

St. Michaels Harbor Parking Survey

Background

A parking occupancy study was conducted to determine parking usage along the Harbor area. The goal being to determine if the parking could be modified by the West Harbor Road/East Chew Avenue Flood Mitigation Feasibility Assessment and Conceptual Design work, currently being conducted by GMB consultants. The survey was completed for several weeks in June and through the July 4 weekend. The attached survey shows the dates, times, weather conditions and notes any special events that occurred. The weather was almost always sunny and conducive to maximum slip holder boat usage. A total of 16 parking counts were taken.

Currently there are 48 parking spaces along the harbor extending from the large boat ramp south along W. Harbor and around to E. Chew. There is only one dedicated trailer parking area which is adjacent to the watermen's shed.

The survey is broken down into three areas:

- The area closest to the hotel south to the small boat ramp.
- The area along W. Harbor Road from the small boat ramp to E. Chew Street.
- The area along E. Chew Street.

While the survey indicates whether the spaces were occupied by watermen or visitors' vehicles, the percentages noted include both. Counts were done at different times of the day to observe expected peaks as well as when typical parking usage might be expected. While on-street parking was not counted, it is noted that on-street parking opposite the harbor parking areas exists along E. Chew and along a portion of W. Harbor Road. *Note that an addendum has been added on the last page.*

Findings

Over the course of the survey, there were two special events in town. The CBMM Antique Boat Show was the weekend of June 16-18, and the fourth of July fireworks and children's parade was the weekend of July 1-4. As one would expect, usage of the parking areas was the greatest during these events. The maximum watermen usage of the parking near the hotel was typically five trucks, with one more waterman truck located just south of the small boat ramp and one waterman truck located at the intersection of E. Chew and W. Harbor. Only one time was a trailer observed in a parking space. The rest of the occupied parking was either slip holders or visitors.

When there is a special event in town, such as the fireworks, Christmas in St. Michaels, and certain other popular events, parking throughout town is at a premium and one can never have enough parking spaces when hundreds of vehicles enter the town. However, for the other 350-360 days a year, there are unused parking spaces along the harbor, some of which might be repurposed as green areas and/or stormwater management uses. So, the question arises, do you base your planning on a few special events or do you base parking on normal everyday usage? And in this case, is hardscape and vacant parking along prime waterfront areas the highest and best use, or are there other more aesthetic and environmentally beneficial uses available?

Several years ago, some parking areas were signed to be occupied only by boat slip holders. During the survey there have always been spaces available in the area from E. Chew to the small boat ramp as the surveyed usage in that area never exceeded 50% of the spaces. Thus, it appears that boat slip users do not have a particularly difficult time finding parking near their boat.

Conclusions

One can extract one's own conclusions from the survey, but my observations indicate that the parking along E. Chew is lightly used with typical counts showing occupancy of well under 50%, except for the evening of the fireworks display. Therefore, the area could be largely redeveloped to a green area to help control stormwater management from the surrounding properties and streets. Two or three spaces to the west could be retained.

The area from E. Chew to the small boat ramp never had more than 50% of its parking spaces utilized, again except for the fireworks display, so there would seem to be an opportunity to create limited green spaces at intervals throughout this area. Plus, vehicles that may have formerly parked along E. Chew, could conceivably move to this area.

The parking from the small boat ramp to the hotel is primarily used by the watermen and overflows from the hotel. This area had parking counts of 100% occupancy on three occasions and 91% on two other occasions. This area should probably remain as is.

I would note that the zoning requirement for marine services requires 1 parking space per 10 slips, plus spaces for employees and retail floor area, which of course, would not apply in this situation.

July 5, 2023

Of the 48 spaces that exist today, in my opinion, somewhere between 35-40 spaces would adequately serve the parking needs of the slip holders, watermen and visitors. On special event days, parking at the school or on-street parking along nearby streets could be a reasonable alternative for visitors.

Dennis Glackin

Addendum

Roy Myers took an additional parking count the evening of July 1 at 7:30 pm prior to the fireworks. His count has been added to the table of parking occupancy for 7:30 that evening when many people come to the harbor area to watch the fireworks. His count shows virtually every space occupied in connection with the special event. Also please note that there were more vehicles squeezed into the area between the large boat ramp and small boat ramp than are spaces and include cars parked on the street next to the shed. Roy also noted that there were 6 cars parked on East Chew starting at David Parkerson's house going toward Talbot and an additional 2 cars parked on the opposite side of the street. There were 7 cars parked on the opposite side of West Harbor Road from the harbor starting at East Chew and going up to the next side street. I think we would all agree that this is probably the worst-case event for parking along the harbor area.