

Opinion: Harbormaster Mike Rademaker is in Charge: Now What?

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Likely most who live in Crescent City could care less who runs the Crescent City Harbor and why should they? For starters, decades of poor Harbor Commission leadership and a successive list of dysfunctional Harbormasters have dug a financial hole, no new Commission or current Harbormaster can possibly climb back to financial security without a large infusion of cash.

The long list of harbor missteps in just the past few years have led to a scenario where the harbor is in a very tight window to remain financially viable without a serious turnabout with its revenue stream. The current commission has elected to promote interim harbormaster Mike Rademaker to the position of Harbormaster. As such, the task of righting the Harbor's ship must commence immediately.

The harbor's financial health is dependent on a rapid infusion of revenue. No amount of "trimming the fat" will vanquish the incompetence of past commissions and harbormasters, who saw to the elimination of revenue from both harbor RV parks, and the lack of harbor dredging which led to Fashion Blacksmith's closure and a multimillion-dollar judgement against the harbor. Currently the revenue source from the commercial fishing fleet is struggling due to onerous regulation, gear restrictions and seasonal closures.

This portrait of the hill the harbor must climb needs an all hands-on deck approach which does not allow for the current circuses which occupy the commission's meetings. It should be clear to anyone with a pulse

recriminations and finger pointing will not save the day. While the commission's choice to promote from within was not the best of decisions, it is done, and time to move forward quickly, yet with a certain amount of prudence.

The harbor must balance their approach with an eye towards supporting the revenue stream from our commercial fishing fleet as well as searching out ways to resurrect a boat repair facility, fish processing, and commercial fishing support facilities. It must also make the harbor into a welcoming site for new business opportunities as well as resuscitating both former RV parks. While a commercial salmon season appears to be off the table, efforts should be made to promote recreational fishing from the harbor as a way of offsetting some of the loss of revenue from the commercial closure.

Efforts to attract large scale projects and its associated revenue must come at the end of extreme caution. Commissioners and the harbormaster should keep in mind bad actors in the mold of Alex Lemus who spun fantasies about harbor development without the money to turn ideas into reality are out there.

Most who have much to lose if the harbor were to fail financially are naturally going to be resistant to change going forward due to the harbor's recent track record, and rightly so. With time being short for at least some signs of a harbor turnaround, and there are a few, patience and support should be the direction for those the health of the harbor is critical to their personal futures.

The most recent version of the Harbor Commission meeting was not one of constructive solutions, but the outcry of petulant children, who do not appear to have any notion of what needs to be done to rescue the harbor. For better or worse Mike Rademaker is Crescent City Harbor District's harbormaster going forward. For the rest of those who find arguing about who should be the new harbormaster, I did not see any person in that room offering to take the job.

I see very little room for a successful resolution to the current harbor's state of affairs, but I will give credit to anybody who is willing to try to fix things. No one can predict the future with any certainty and Rademaker may not be the solution going forward. We, the citizens of Del Norte County, can do the easy thing and continue to quarrel over who should be the harbormaster while nothing gets done. Rademaker has been made harbormaster. Until he succeeds or fails and is fired, the local community should support any and all evidence of success going forward.

I repeat, Mike Rademaker is the Crescent City Harbormaster. So, buckle up. Now where do we go from here?