

MEMO TO: ROBIN PEACH  
FROM: GENE SOCCOLICH  
DATE: FEBRUARY 13, 2004  
SUBJECT: COMMENTS TO THE MASSACHUSETTS OCEAN MANAGEMENT  
TASK FORCE ON COASTAL AND MARINE RESOURCES

Included in an article, which I wrote and was printed in the New Bedford Standard Times on a proposed misguided Oceanarium (see attached copy), were marine oriented recommendations on development of an infrastructure which should hold universal merit for all of coastal Massachusetts and beyond. Within a facility focusing on accommodating realistic marine/maritime needs of government, post-secondary education and industry, they included:

- Development of an educational-applied marine technology corridor, with possible biotech emphasis, in concert with marine research from relevantly renowned institutions such as the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, then University of Rhode Island Graduate School of Oceanography, MIT, and C-MAST at UMASS-Dartmouth
- A national mediation center to conduct forums toward resolving offshore conflicts for fisheries, oil and gas, alternate energy, shipping, and boundary disputes, in concert with resource conflict programs at URI and Harvard University.
- An industrial exhibition and forum for improving port and marine transportation security in concert with historic port preservation.  
Planning exhibition and forum to discuss encroaching gentrification of fishing ports and dockage constraints, as exhibited in Point Judith and Narragansett, R.I., Rockland, ME, and recent attempts in New Bedford, MA, during the federally mandated lull in fishing activity.
- Future impact of outsourcing our fish market/consumption to other nations
- Accommodation of major corporate grants, such as from large pharmaceutical/energy companies, to fund modular exhibits in applied marine technology and formal political/industrial functions

Local New Bedford/Fairhaven:

- The port seems mired in an economic and political gridlock, possibly due to ineffective efforts, e.g. casinos / oceanarium, of some seeking to gentrify this renowned maritime area, or possibly an ineffective Harbor

FROM

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Development Plan / Harbor Development Commission, which may strongly suggest further study for development of an independent Port Authority. I initiated discussion on this issue before the New Bedford HDC last night, requesting their formal response within thirty days. They had no immediate comment, but accepted my long list of questions as regard the efficiency of both their plan and their implementation.

All the best,



Gene Szwedlich

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**Building Permits**

n A facility for developing an educational-applied marine technology corridor, possible biotech emphasis, in concert with marine research from the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, the University of Rhode Island Graduate School of Oceanography, MIT and job training programs with UMass Dartmouth.

n A national mediation center to conduct forums toward resolving offshore conflicts for fisheries, oil and gas, alternate energy, shipping, and boundary disputes, in concert with resource conflict programs at URI and Harvard.

n An industrial exhibitions/forum in applied marine technology for environmentally responsible economic development of offshore resources.

n An exhibitions/futures forum for improving port and marine transportation security in concert with historic port preservation.

n Amelioration of severe fishing boat docking constraints by providing dock use on the facility's site as a viewable working exhibit.

n A multi-use public facility for a sustained influx of world professionals and students.

n Accommodation of major corporate grants, such as large pharmaceutical/energy companies, to fund major modular exhibits and formal political/industrial functions.

Implementing these regional-specific economic objectives would set the oceanarium in New Bedford apart from other aquariums, some of which are struggling financially as tourist attractions.

The Oceanarium's leadership still maintains the tourist/visitor attraction as its major thrust. I was told that my presenting the merits of my recommendations to the state on New Bedford's behalf was considered a possible threat, and that the oceanarium is a political issue not to be judged on any other merit.

The Oceanarium's leadership recently has been admonished in government reports for questionable fiduciary conduct. Its leadership took pride in publicly announcing a personal vindication that those actions were not found illegal.

Such fiduciary practices, however, only serve to damage the public trust, placing the Oceanarium's leadership in question. Said parties also must either divest themselves from any conflict of interest in their ownership of adjacent property, or resign from the Oceanarium in the interest of that public trust.

The supporters of the oceanarium should schedule an immediate public forum on its economics and a realistic true-business case. Gov. Romney has decided that the Regional Economic Development Council must set priorities for the region.

New Bedford is an oceanarium's prime site. However, most of the new economic opportunities proposed hold universal truths applicable to other seaport regions.

Gene Soocolich of Beverly is a private consultant with a master's degree from the University of Rhode Island in Marine Affairs. He worked for the state in the 1970s as assistant director of the Energy Office.

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