

**DRAFT 5**

“Safe Boating on Lake Erie & in the Maumee River” Meeting Minutes  
One Government Center, Floor 1  
Thursday, November 17, 2011—2:00pm-4:00pm

Toledo Mayor Michael Bell and Deputy Mayor Tom Crothers welcomed the many delegates to the subject meeting. Attached is an attendance sheet, showing the names of those who attended. “Going around the room,” each attendee introduced himself or herself.

Mayor Bell indicated that our prime objective should always be to recognize that safe boating in Downtown Toledo, in the Maumee River and on Lake Erie is our number one priority and that that we share this objective with members of our local yacht clubs and law enforcement agencies.

Nevertheless, there is a perception by some recreational boaters that they have been “hassled” by multiple jurisdictions on the same day, particularly when they traverse the river into Downtown Toledo. The Mayor indicated that the purpose for the meeting was to try to find a balance between ensuring safe boating and taking advantage of the economic development potential that recreational boating provides to the city and state.

Several law enforcement agencies were asked to share their mission, goals and objectives relative to safe boating enforcement.

ODNR, Division of Watercraft—Representatives indicated that Ohio has 4.4 million boats registered on our “North Coast” and that Ohio is 9<sup>th</sup> in the United States in terms of boat registration. ODNR is self-funded via boat registration fees and utilizes a great deal of that funding for boating educational programs through local yacht clubs.

Ohio Homeland Security, Northern Border Initiative—Representatives indicated that this not-for-profit task force represents a consortium of stakeholders across Pennsylvania and Ohio. It operates under the auspices of the U.S. Border Patrol and U.S. Coast Guard with a specific mission to monitor boat traffic between the United States and Canada in both directions.

United States Coast Guard, Toledo Station—Representatives indicated that USCG has 11 statutory missions, the most well-known of which are Search & Rescue and Homeland Security. Accordingly, USCG is very active in boarding recreational vehicles to ensure that their operators have proper safety equipment and that they pose no threat to the U.S.A.

Representatives indicated that they had boarded some 243 vessels in 2011 and that the average length of each visit was roughly 15 minutes.

United States Customs and Border Control—Representatives indicated that their prime mission is to interdict international threats through the Lake Erie Corridor by air and boat.

U.S. Customs and Border Control, Office of Air and Marine—Representatives indicated that their mission is, naturally, to support the U.S. Customs and Border Control by any means necessary.

After the missions of various law enforcement entities had been shared, a lively “round table” discussion took place. The principal points raised during this discussion are as follows:

1. Some delegates questioned whether there is truly a market in Downtown Toledo for its finger dock space, as well as that for the Great Lakes Marina located on the east side of the river.
2. With gas prices being so high, recreational boaters make shorter trips from their marinas (if any.) This equates to fewer boaters coming to Downtown.
3. There was a consensus that City of Toledo needs to have electric power and potable water available at its finger docks, similar to that which is available in the Glass City Marina.
4. Several folks shared stories in which various law enforcement agencies had boarded their boats on the same day. This was despite the fact that these boaters had properly displayed the appropriate decals and/or had the appropriate paperwork at the ready from the prior visit.
5. When asked, “Are these stickers worthwhile?,” representatives from the Coast Guard indicated that, “Yes, they should be honored.” Also, they said that boaters should always keep their paperwork available for agencies that may wish to board their vessel on a later date.

6. Some recreational boaters felt that a 15-minute stop is excessive, since most boaters only have a short 3 month season to be "on the water." It was felt by law enforcement personnel that an average 15-minute stop was not excessive and that their taking this amount of time was essential for them to do their job properly.
7. A comment was shared that the river is only 8 miles long and that there are too many law enforcement agencies with jurisdiction over that short distance.
8. The law enforcement agencies indicated that they meet monthly and do try to coordinate their enforcement schedules. Nevertheless, since they don't currently have fully computerized communication regarding which vessels have been boarded, when, and under which conditions, some multiple boardings are certain to occur.
9. Law enforcement agencies feel that one solution is for the yacht clubs to work with them to better educate their members regarding the existing laws and the responsibilities of each jurisdiction.
10. A question was asked whether the various law enforcement agencies have a master computer database. Apparently, they are able to jointly communicate through a multi-frequency radio system band on the 800 mH system. The U.S. Customs and Boarder Patrol, Office of Air and Marine Unit indicated that local, state and national agencies can now communicate better than has been the case in the past.

For the last four months or so, they have begun to operate an OIC Collaborative Network located in Selfridge Air Force Base in Michigan. Data can be entered into

this system; photographs of boats can also be uploaded; and all of this information can be available to other law enforcement agencies once this system is fully developed.

11. It was suggested that the various enforcement agencies need to collaborate to create a "one-pager" showing which violations local, state and federal agencies are looking for when they stop recreational boaters. The U.S. Customs and Border Patrol, Office of Air and Marine offered to create such a document.
12. It was shared that Lucas County has received a \$750,000 grant to purchase a new patrol boat, with the additional assistance of the Border Patrol and U.S. Government in providing gasoline and overtime pay for Lucas County Sheriff officers as they patrol our northern borders.
13. It was shared by the U.S. Border Patrol that they no longer have a "U.S.-Canada Boat Entry Reporting Office," but are looking to create one and will advise ASAP.
14. It was asked if "everyone is now on" the 800 mH system. The answer from the U.S. Border Patrol, Office of Air and Marine was "Yes, but for voice communication only." Nevertheless, they are still looking to offer data bands and that their engineers are working on the final development now.
15. It was shared that the City of Toledo must better publicize to local yacht club members that Downtown has assets which should be attractive to recreational boaters and to indicate that boaters will not be "hassled" so long as they follow the rules and regulations of the various law enforcement agencies. The Mayor

again indicated that it will be important to balance boating safety with entertainment opportunities.

16. The vision concept to improve Promenade Park to better accommodate both pedestrian and boating traffic was shared. The delegates seemed to be excited about this new development.
17. Folks believe that it will be important to have the enforcement agencies visit the yacht clubs early each season to have their members' boats checked and stickered. Accordingly, if folks are stopped during the season, they should be able to show proof that they have complied with the regulations quickly. Accordingly, a stop should be shorter than has been the norm.
18. It was shared that, along the Cuyahoga River in Cleveland, all stakeholders came together to resolve similar issues by creating a task force. Property owners, commercial shippers, commercial and recreational fishermen, recreational boaters, law enforcement agencies, local governments and the yacht clubs all meet consistently 4-6 times a year to resolve ongoing issues related to the Cuyahoga River.
19. The Greater Toledo Convention and Visitors Bureau, now known as Destination Toledo, shared that they plan to do a better job of letting potential waterborne visitors to Downtown know about the boating services that are currently and will soon be available. Further, they will continue to promote that all the on-shore attractions are now available to boaters. It was also felt that having a consistent, reliable and timely shuttle service moving among all these attractions, the Glass City Marina and Promenade Park's finger docks would be important to boaters.

It was determined that the next steps would be:

1. Tom Crothers agreed to draft minutes from this meeting and send them to all stakeholders to review and revise. (Please allow this document respond to this request).
2. U.S. Customs and Border Patrol, Air and Marine Division agreed to create a one-pager regarding the various jurisdictional agencies missions and what items they are “looking to” enforce when they make safety stops on the lake and river.
3. U.S. Customs and Border Patrol, Air and Marine will consider providing an update regarding the status of its OIC Communications System.

Respectfully submitted.

Tom Crothers

Deputy Mayor, City of Toledo

Attachment