

1(a)  
2-23-13

**Verbal remarks:**

My name is Matthew Hirschmann. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

I can say honestly that I am a very proud Alexandrian, singing it's praises for almost 12 years now. When our peers had kids, they all went to Fairfax. We didn't even consider it, and had our baby girl at Alexandria. It just felt right. Just prior to that, we had the opportunity to move our boat into the city. We were ecstatic. Another part of being in a real community. We love our city, we love our farmers' markets, we love that we used to work out with the mayor at the Y. My wife and I run our business here; we live here, we eat here, AND... we love that our boat is at the city dock.

Despite our strong objection to increasing marina fees on city residents, I want to be clear that we are not coming at this from a position of anger. We simply feel that the marina is already very expensive in real terms.

To my letter of objection dated 12 February, Mr. Spengler responded, "If a boater perceives that rates are too high, then they have the option of locating to another marina." That doesn't feel communal to me. So, why don't we leave? Because we love Alexandria and we want to be a part of our community in every possible way. I'm very willing to pay for services, but shouldn't be asked to pay significantly above their value, nor asked to leave.

Some nuts and bolts:

Firstly, regarding the "\$1" number. It sounds diminutive. That's actually a 12.5% increase, which brings our fees to approximately \$3,825. An increase of \$425 over last year (but amounts to only pennies per resident in taxes saved).

Secondly, I'm only objecting to the increase on city residents. We, as a group, are already contributing to the city and the marina in what is likely a higher-than-average proportion.

Thirdly, given that the marina serves primarily as a tourist destination and commercial vessel marina, asking us to further subsidize these operations is simply not appropriate. Mr. Spengler states that "slip holders must recognize some adjacency issues regarding the other uses." That should translate into a significant discount in our fees, not a premium.

The basis for my objection is 3-fold, and is supported by this list of slip holders. My impression is that most of the tenured slip holders are actually offended by the proposed increase.

Point #1.

In the documentation outlining the case for the increase, 4 marinas with higher fees are listed for comparison. However, no mention is made of relative amenities. I'm referring to fundamental, substantive differences. The marinas are not vaguely comparable to ours, as you can see in this table. And these differences actually cost slip holders hundreds, even thousands of dollars per year, over and above our slip fees. As quick examples, the lack of floating docks cost my family approximately \$1,200 in the last two years. (Here's a picture showing what fixed docks look like after high water.) The lack of parking costs us hundreds each year in garages and parking tickets. The lack of security gates has cost boat owners hundreds, even thousands in stolen property and vandalism. And the list goes on.

Point #2.

Also cited in the paperwork is that the increase is designed to keep up with the CPI. This increase is approximately double the CPI increase over the same period.

Point #3.

Also mentioned is that over the last 3 years, 98% of slip holders have given the marina a "good to excellent" rating in the annual survey. Pretty powerful: if we're producing a service *this* popular, we can justifiably charge more. However, I've never been surveyed, and neither has anyone else I've heard from. This survey appears to be fictional and therefore is misleading as background information for you to make your decision.

(I realize that the one nagging thought may be, "But you're at the foot of King Street!" That's true, but keep in mind we already pay for this location by living here. And when we go boating, we actually depart Old Town.)

**In summary...**

3 key stated justifications for the increase are all fundamentally unsound or inaccurate, and therefore the fee change specifically on city residents should not be approved until the marina offers higher value for money.

*Thank you very much for your fair consideration of this matter.*

# List of slip holders who I was able to contact who oppose the increase. I expect the actual number of supporters is close to 100%. (I only included their notes if it appeared they expected me to.)

- Anonymous (3)
- from Dave Beck:

*Dear City Council,*

*I am in agreement with Mr. Hirschmann's assessments as to the differences between the City Marina and any marinas that have been used for comparison. While I do not wish to prioritize these differences, boat safety (to include wake protection, dock construction), security, and parking are all elements of a real marina.*

*Mr. Hirschmann also drives home a very important point. The City Marina has been developed as a tourist attraction; boats are merely props. The City wants to allow people to walk along a pier as they would a zoo. However, no marina allows people to do this.*

*It is, one, a matter of safety and security for everyone; with the numerous instances of kicked dock lines and disconnected power cords, I am surprised that there has not been a tragedy on the piers.*

*And two, it is out of respect for their slip holders, who those other marinas consider their primary customer. Let's face it. That is not the case here. A slip holder has no privacy, is on display, is a City ambassador answering questions from "where can I catch the shuttle, to can I have a ride"?*

*The City has benefited handsomely from this somewhat lopsided symbiotic relationship, where we and our boats are objects to be viewed, in return for a disguised marina slip fee. Why we are not charging the City is beyond me?*

*—Dave Beck*

- from Jeffrey Yates, Sr.

*I am against any increase in boat slip fees! Jeffrey Yates*

- from Mark Carter:

*I fully support your position and am opposed to a fee increase at the Alexandria marina. Please add my name to your list of slip holders who are in opposition to the proposed fee increase for the very reasons that you cite.*

- John Yates
- Jim Yates
- Richard Lloyd
- Clayton Wirtz
- David Hammond
- Tom Hanton
- Alan Shark
- Nathan Read
- James Duda
- Douglas Gosnell
- Eugene Smith
- John & Beth Kiesner

# COMPARING MARINAS @ CLARIFYING COSTS FOR SLIP-HOLDERS: AN IN-DEPTH EXPLANATION OF WHY THE CITY MARINA'S FEES ARE ALREADY HIGH

The marinas used in the fee comparison were Gangplank Marina, Columbia Island Marina, James Creek Marina, and National Harbor Marina. The following differences in standard marina amenities were not included in the comparison provided to the city council.

## Overview of key marina amenities

Note: This approx. list of amenities would typically be advertised for any modern marina in some form.

	Impacts	Gangplank	Columbia	James Cr.	National	Alex.
Floating docks	VS, CS, C, \$	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Reserved, on-site, secure parking	CS, C, \$	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Security gates on all piers	VS, CS, \$	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
De-icing protection system	VS, C, \$	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
On-site fuel available	C, \$	1 mi	✓	✓	✓	✗
Always available on-site waste pump-out	C, \$	mobile	✓	✓	✓	✗
Updated electrical supply on all slips (50 AMP+)	C	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Protection from river current @ debris	VS, \$	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Effective security guards or system	VS, CS, \$	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Boat-length finger piers	CS, C	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Seasonal leases available	\$	✓	✓	✓		✗
WiFi included or available	C	✓	✓		✓	✗
Cable TV included or available	C	✓			✓	✗

Key: VS = vessel safety issue CS = citizen safety issue C = highly-valued convenience \$ = financial savings for slip holders

There is significant value in the convenience issues mentioned above. Marinas sell their facilities with their list of conveniences as much as anything else. *However*, many of the issues impact the bottom line for slip-holders, and cost us real money. I'll explain both below, with an emphasis on the financial impact.

**Total impact of the above differences on the annual cost for a city slip holder: +\$1,950 -\$4,000**

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**Floating docks are dramatically safer for people and vessels, and fixed docks can cost slip holders \$1,000s:**

- The biggest draw for any modern tidal marina is floating docks.
- Boats are damaged by high-tides and storms dramatically less often with floating docks.
- Our boat sustained approx. \$3,000 in damage from a storm 2 years ago. No damage was sustained at the comparison marinas.
- Numerous boats have been damaged by storms at Alexandria Marina in our time there, costing thousands and causing boats to be out of the water for weeks or months.
- We (and many other slip-holders) have to move our vessel for every named storm to a floating dock marina. We typically move our boat to James Creek Marina. Moving the vessel for Hurricane Sandy cost us \$338 in slip fees and fuel. Insurance typically covers 50% of these costs, because they realize the value. Hauling a boat on land can cost thousands.
- Insurance charges more for marinas that don't have floating docks.
- Safety is dramatically improved with floating docks, as boarding the boats is always very easy. Boarding is often very dangerous when tides are very low or high. We've had one injured family member which required an emergency room visit and ended the boating trip before it started (unsure of her costs), and one family member can only board our boat at high tide. Getting on and off with our baby can be very dangerous as well.

*Estimated cost: \$400/year in insurance deductibles, moving the boat for storms and higher insurance rates.*

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**Reserved on-site parking is a must for most boaters, for convenience and safety. Parking annually costs us \$100s.**

- We currently pay \$100s over the course of the season for parking garages and City parking violations because it takes more than 2 hours to do even a very quick boat trip.
- Walking back to the car at night presents a real safety issue in some cases
- Lugging all the necessary gear for boating to or from cars parked far away is a major inconvenience.
- Cars are not watched by security as with other marinas, and are therefore more prone to damage or break ins.
- Overnight boat trips are almost impossible at the city marina, from a parking standpoint. All other marinas allow cars to remain in the lot as long as needed. We have to take taxis back and forth from our house in order to do a longer trip.

*Estimated cost: \$300/year in taxis, parking garages and parking tickets.*

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**Security gates on all piers is considered essential by most marinas. Lack of security can cost slip holders \$1,000s.**

- We have found several instances of people boarding our boat at night. We have found drug and smoking paraphernalia. Fortunately, we haven't been on board during these occasions.
- We've witnessed numerous occasions where drunk passers by board other boats on our pier.
- A neighbor on our pier had their vessel untied by people who entered the dock at night. The boat could have been lost, but the tide caused it to stay in its slip, but cost several thousand to fix damage sustained.
- We've heard several reports of stolen coolers, flags, etc.
- The chain that hangs at our pier at night is actually hazardous, and very difficult to handle at night when trying to get baby, coolers, stroller, etc, over it.

*Estimated cost: \$50-75/year in stolen equipment and vandalism, with possible spikes into thousands of dollars*

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**De-icing systems allow boats to safely winter in the water. Moving a boat for the winter costs \$1,000s.**

- All the other marinas have underwater systems to protect boats from ice damage.
- Many insurance programs require boats be pulled during the winter if these systems don't exist.
- Moving and hauling a boat for the winter costs thousands of dollars.
- Slip-holders then have to pay for monthly winter storage while still paying for their slip in Alexandria. This is a major additional cost for many at the marina, and is not required at the other marinas listed.

*Estimated cost: \$500-\$1500/year in necessary removal of boats and storage elsewhere for some slip holders*

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**On-site fuel is a huge convenience. Making a special trip to get fuel costs slip-holders money.**

- In many cases, boat owners can't get fuel when returning from a boat trip due to fuel dock hours.
- Therefore, making special trips to get fuel can tens or even hundreds of dollars in fuel, depending on the vessel, over the course of a season.

*Estimated cost: \$50-\$100/year in fuel spent getting to one of the other marinas' fuel docks.*

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**On-site waste removal being always available is a big differentiator.**

- The waste pump-out facility is only available when no transient boat is occupying the location, and staff is available. Not being able to remove human waste from your boat can be a major inconvenience or ruin a boating day.

*Estimated cost: negligible financial, but reduces relative value of marina*

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**All modern marinas offer a minimum of 50AMP power at every slip.**

- This is almost entirely a convenience issue, but it means that boats at the marina will quite often trip a circuit, and lose power.
- In some cases, this could increase the chances of the boat taking on water.

*Estimated cost: negligible financial, but reduces relative value of marina*

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**All comparison marinas offer dramatically better protection from river debris. Alexandria Marina is full of logs.**

- Other marinas are situated in protected areas, and have protection barriers in place.
- Damage to props and hulls from floating logs can cost slip-holders thousands.
- The city marina has a huge amount of floating logs and debris around boats for much of the season.

*Estimated cost: \$100/year for damage to props and other gear, averaged out over several years*

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**Marinas used in the comparison offer real security.**

- Security gates are one part of this issue, but cameras, guards and facility lighting are also factors.
- It is extremely hard to get to a boat from the land at the other marinas.
- Docks are protected by a piece of string on one pier, and chains that hang 1-2' from the ground at the other piers.
- Security almost never walks the docks.
- We have seen people on the docks after hours on almost every occasion that we've been there. We have seen them be asked to leave by security zero times.

*Estimated cost: \$50-75/year in stolen equipment and vandalism, with possible spikes into thousands of dollars (split with lack of gates note above)*

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**Finger piers that run the boat's length offer significant convenience and safety.**

- Boarding, cleaning and maintaining a vessel when the pier runs the length of it is much safer and easier.
- All above marinas offer boat-length or near boat-length finger piers.
- We have to hang from the vessel to secure it to pilings, often fighting the current and wind to do so.
- Some boats can be easily boarded from the side, especially at low tide. Not being able to get to the side removes this option.

*Estimated cost: negligible financial, but reduces relative value of marina*

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**Seasonal lease options are unavailable. Many slip-holders "double-pay" during the winter, costing \$1,000s**

- Insurance requires us to winterize our vessel for several months each winter, rendering it useless.
- Many boaters pull their boat for annual maintenance and store it on land for the winter, at dramatically lower rates.
- The city marina only offers annual leases, so slip holders have to pay for their boats to be in two places at once during the winter, which significantly increases the real cost of the marina.

*Estimated cost: \$500-1500/year for some slip holders that have to remove their boats in the offseason.*

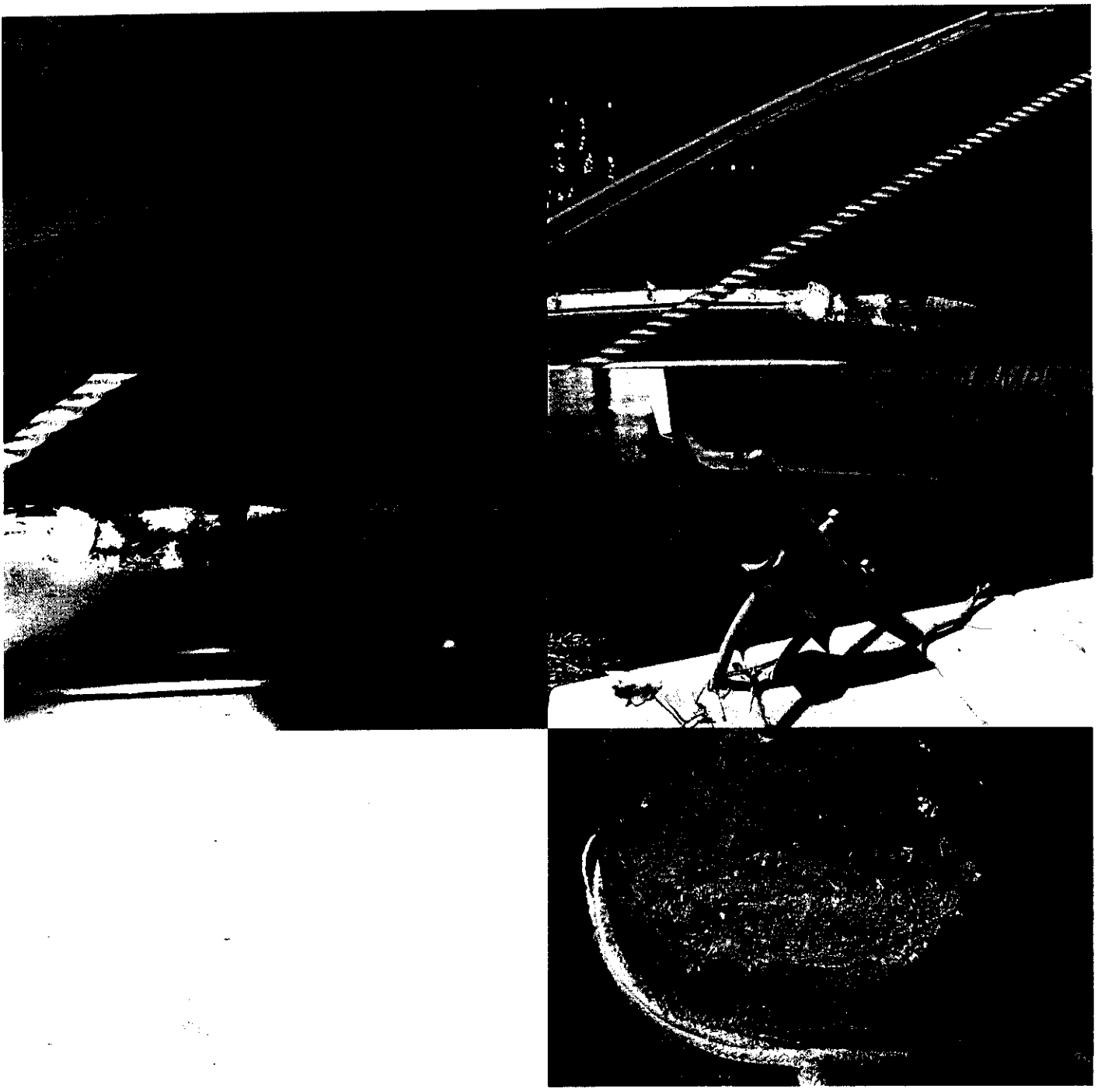
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**WiFi, Cable-TV, telephone, mail and courier receiving, concierge services, etc., etc.**

- While not universally available at the other marinas, it's important to note that these kinds of amenities are offered at some of the marinas in the fee comparison, and it's simply another explanation for their higher costs, in the cases where they are higher.

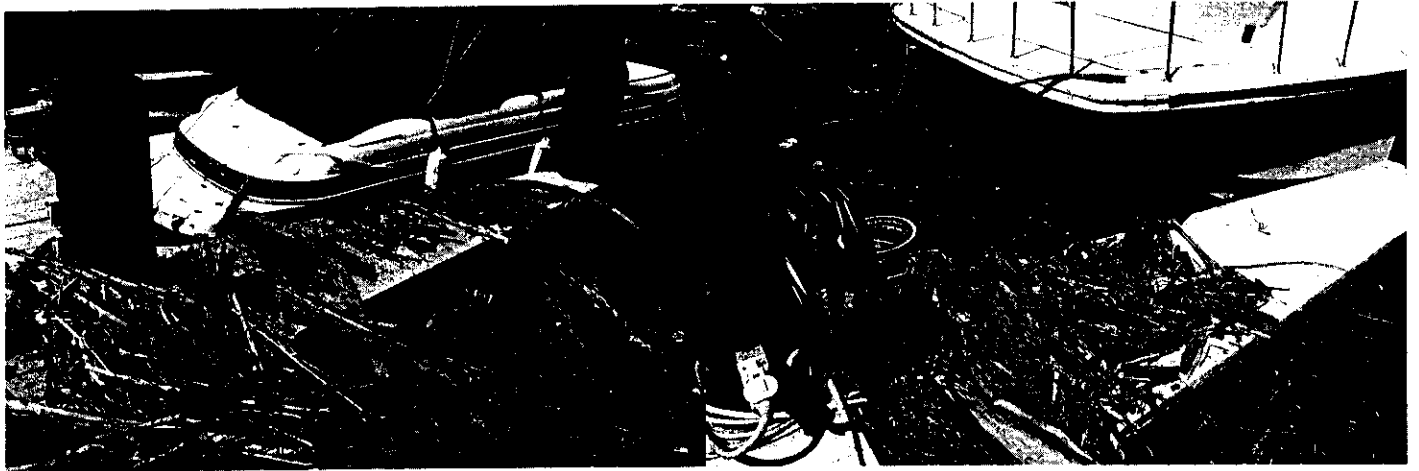
*Estimated cost: n/a*

Damage to our boat and marina during unnamed April 2011 storm: Our repair was approx. \$3,000, and 4 weeks of lost usage due to repair. Total damage from *this* storm to boats on this pier would have been at least \$15,000. One boat lost almost the entire season during repairs. All avoided with floating docks.



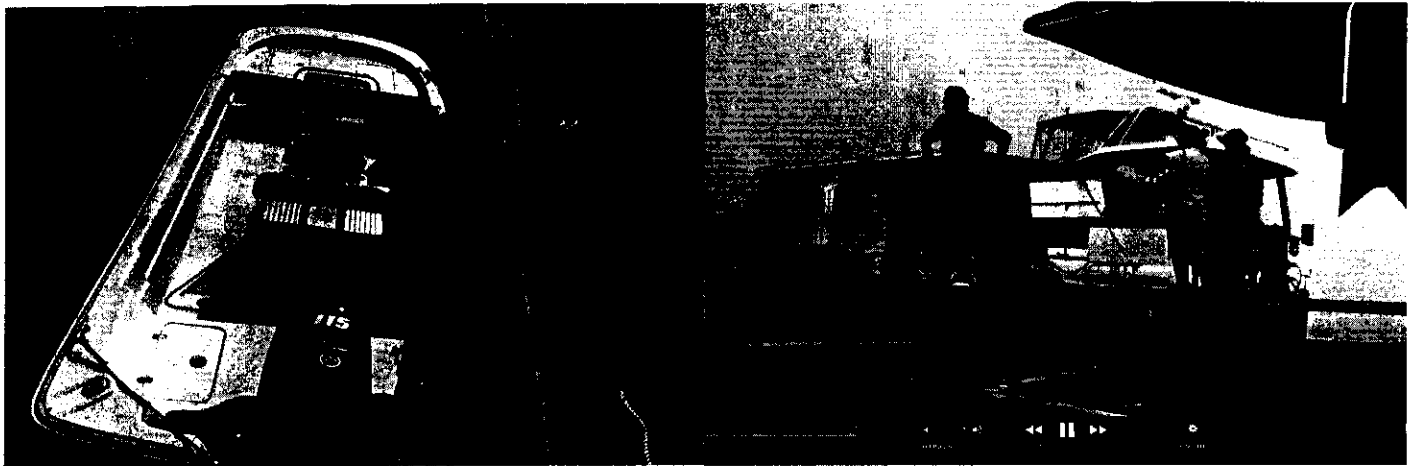
Our boat rose above this piling during high tide and then pounded on it until it punctured the hull. Another location for the puncture could easily have sunk the boat.

Extreme examples of how debris becomes a problem when docks don't float and marina is in an unprotected location. This doesn't happen at the other marinas mentioned. This causes hull, prop, and other damage to the boats.



This shows the marina's own boat on a standard day stuck under a dock because it doesn't float. No storm or tidal anomaly involved here.

This is a screenshot of a video showing members of a family boarding another boat on our pier in the rain. People board our boats at night frequently.







# Overview of key marina amenities —These differences cost us \$100s, even \$1000s / year

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Key: VS = vessel safety issue CS = citizen safety issue C = highly-valued convenience \$ = financial savings for slip holders

Douglas L Gosnell Jr  
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### Marina Fee Increases 2-23-13 Public Hearing

I am a two home owner in the City and been a slip holder since 1996 and since 2005 been the Pleasure Boat Slip holder to the Waterfront Commission.

First- Only one person, other than I and Ms Hall which runs commercial boats, of the 20 Person Waterfront Commission has a boat and it is an open air pontoon boat with no electric or even an enclosure and he has never docked in any other marina. However, in a meeting I didn't attend while in surgery, this commission plowed forward with some analysis that the city marina can be compared to other marinas. Let's point out that the Commission's experience on what a real Pleasure Boat Marina Operation is, without me in attendance, is ZERO. But a group of 18 people that have walked by the waterfront started making decisions.

Over 7 years ago I took on the position of "pleasure boat slip holder" rep to the waterfront committee - now commission

At that time I did so as I brought over 20 years of boat ownership, 28 years of naval engineering experience (now 27 and 35 respectfully) and personal ownership of waterfront-dock property that included sea wall, electric power and dock building and maintenance for 14 years.

The issues at hand at that time were (7 years ago) : 1- terribly poor security , needs for gates to protect boat theft - vandalism and liability to the city for a drowning or boat owners vandalism (unheard of in any marina) (i had incurred over \$5000 in damages), 2- a lack of stable power which was destroying power plugs (unheard of in even my backyard much less a professional marina), 3- degrading sea walls, wake issues which has caused by boat over \$10,000 in damages (and unheard of in any marina) which is also destroying our sea walls, 4- dock boxes, 5- professional electric plugs which would stop kids from unplugging boats (unheard of in any marina), 6- jetty consideration to stop trash and slitting, 8- need for better finger piers as the current ones don't extend far enough 9- marina re- design to accommodate the boats of the last 15 years for larger slips and 10- parking or some accommodation for boat owner parking.

Note: In this list I fully I accepted the city marina would never be a full working marina, have real facilities, a pool or even supply fuel. Which all marinas sell fuel and most have services. And that we would not ever be a state of the art, floating dock marina.

In my seven years the only thing the city did on any of these was to do 2 things

- 1- A year ago, change the yearly lease holder agreement making the boat owner accept that city provides NO security and that all responsibility for theft, vandalism etc. falls on the boat owner (unheard of in any Marina and further such clause would destroy any insurance policy should an insurance company read the lease) and then
- 2- In these past months eliminated the closet parking - unloading area for boat owners (spaces at queen and union) and did so without asking this commission for input on either of these items and without warning any boat slip holder so that the city fire boat could have an access point. Something I have requested for slip holders for 10 years.

In the last 7 years and all this city has done is take away parking and instead of protecting the boats and risk to the city, they decreased the services and security provided in all our marinas. Services and protection decreased. The condition of the marina is far below the other marinas compared to and degrading yearly. Somehow that is deserved price increase????

Finally, in March at special commission hearing, an outside consultant will be interviewing the commission to determine the condition of the marina and to determine planning and budgeting to fix the marina. So before even the finding of this consultant, the city feels justified in raising prices based on a survey and opinion from 19 people that how clue what they are talking about or voted on.....

Recognize that- the City does not have a marina; it has some piers for docking that are below standard, and have no parking. If anything, the rate should go down or at least be deferred until after the consultant's findings.

LASTLY, MOVING OR FINDING A NEW SLIP TAKER MONTHS, AND THUS AT SIX MONTH NOTICE SHOULD BE GIVEN OF RATE INCREASE.

## Gosnell, Doug (DC, Field)

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**From:** Nate Macek <natemacek@hotmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 21, 2013 5:55 PM  
**To:** Nate Macek  
**Cc:** Stephen Thayer; Jack Browand; Nancy Williams  
**Subject:** Marina Facilities Assessment Discussion 3/14/13 at 5:00 PM

On Thursday, March 14, RPCA will host a meeting with the Michael Baker Company to facilitate a discussion with Marina users regarding the ongoing facility condition assessment of the City Marina. The assessment will be used for the planning of future annual maintenance projects and potential operational enhancements consistent with the approved Waterfront Small Area Plan. Approximately one week in advance of the meeting, you will receive suggested discussion topics as prepared by the consultants.

The meeting is scheduled from 5 pm to 6 pm in Room 2000 at City Hall on Tuesday, March 14. If you are unable to attend the meeting, please forward your comments to Jack Browand at [jack.browand@alexandriava.gov](mailto:jack.browand@alexandriava.gov).

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Jack at 703.746.5504 or [jack.browand@alexandriava.gov](mailto:jack.browand@alexandriava.gov).