

## **District Waterways Advisory Commission - Meeting #4 Meeting Minutes**

**Date:** June 25, 2026  
**Time:** 10:00am – 12:00 pm  
**Location:** Virtual

### **Call Meeting to Order**

- Jo Ann Grundy joined this meeting to represent Army Corps of Engineers in place of Eric Lindheimer
- Captain Garrett Houston replaced Captain Ryan Gaul to represent Naval Support Activity Washington.
- The meeting was called to order at 10:10am.

### **Commission Logistics**

- Motion for the adoption of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Commission Meeting minutes was made by Comm. Jason Kopp.
  - The motion was seconded unanimously by Comm. Thomas Skinner.

### **Review Meeting Objectives**

- HR&A presented on meeting objectives and focus.

### **Topic Area Focus**

- **Safety & Security Topic Area**
  - HR&A presented slides on the safety and security topic.
  - Commissioners and public attendees responded to questions regarding safety and security using Mentimeter.
    - **Mentimeter Question 1:**  
**What are the most urgent safety issues on the waterways that this plan should address?**
      - Participants noted inadequate or incorrectly located navigation markers, unclear no-wake zones and water depth indicators, and silted channels on the Anacostia.
      - Participants raised concerns about unlicensed charters, inexperienced boat rental operators, and registration processes for smaller/non-motorized craft.
      - Participants questioned who is responsible for enforcement and across which areas, noted limited oversight on the water, and flagged that marine unit vessels and equipment are adequate, but personnel levels are not.

- Participants cited risks from mixing motorized and non-motorized vessels and called for planning around interaction between various user types (houseboats, recreational, transit, etc.).
  - One participant questioned whether first responders have full access to the Anacostia. Another called for additional public safety station locations and staffing.
  - Participants mentioned water quality generally, real-time E. coli measurements, and flooding and ecosystem health.
  - One participant identified the CSX bridge as a tidal choke point. Dangerous currents and need for signage were also noted.
  - One participant asked how many drowning deaths occur and where, and what can be done to reduce them.
  - One participant called for waterway-wide communications on significant events.
  - One participant asked whether DC-moored boats must be registered in DC or can be registered in Virginia.
- **Mentimeter Question 2:**  
**Can the District improve enforcement of the waterway rules and regulations? How should the District take into account federal responsibilities?**
- Participants raised questions about which entity is responsible for which aspects of enforcement, including who to call for dangerous boat operation or a medical emergency.
  - Multiple comments called for reduced overlap between existing rules and regulations and better communication between agencies, with one suggesting a single District entity paired with an equal federal body.
  - One respondent noted that District Police and Fire marine units are the only 24-hour staffed presence on the water and suggested DC code should mirror the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) to provide enforcement capability.
  - One comment linked improved enforcement to increased spending on Harbor Patrol, which the respondent characterized as modestly funded in recent years.
  - Multiple participants expressed support for a non-law-enforcement presence on the water to educate newer users in real time.
  - One respondent requested more consistent enforcement of no-wake and safety regulations and improved signage in no-wake zones.

- Several comments identified a lack of formal regulations for abandoned vessel disposal and questioned whether Harbor Patrol's removal authority is regulatory or requires legislation.
- One participant described the Online Vessel Registration System (OVRs) as cumbersome and called for a streamlined process, particularly for smaller vessels.
- One respondent noted that new [National Park Service wetlands protocols](#) may limit dredging on the Anacostia.
- One comment suggested focusing on compliance assistance rather than purely punitive enforcement.
- **Mentimeter Question 3** (ranked exercise):  
**What should the District prioritize related to waterway safety and security?**
  - Responses favored prioritizing safety and security for commercial and recreational activity on the water (10 selections), followed by safety and security related to emergency response (6 selections), and safety and security on the water's edge (2 selections).
- **Transportation Gaps Topic Area**
  - HR&A presented slides on the transportation gaps topic area.
  - **Comm. Ted Jutras** (Navy Yard BID), in response to discussion about the [2023 Potomac Fast Ferry Business Plan](#), noted that the DC Mobility Innovation District is in the process of updating the NVRC Potomac Ferry Study. This is a feasibility analysis with updated assumptions looking at electric hydrofoil vessels
  - Commissioners and public attendees responded to questions about transportation gaps using Mentimeter.
  - **Mentimeter Question 4:**  
**What and where are the most significant gaps in getting to the waterways? What could address these gaps?**
    - Participants identified limited public access points to both rivers, particularly in the downtown, Southwest, Northwest, and Ward 7 areas, with the waterways described as not feeling connected to the city or integrated into neighborhoods.
    - Multiple comments cited physical infrastructure gaps including missing or inadequate boat ramps, docks, public boathouses, seawall ladders, and inconsistent conditions along the Anacostia Riverwalk Trail.
    - One respondent identified the CSX freight rail bridge and abandoned CSX spur running between I-295 and Fairlawn Avenue as obstructions to waterway access.

- Participants raised concerns about I-295 as a barrier, with the limited number of access points either under or over the interstate identified as barriers.
- One comment noted that the Long Bridge project will squeeze all water traffic into a narrow channel, with one respondent urging coordination with the project planning team to amend the design before construction is finalized.
- Multiple respondents cited transit gaps, including the loss of the Georgetown Circulator, infrequent transit service near the waterfront, and questions about a potential DCA water stop.
- Participants identified parking availability and awareness of public parking near waterfront access points as a gap, alongside a need for better public information on reaching the waterfront by transit.
- One comment called for a comprehensive online map consolidating information on boat launches, bikeways, bike racks, parking, and marinas, with another suggesting waterfront BIDs produce a single waterfront guide.
- Respondents noted that federal land ownership, particularly military bases, limits public waterfront access in certain areas.
- One participant noted that bike infrastructure, if poorly designed, can obstruct rather than support access to the water, and called for careful coordination between bike and water access planning.
  - **Comm. Trey Sherard** (Anacostia Riverkeeper) expanded on this comment, noting that the proposed bridge from Kenilworth to the Arboretum will reduce easy options to move rowing vessels into the water without conflicting with existing trails/bike paths.

▪ **Mentimeter Question 5** (interactive map):

**Where are the most significant transportation gaps on the waterways?**

- Pins were primarily placed along the Anacostia River, including five near the CSX bridge.
- **Comm. Gretchen Mikeska** (DOEE), via the meeting chat, commented that a temporary dock located at the US National Arboretum has washed away and is missed by river users.
- **Comm. Trey Sherard** (Anacostia Riverkeeper) noted his concern that [increasing] access to the waterways is important, but too many access points risks diminishing the river as a natural asset.

## Full Group Goals Discussion

- HR&A presented slides on the draft preliminary goals.
- Commissioners and public attendees responded to prompted questions using Mentimeter regarding these goals.
  - **Menti Question 6:**  
**Do these preliminary goals address the right topics? How would you adjust these?**
    - Most participants expressed general agreement that the preliminary goals address the right topics, with several describing them as a good starting point.
    - A respondent suggested the goals may need to be more specific.
    - One comment recommended adding "conflicts" alongside "weaknesses" and "gaps" in the goal language.
    - A respondent identified ambiguity in safety enforcement as a gap in the goals.
    - One comment flagged that coordination with the federal government and the states of Virginia and Maryland is a missing element.
    - One participant called for the goals to identify which entity or agency is responsible for different types of infrastructure maintenance.
    - A respondent raised the need to balance recreation and enjoyment of the waterways with environmental protection.
    - One comment expressed skepticism that water-based transportation can represent a meaningful improvement to current transportation issues, characterizing it as likely unsustainable, while agreeing with the other five goals.
    - One respondent suggested that Goal 3 on transportation should incorporate community and public opinion.
  - **Menti Prompt 7:**  
**What strategies should be pursued to achieve [the preliminary goals]?**
    - Participants called for a comprehensive assessment of physical safety infrastructure gaps including lighting, signage, shallow water hazards, and river edge conditions, prioritized by cost, level of effort, and impact, and inventoried against improvements already underway or in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

- Multiple comments addressed seawall safety, recommending ladders at select locations for emergency egress and removal of seawalls where possible in favor of living shoreline.
  - Participants called for improved user education on waterway rules through a dedicated app, updated Harbor Patrol and DOEE websites, and by requiring rental companies to push safety information to clients prior to rental.
  - Multiple comments addressed ferry service, with participants calling for stops at National Airport, northern Virginia, Navy Yard, Fort McNair, JBAB, and the Pentagon. One respondent noted ferry capacity cannot replace a metro, and another referenced Candela hydrofoil ferries as a wake-free option.
  - One comment called for improved bus or shuttle service between Wharf, Buzzard Point, and Cap Riverfront alongside a waterfront app.
  - Participants called for dredging in the Anacostia, additional first responder resources, and better signage for rules and no-wake zones.
  - One respondent called for review of the proposed Kenilworth Arboretum Bridge design, suggesting a free-span design like Bladensburg Waterfront Park.
  - One respondent raised the question of where guarded and unguarded swim beaches will be located.
- **Goals Breakout Room 1 Discussion:**
- **Chairman Darryl Madden** noted that navigational buoys are inconsistently marked and shift position over time and asked what near-term solutions could be pursued with partners, citing existing work with DC Fire EMS and DMPED in the north Potomac.
  - **Comm. Ebony Payne** (ANC 7D05) stated the goals are appropriately broad but called for greater specificity on the types of safety and security issues to prioritize. She referenced a recent drowning death of a college student and called for signage prohibiting swimming in unsafe areas alongside the creation of designated safe swim spaces. She noted that dangerous currents, not water quality, are the primary safety concern.
  - **Comm. Ebony Payne** (ANC 7D05) noted that ferry interest appears concentrated around RFK Stadium.
  - **Comm. Ted Jutras** (Navy Yard BID) relayed that the team is currently updating the NVRC Potomac Ferry Study, incorporating electric hydrofoil vessels as a potential solution in speed and wake restriction areas, given they do not create wakes. The updated study examines multiple stops including National Harbor, Alexandria, and DCA. He noted significant interest from DOD, JBAB, Navy Yard,

and Buzzard Point, and that the CSX bridge presents a challenge for RFK access. WMATA is not yet formally involved.

- **Comm. Ebony Payne** (ANC 7D05) raised water supply security as a contingency concern given the limited response capacity in the event of an attack on the water supply.
  - **Chairman Darryl Madden** noted that ICPRB is actively studying this issue in coordination with COG and examining alternate reservoirs and offered to provide additional details on public information later.
- **Chairman Darryl Madden** called for greater attention to water-to-land access, and flagged Kingman Island as an area where current plans should be better understood.
  - **Comm. Ebony Payne** (ANC 7D05) noted that River Terrace lacks comparable water access to the western shore of Kingman Island, and that Kenilworth faces similar gaps. She called for connecting the Anacostia Trail to the Arboretum and noted that the Benning Road bridge is unwelcoming as a pedestrian connection. She referenced longstanding community requests for improved east-of-the-river access.
- **Chairman Darryl Madden** asked whether DDOT's exploration of an East Capitol Street crossing is still active.
  - **Comm. Ebony Payne** (ANC 7D05) confirmed DOEE has discussed a pedestrian bridge but noted she would need to follow up on status.
- **Comm. Nate Handy** recommended developing a set of guidelines governing interaction between waterway users, distributed via app prior to boat rental, and proposed a river ambassador program modeled on bike path ambassadors to educate users and de-escalate conflicts between motorized and human-powered craft.
- **Comm. Nate Handy** raised the idea of a canal or faster water connection from Georgetown to the Wharf or through the Tidal Basin as a longer-term goal under Goal 3.

○ **Goals Breakout Room 2 Discussion:**

- Commissioners raised the question of how to shift public behavior toward prioritizing ferry service as a transit mode.
- One Commissioner noted that no ferry system in the world operates without subsidy, and called for study of commuter patterns, last-mile connectivity to ferry stops, affordability, and competitive travel times before advancing ferry planning.
- A Commissioner noted the importance of understanding activity at proposed ferry stops to avoid use conflicts, and referenced newer vessel technology as a means of increasing speed and range.

- One Commissioner called for analysis of ferry demand and proposed exploring a modest property tax assessment for properties within a quarter mile of ferry stations to support funding.
- Commissioners stated that the CSX bridge would need to be relocated to enable ferry service at RFK, characterizing it as a low priority for CSX while also acknowledging it as an obstacle for other vessel types and for EMS and first responder access. One Commissioner noted the bridge can technically be opened but requires coordination with CSX, and called for improved inter-agency coordination and accountability.
- A Commissioner called for a freeze on the design of the proposed Kenilworth to Arboretum bridge, pending further review, and noted the project is run by DDOT.
- One Commissioner cautioned that transportation investments must be planned system-wide, citing the DC streetcar rollout as a cautionary example, and called for shared financial commitment across multiple entities.

### **Meeting Schedule & Next Steps**

- Next meeting will be in-person on July 22<sup>nd</sup> 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Additional information will follow the meeting.

### **Adjourn**

- Comm. Jason Kopp motioned to adjourn the meeting.
- Comm. Ted Jutras (Navy Yard BID) seconded the motion to adjourn.
- The meeting was adjourned at 12:00pm.