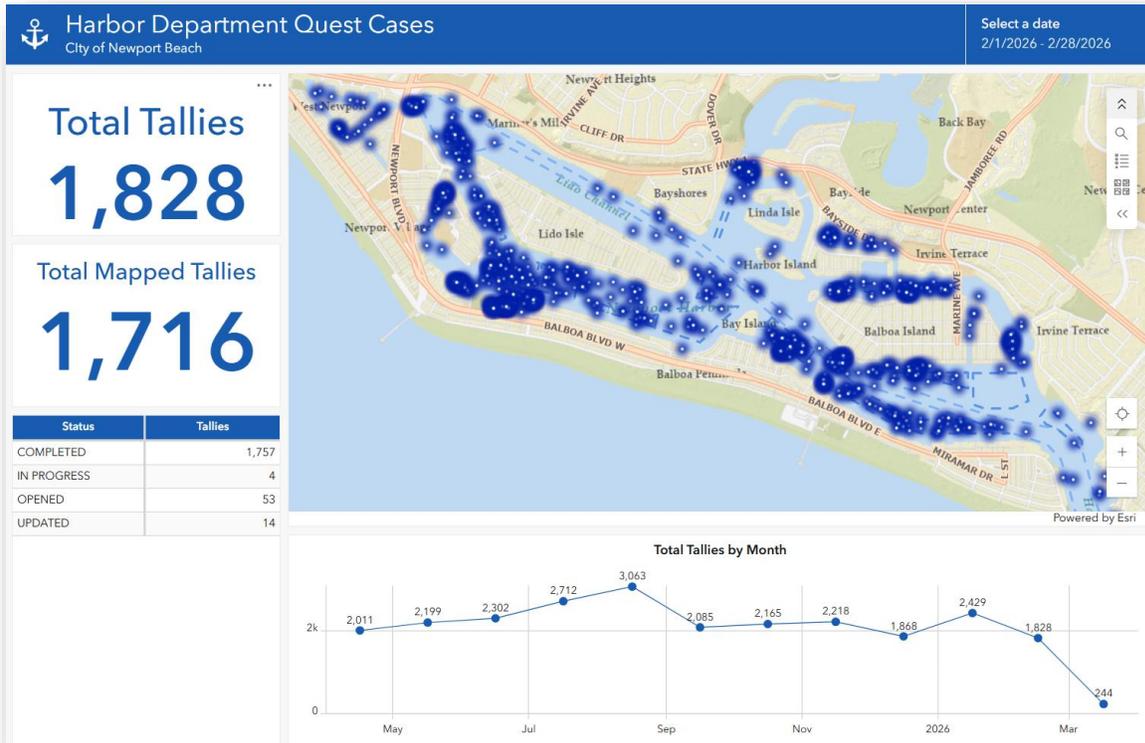
The agenda item has been noticed according to the Brown Act (72 hours in advance of the meeting at which the Harbor Commission considers the item).

ATTACHMENTS:

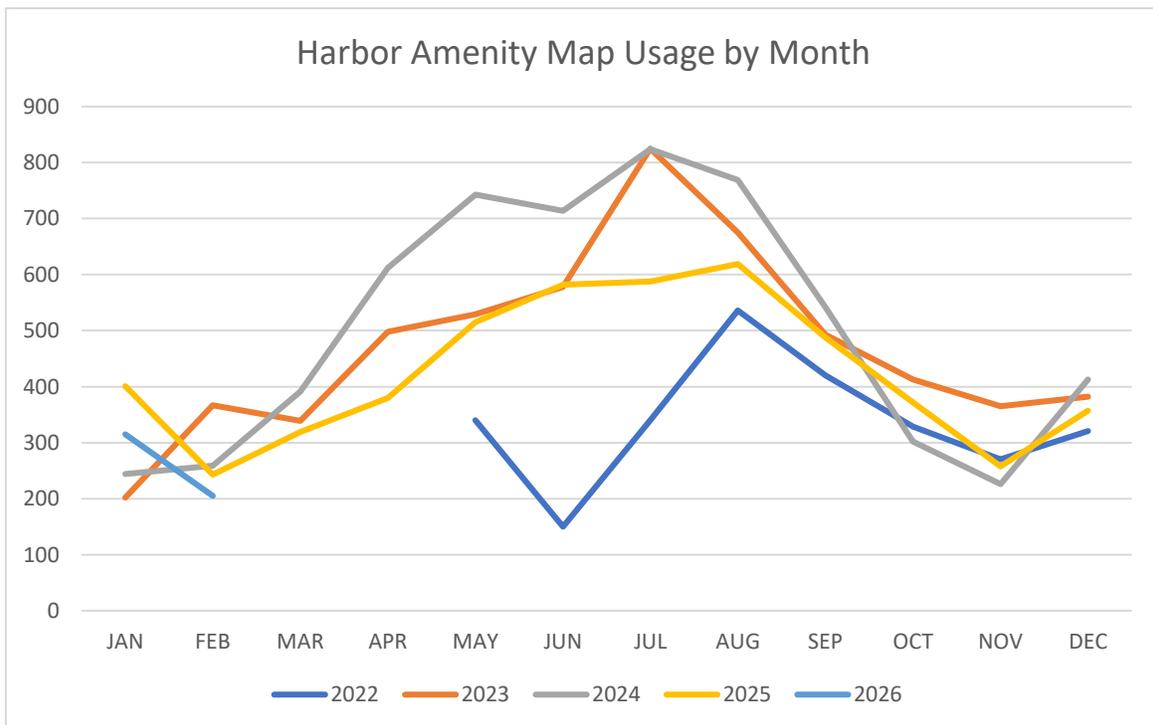
Attachment A – Harbor Department Statistics Infographic

HARBOR DEPARTMENT STATISTICS INFOGRAPHIC

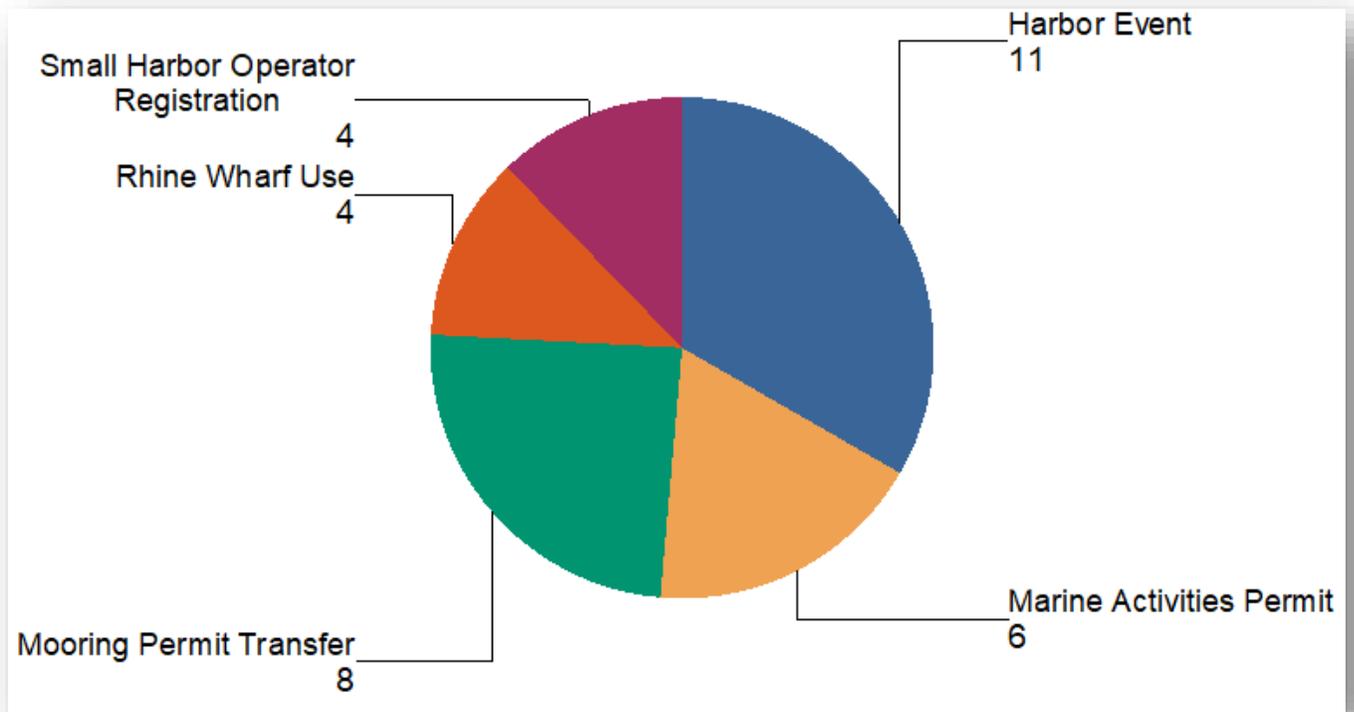
Heatmap of Harbor Service Requests – For January



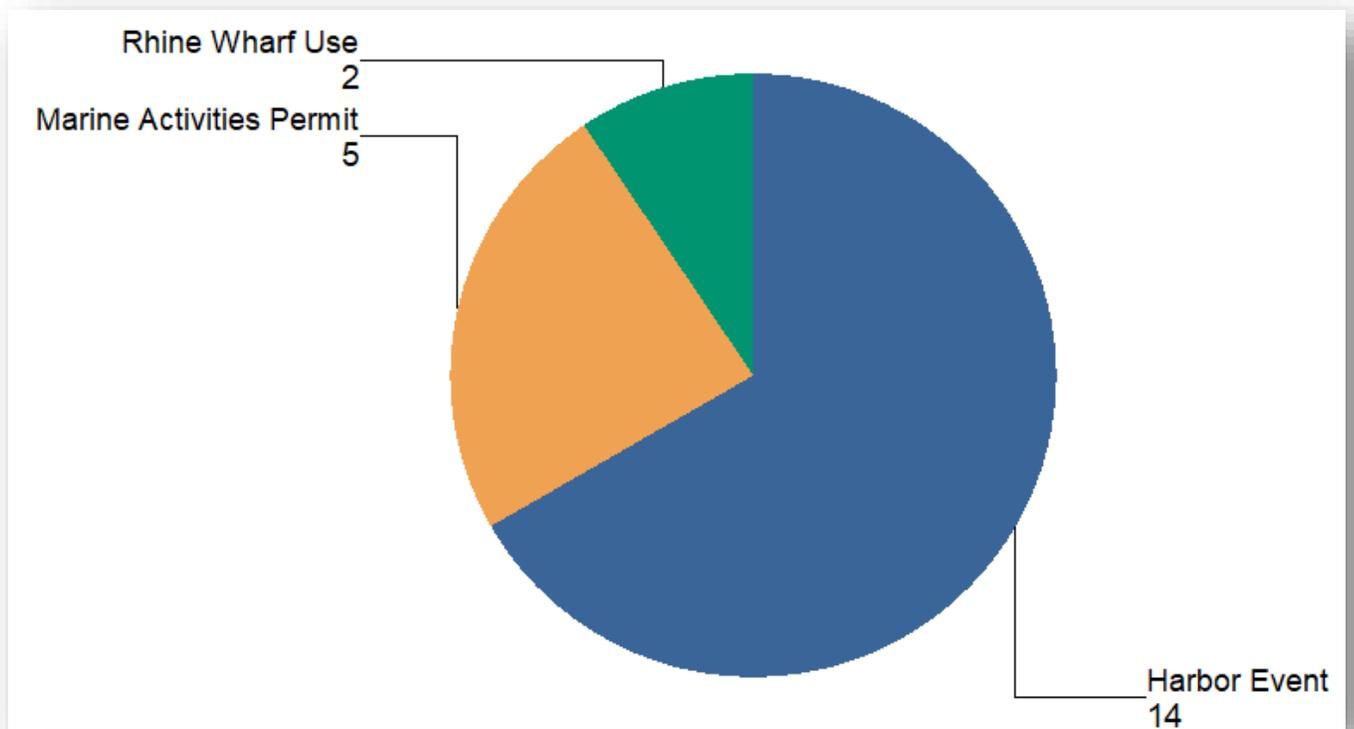
Harbor Adjacent Public Amenity Map Usage



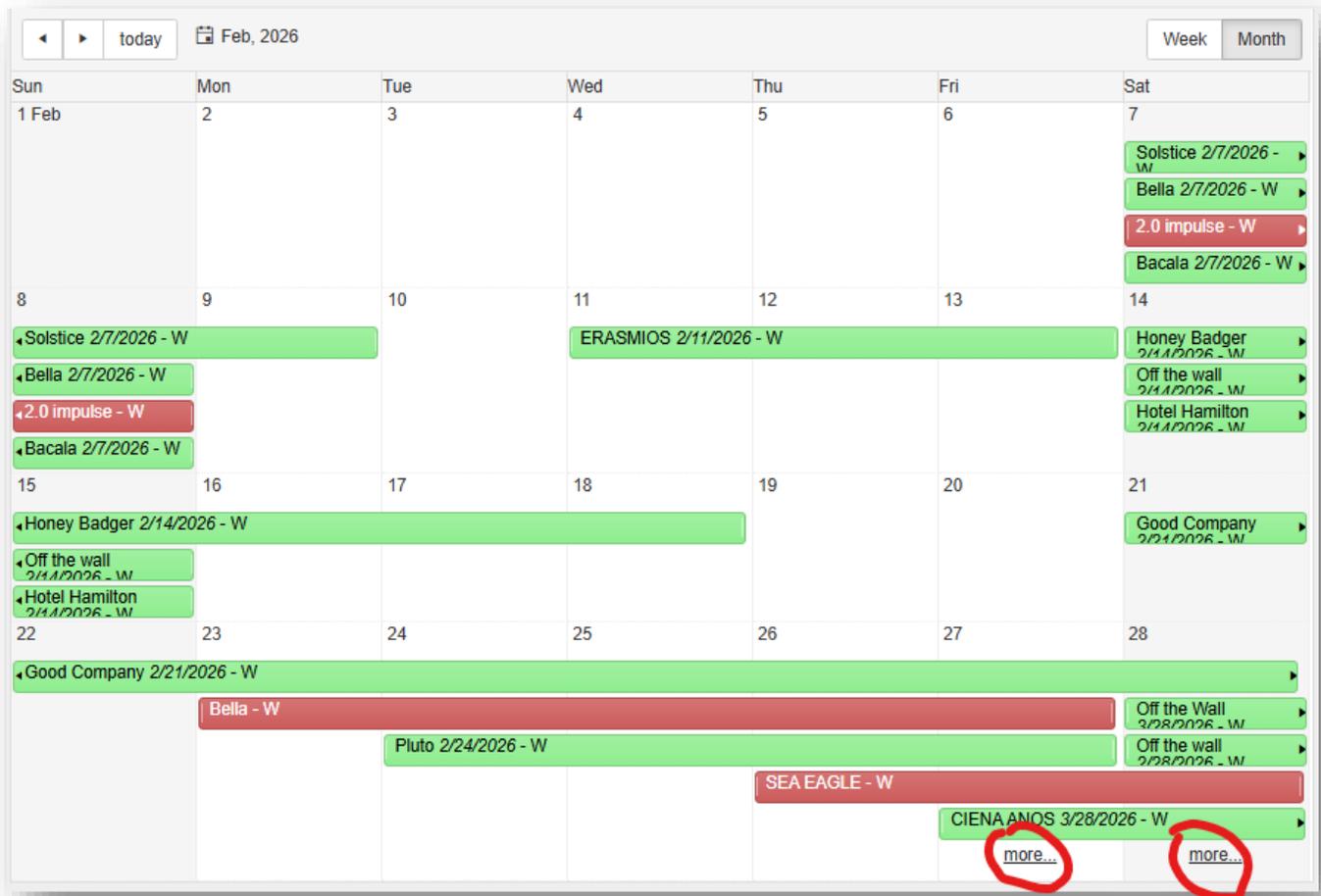
Permit Activity in 2026



Permit Activity in 2025



Anchorage Usage for the Month



Debris Removed from Newport Harbor

Harbor Department			
Debris Removed from Harbor (in pounds)			
Year to Date			
	Harbor Department	Good Samaritan	Total
2024	2,228	537	2,764
2025	2,425	10,465	12,890
2026	3,405	7,297	10,702