

# City of Capitola

## Commission on the Environment Meeting Minutes

**Wednesday, May 28, 2025 – 6:00 PM**

Capitola City Hall, Community Room  
420 Capitola Avenue, Capitola, CA 95010



**Chair:** Michelle Beritzhoff-Law

**Vice Chair:** Michael Maroney

**Commissioners:** Mayor Clarke, Dennis Norton, Scott Rohlf

**Staff Representative:** Erika Senyk

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**1. Call to Order and Roll Call –** Chair Beritzhoff-Law called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

Commissioners Present: Michelle Beritzhoff-Law, Michael Maroney, Dennis Norton, Scott Rohlf

Absent: Mayor Clarke

City Staff Present: Erika Senyk (Environmental Projects Manager)

**2. Swearing in of new Commissioners**

Commissioner Rohlf was sworn in by staff.

**3. Additions and Deletions to the Agenda**

No additions or deletions to the agenda.

**4. Public Oral and Written Communications**

Gayle Ortiz, a Capitola resident, provided a written communication to the Commission requesting that the COE consider inviting GreenWaste representatives to a future meeting to present on what items can and cannot be recycled in Capitola.

Goran Klepic, a member of the public, spoke about his concerns with illegal dumping in the City.

**5. Staff Comments**

Staff provided the following updates to the Commission:

- Saturday, June 7<sup>th</sup> is National Trails Day, and the City will be hosting one of the sites for invasive ivy removal at the Rispin Mansion in partnership with the Natural History Museum and the Santa Cruz Mountains Trails Stewardship. Volunteer pre-registration is required.

**6. April 16, 2025 Regular Commission Meeting Minutes**

Recommended Action: Review and approve minutes.

**Motion to approve the April 16, 2025 minutes:** Commissioner Norton

**Seconded:** Chair Beritzhoff-Law

**Motion passed 4-0-1**

## 7. General Business

### A. Capitola Wharf Master Plan Options

Recommended Action: Provide feedback on the draft options for the Capitola Wharf Master Plan.

Erika Senyk, Environmental Projects Manager, presented the staff report.

Each commissioner individually provided their feedback and then the Commission discussed their joint feedback as a whole.

#### Chair Beritzhoff-Law

- It is important for City Council to consider the highly likely event of additional wharf damage caused by extreme storms in tandem with preferences from the public.
- The Planning Commission did not discuss the likeliness of coastal impacts.
- I would be interested in knowing the likelihood of coastal impacts to the wharf from data collected by the contracted wharf project engineers or architects.
- It does not make sense to remove the boat hoist. The hoist has a great purpose and removing it would create more construction waste.
- The City should explore other options for where boats can be stored and repaired, other than on the wharf. It should be determined whether repairing boats on a pier over the Sanctuary is still a permissible activity.
- There is value in the City asking Fuse how we can make energy usage on the wharf more sustainable (e.g., solar panels) and how these upgrades would be reflected in additional costs.
- City Council should consider sustainability and resiliency data for the wharf and weigh that data against public opinion.
- I do not have a strong opinion about any of the specific proposed options and would be okay with entertaining a hybrid option.
- City Council should review vulnerability data for the wharf and projected future storm data to understand the risk profile and associated costs for some of these proposed options.

#### Vice Chair Maroney

- My written comments are included in my written communications document dated March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025 and included in the agenda packet for this meeting.
- I have a preference for Option 3.
- Removing the boat hoist is a bad idea and would prevent the community from connecting with the Sanctuary and environment.
- I am not in favor of building new structures on the wharf, since they would be vulnerable to future extreme storm events.
- City Council should consider the new waste streams that would be created by adding vendors, restaurants, or markets to the wharf, as well as the viability for the City managing that additional waste.

#### Commissioner Rohlf

- I have concerns about the environmental risk for building new structures on the wharf and how the City would insure these structures.
- Fixed facilities are vulnerable over the ocean and would be challenging.

- Mobile vendors could be removed seasonally when there are risks of incoming coastal hazards or extreme storms.
- I would not want to remove any features that provide fishing access on the wharf. We should keep fishing a priority because this is a great opportunity for the community to engage with the ocean.
- My main concern is how coastal hazards would impact the wharf. I prefer lower cost options for building and maintaining new wharf structures and features.
- I have a preference for vendors and structures to be mobile and removable from coastal hazard space.
- The COE maybe shouldn't select to recommend a specific option, since we are first requesting a more thorough review of the wharf vulnerability data.
- Any vendor on the wharf is going to generate a waste stream, even if it isn't food or drink related.
- There was not enough information in the public survey related to resiliency of the wharf and how each of the proposed options may be impacted, physically and financially, by extreme storm events. If members of the public were made aware of the risks associated with each option, maybe they would have answered survey questions differently.
- It is important for City Council to balance public opinion and feedback from the survey with the reality of the wharf's vulnerability to climate hazards.

#### **Commissioner Norton**

- I agree with Vice Chair Maroney's comments and have a strong preference for Option 3.
- The wharf serves as an important way to connect people to the ocean. Some people only have the opportunity to go out onto the ocean when they walk out onto the pier.
- I don't believe that we would need another bathroom – one should be enough if this remains as a fishing pier.
- The wharf should remain as a fishing pier and retain features that promote fishing. Fishing is an important activity on the wharf to foster connection to the ocean.
- The wharf's primary time of use is the spring and summer, so this should be considered when weighing these options.
- I don't believe permanent fixed structures should be placed on the wharf. Instead, there should be open space and the structures could be movable (e.g., portable stage instead of a fixed stage) so that the community can find new uses for the wharf over time. We could design the wharf for the next 2 to 3-year period instead of for a 20-year period.
- The current bait shop is in a location that makes sense because you can launch your boats right near that location.
- I do not consider it to be a good public investment to build structures that are vulnerable to climate hazards.

**Motion to recommend to City Council that Council consider the longevity of the wharf, the capacity of the wharf to hold new weight, the likelihood that the wharf will be damaged by future climatic events, the impact of future waste streams, and the impact of new structures on the wharf: Vice Chair Maroney**  
**Second: Commissioner Norton**

**Chair Beritzhoff-Law amended the motion to include a recommendation that City Council should also consider wharf vulnerability data and modeled storm frequency and intensity data prior to or in combination with public opinion and the results of the public survey.**

**Vice Chair Maroney and Commissioner Norton accepted the motion amendment.**

**Voting Yea: Chair Beritzhoff-Law, Vice Chair Maroney, Commissioner Rohlf, Commissioner Norton (4-0-1)  
Mayor Clarke Absent**

## **8. Items for Future Agenda**

1. Provide feedback on the proposed annual Monte Foundation Firework Extravaganza event.
2. Discuss the opportunity for a GreenWaste representative to provide a presentation at a future COE meeting and identify priority topics for discussion.

## **9. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:03pm to the next Regular Meeting of the Commission on the Environment on June 18th, 2025.

**ATTEST:**



Erika Senyk, Environmental Projects Manager



Michelle Beritzhoff-Law, Chair