

This update is being provided to inform membership of a developing dredging issue. It includes short-term actions being taken and information on a long-term concept being developed for consideration this season. This outline will provide general information as details for a long-term proposal are finalized.

The Problem: Dredging our harbor dependably every two years has become very difficult. Our dredging contractor scheduled us for last summer, then pushed us to late fall and then cancelled when a large project delayed them. With no firm commitment for this year, other companies were also contacted but none can commit, noting PYC is a relatively small project. There are growing concerns about the reliability of our contractor. Dredging is a necessity, particularly in 2024 with its projected water levels lower than recent memory. Note that our harbor accumulates 9 to 12” of muck per year so it’s a challenge to prevent the harbor from returning itself to a swamp!

The Concept: PYC may be better off to take control of dredging costs and timing. To ensure a successful 2024 season, the executive committee has decided to advance a potential long-term solution and rent our own dredging unit for four weeks around July 15th. The agreement has a “rent to own” option with significant savings if we decide to purchase during the rental period.

The Equipment: A small hydraulic dredge has been identified for consideration. It works like our contractor’s dredge on a smaller scale. Picture a five-foot wide, cable guided “snowblower” clearing the harbor floor, pumping dredged residue or “spoils” through a combination of flexible and fixed pipes to our approved spoils area. Some of these pipes will need to be installed for the rental period.



The Process: Basic operation requires an operator on board and one or two people on shore to monitor the outflow and relocate the pathway cables. The cables control the dredging pattern, like mowing a lawn. The workboat might also help in some areas. There is also set-up work for the dredge and for in-harbor tubing. This will be where we have the most to “learn by trying”.

Validating the Process & Time Required: This rental/trial is conditional on a PYC tour of a Kansas project by Steve Sangster and Jeff Tallon the first week of May. Meanwhile, we’re working on minimizing setup time by installing some fixed piping, even in the trial, to minimize cost and time. Driving the dredge itself will be easy. It’s moving pipes we’re concerned about.

Dredging time depends on how well the dredge performs and the depth we choose. The first week will be less efficient while we train and test the unit’s capability. If it operates as advertised, we expect to dredge the harbor to an acceptable level in 3-4 days. We are planning three 4-hour crews per day, including 4:00 to 8:00pm to avoid all the work falling only on members available during the day. This also makes sure everyone can see it in operation.

We need and strongly encourage members (especially younger ones) to get first-hand experience during the rental period as this may determine how dredging is managed in the future.

The Finances: If approved, this will reduce annual dredging costs to operation and maintenance of the dredge. There would be a financing payment for part of the costs, easily offset by savings. We expect this to be highly favorable, but the tradeoff will be in work effort. The idea of “rent to own” is to learn with actual experience how that tradeoff will work. Dredging costs PYC around \$50,000 per job. We reserve \$25,000 each season and that reserve will be over \$100,000 during 2024. With start-up costs roughly estimated at \$170,000 including piping, a trailer and storage container and contingencies, a combination of the reserve and financing makes doing this possible. Full cost details will be shared with membership once piping and purchase options are known.

The Decision: If Membership approves, the most economical way to buy the demo unit is to decide as the rental concludes. If we choose to purchase before the end of the rental period, the rental costs are credited towards the purchase, saving us around \$30,000. Because this timing falls between the June and September meetings, a special meeting to share all the cost and trial results will be needed.

The Benefits: In a nutshell, (1) cost savings, (2) control of dredging schedules and (3) the ability to change PYC’s reputation as a shallow harbor. Serving a wider range of boat sizes is an important part of attracting and keeping members!

The Elephant in the Room: While this idea has great savings and control options for our largest operating expense, it can only succeed with members agreeing to learn and operate the unit. While there is a group of members willing to get this started, they are senior members and a project of this importance and long-term impact can’t be based solely on “senior” (aka: “no-so-young”) member support. We can’t recommend this project unless a cross-section of our membership can commit to future years support. It’s not all heavy work and need not be restricted by gender. Scheduling will allow both retired and working members to help staff the project. If it works as advertised, it’s likely a week’s worth of work, 12 hour days, per year.

Please consider this an invitation to get involved in the development of the proposal and if approved, in its implementation. Contact any member of the Capital or Executive Committees to learn more.