



== CITY OF ==

# NEWPORT BEACH

## Harbor Commission Staff Report

June 10, 2020  
Agenda Item No. 7.2

**TO:** HARBOR COMMISSION

**FROM:** Kurt Borsting, Harbormaster, (949) 270-8158  
[kborsting@newportbeachca.gov](mailto:kborsting@newportbeachca.gov)

**TITLE:** Harbormaster Update – March, April and May 2020 Activities

---

**ABSTRACT:**

The Harbormaster is responsible for the management of the City's mooring fields, the Marina Park Guest Marina and Harbor on-water code enforcement activities. This report will update the Commission on the Harbor Department's activities for March through May 2020.

**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, Chapter 3, because it has no potential for resulting in physical change to the environment, directly or indirectly.
- 2) Receive and file.

**FUNDING REQUIREMENTS:**

There is no fiscal impact related to this item.

**DISCUSSION:**

**COVID-19 Operational Changes**

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the Governor's Stay at Home Order, the Harbor Department instituted a number of operational changes during the months of March, April and May.

The Department's office operations continued uninterrupted. While in-person counter services were suspended, all customer services provided through the office continued via telephone, email, and on-line services. Regular daily harbor patrols conducted by department staff also continued without interruption. Patrols took on an expanded focus related to monitoring the condition and safety of vessels in the mooring fields, during a period when boat owners were less able to care for their property. Expanded patrols of both the Newport Harbor Yacht Club and

Balboa Yacht Club mooring fields also took place during the periods when their respective waterfront programs were suspended.

Department outreach efforts took place with members of the live aboard community in the City mooring fields, aimed at confirming their well-being and offering help, as needed, during the stay at home order.

As the COVID-19 event continued and recreational boaters began returning to the Harbor, the Harbor Department participated in a "Social Distancing while Boating" informational campaign, encouraging various responsible-use practices to afford boaters access to local waterways for recreation and mental rejuvenation, while also advancing public health goals.

### **Voluntary Turn-In Program (CA Division of Boating and Waterways Grant)**

During April 2020, the Harbor Department assisted four (4) local off-shore mooring permittees who took part in the voluntary vessel turn-in program (also known as VTIP). This CA Division of Boating and Waterways program, funds the disposal of older unwanted boats, as a proactive way of addressing vessel removals prior to their creating risk of environmental concerns.

Following owner's releasing vessel ownership/titles to the City, competitive bids were collected and awarded for removing the boats from the Harbor. Three of the four vessels have since been removed from the Harbor by qualified salvage companies, and one remains in process. The Harbor Department will soon start a "round two" effort with additional boat owners who have expressed interest in the VTIP program.

### **Expanded Harbor Department Operational Hours**

Effective Saturday, May 23 and continuing through the remaining summer months, the Harbor Department's hours have expanded. Harbor Department operations now start at 8 a.m., seven days a week, and continue through 7 p.m. Sundays through Thursdays and until 8 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays (for both office coverage and on-water patrols of the Harbor). This approach mirrors operating hours during Summer 2019, which were received well by the community.

### **Planned Test of Harbor Lights**

The Harbor Department is exploring the possibility of restoring/reinstalling approximately 20 solar lights on various markers in the Harbor. Lights of this type were previously installed as part of a local youth's Eagle Scout project. While those lights were very popular with members of the local boating community, they were removed after it was learned the equipment did not meet US Coast Guard specifications.

With the assistance of OC Sheriff's Department staff, an improved light fixture has been identified that is believed to meet the Coast Guard requirements (this style light features brighter lumen levels and ability to flash at specific cycles). Two such fixtures have been purchased as test units, and will soon be installed on a trial basis. Should the test installation prove successful, the Harbor Department will re-submit a formal request to the USCG, allowing the lights to be installed throughout the Harbor.

### **Public Information and Departmental Outreach Efforts**

An informational presentation regarding the Harbor Department, to the Balboa Island Improvement Association, was planned for Saturday, March 14. Commissioner Scully was set to represent the City at this meeting. Unfortunately, the program was canceled due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

A feature story about the Harbor Department appeared in the on-line version of the Newport Independent newspaper. The piece was organized in a question and answer format with the Harbormaster, and covered an array of general topics of interest.

An article appeared in the April 3 edition of The Log newspaper informing the local boating community about time zone changes to the 19<sup>th</sup> Street Public Dock, as previously approved by the Harbor Commission.

### **Code Enforcement Activity**

During March through May 2020, Code Enforcement staff opened 247 new cases and successfully resolved/closed 203 existing files.

During the above timeframe, there was an increase in the number of delinquent mooring accounts for which the mooring fees were more than 60 days past due (approximately double of prior trends). Permittees have been contacted about their accounts and staff will be working with them to bring their accounts current.

Monitoring and enforcement activities associated with the Harbor's public docks were relaxed during the early months of the COVID-19 event. However, with expanded use of the harbor expected during the summer months, these monitoring and enforcement efforts are resuming. Initially these activities will take the form of a brief public informational period, when reminders/warnings will be issued, followed by the resumption of the department's standard practice, where leaving one's vessel at a public dock in excess of the designated time period allowed, will result in the vessel's impound and removal from the dock.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:**

Staff recommends the Harbor Commission 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, 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 – Harbor Department Statistics, Fiscal Year through May 2020