

CHCA GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING NOTES-Oct. 20, 2026

Overview. The meeting included a presentation by REACH on harbor restoration, followed by CHCA financial and organizational reports, neighborhood improvements, traffic safety, dredging issues, and upcoming events.

1. Guest Presentation: REACH Environmental Restoration

REACH described a coordinated effort involving Rotary (volunteers and support), Cornell Cooperative Extension (marine science and testing), and the Town of Huntington (facilities, equipment, and operations). Speakers emphasized that nitrogen pollution from septic systems, lawn products, and stormwater runoff requires several complementary approaches; oyster and kelp projects alone cannot solve it.

I: Oyster Reef Project:

- **Oyster shell recycling and reef creation.** Shells collected from local restaurants are cured outdoors for about nine months. Exposure, insects, and weather remove remaining material and pathogens. Cornell then uses the cured shells as substrate for spat-on-shell production. Cornell's Southold hatchery induces oysters to spawn through temperature changes. Oyster larvae then attach to the calcium-carbonate shells. A single shell can support roughly 10 to 12 oysters, or about a dozen as they grow.

The shell operation and kelp-drying greenhouse use a town-owned former boatyard site near the sewage treatment plant (Creek Road Site). Oyster reefs filter water and create habitat for fish and other marine life. REACH has three reefs in Huntington Harbor, including a Centerport site near the Vanderbilt plane hangar, and is concentrating on enlarging established reefs. Shell exports: REACH now collects more shells than it needs. It has become a net shell exporter, sending Huntington restaurant shells back to Cornell for reefs in places including Islip, Brookhaven, and Hempstead.

- **Coddling Improves oyster survival** REACH receives spat-on-shell from Cornell at the end of June. The baby oysters are initially little more than visible dots. They are placed in cages at Gold Star and Woodbine, where volunteers clean, spray, measure, and monitor them through the summer. Oyster projects in Northport Harbor remain restricted because of water-quality and pathogen concerns. Cleaning cages raises survivability by 18% to 30%. Removing sea squirts and other fouling organisms helps oysters survive. The project also protects young oysters from crabs, oyster drills, snails, starfish, killifish, minnows, and other predators. A study this year placed some spat-on-shell directly on the reef without coddling. Those small oysters had thin shells and much higher mortality. The caged oysters grow substantially over the summer before being placed on reefs.

Oyster Reefs: REACH has three reefs in Huntington Harbor, including one by the Vanderbilt plane hangar in Centerport. The organization has focused on enlarging successful reefs rather than spreading resources across many small sites. Larger reefs protect interior oysters and

improve spawning potential. Predators have less access to oysters in the middle of a reef. More oysters also increase the odds of successful spawning.

REACH places Huntington Harbor reefs roughly 200 yards apart. The hope is that currents will allow reefs to cross-recruit through spawning. Two existing reefs were described as looking strong: one off Gold Star near Coindre Hall, and another on the north side of the Huntington Channel in water generally about four feet deep. Northport Harbor remains off limits for REACH oyster placement because of pathogen concerns and poor flushing. They hoped it could become possible to use again in a few years if conditions improve. The group noted that homeowners and yacht clubs also work with Cornell on smaller oyster projects. Waterfront residents may put oysters in milk crates, and yacht clubs may maintain their own programs. Families interested in sponsoring oyster boxes were told to contact the Cornell Cooperative Extension Marine Program about buying spat on shell. REACH said it could find a way to help if volunteers and manpower were available.

II: Sugar Kelp Project:

- **Sugar kelp cultivation.** Kelp grows in cold water (below 55 degrees), absorbing nitrogen that otherwise contributes to algae blooms. Kelp starts breaking down when water reaches roughly 65 to 70 degrees. It must be harvested before June. When algae die, bacteria consume them and use up oxygen, contributing to hypoxia. Lines are generally installed in early November and harvested in spring before warming water causes deterioration. Cold Spring Harbor was described as a particularly productive local site; ice damaged some lines last season.

Growth pattern: Kelp needs cold water and sunlight. It grows little in January, accelerates in February and March, and can reach five or six feet by April. Fragile seed line: Kelp arrives from Heart Nurseries in Seattle on a 200-foot line spooled around PVC. It must stay damp in a cooler with wet paper towels. Touching it or letting it graze the side of a boat can kill spores and leave dead sections in an otherwise healthy line.

- **Kelp byproduct and water quality.** Harvested kelp is dried, milled, and distributed in small quantities as a soil amendment for gardens and public landscapes. A reported 54% reduction in mid-Long Island Sound hypoxia over roughly a decade was attributed to multiple possible improvements, not to kelp alone. They also pointed to wastewater upgrades, more sewer connections, and cleaner boat-discharge systems as contributing factors.

Other facts: Most harvested kelp is water. Roughly 700 to 800 feet of kelp lines can fill 30 trash cans weighing 150 pounds each when wet. Once dried and processed, that material may produce only about 25 pounds, or one large garbage bag, of powder. The resulting product is described as a bio stimulant rather than a conventional fertilizer. It has small amounts of compounds plants need. It is low in nitrogen and phosphorus, releases slowly, does not absorb heavy metals, and was said not to pose the same groundwater concern as chemical fertilizers. It is intended to support heartier roots and more drought-resistant plants. Kelp has gone to local gardeners, Heckscher Park plantings, the Ketewomoke garden effort and Crab Meadow Golf Course. Kelp is widely cultivated in Canada, Alaska, and Japan, where suitable water has supported larger industries. California has native kelp forests, including very tall kelp and sea

otter habitat. Large operations can use specialized vessels that cut and collect kelp like a combine. REACH said its work is not yet profitable at that scale. A small amount of kelp may sell online for \$32, but producing it locally requires more than \$32 worth of labor.

- **Rain gardens.** Projects at Gold Star and Ketewomoke Yacht Club use native plants, drainage features, and soil to absorb runoff and filter pollutants before water enters the harbor. The Ketewomoke project also aims to support pollinators.
- **Volunteer opportunities.** Assistance is needed for oyster cage maintenance (late June–early September), kelp harvesting and milling (especially April–May), and rain-garden upkeep. REACH information: oysterreefproject.org.

Students and other volunteers can assist with oyster coddling and cleaning from the end of June through roughly the second week of September. Spring kelp harvest and milling also need extra hands, particularly in April and May. Rain-garden maintenance and watering can require Saturday help. A related Rotary group meets at 7 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month at Ketewomoke Yacht Club.

2. CHCA Treasurer, Fundraising and Governance Reports

- **Treasurer’s report.** Checking balance: \$7,921. Savings balance: \$133.
- **Centerport Community Yard Sale.** The inaugural event attracted 37 sellers and approximately 100 shoppers and generated about \$700. Approximately 88% of post-event survey respondents rated it “excellent.” Participants favored holding it annually, with consideration of longer hours. Pat Coyle was recognized for extensive organizing work.
- **Heron Park brick campaign.** The engraved-brick fundraising program remains underway. Residents may purchase a commemorative or personalized brick for the walkway at Heron Park.
- **Officer elections and bylaws.** Officer elections are planned for the November meeting. An officer slate and proposed limited bylaw changes are expected to be circulated to members through Constant Contact, with circulation discussed for approximately two weeks after the meeting. Interested candidates were invited to respond.
- **Environmental scholarships.** Two \$1,000 Bald Eagles of Centerport scholarships were announced for graduating Harborfields High School seniors pursuing wildlife studies, environmental science, conservation, or related higher education.

3. Harbor Dredging and Waterway Access

- **Northport Harbor.** A proposal involving approximately 57,000 cubic yards of dredged sediment remains unresolved because of contaminated-material disposal restrictions. One concept would contain sediment in large geotubes around Bird Island and establish vegetation over it, subject to regulatory approval. Transport by road was described as requiring roughly 1,300 tractor-trailers; barging would also be costly.

- **Crab Meadow.** An approximately \$800,000 Audubon-funded engineering initiative was mentioned for watershed restoration, but state environmental restrictions were said to prevent use of the Northport sediment in the marsh. The DEC must approve any disposal option other than trucking or barging the material away. The obstacle is a pathogen described as *Alexandrium* psp in Northport Harbor sediment. The DEC has said it will not allow the material to be placed in the Crab Meadow marsh, despite testing that reportedly found the marsh as contaminated as the harbor. Bird Island itself was formed from Northport Harbor dredge spoils in 1964, before the DEC existed. Open-water disposal in the Sound was described as unavailable. Enlarging Bird Island or placing the sediment in sand was also described as unavailable under current rules. Trucking the material from Scudder Park to Pennsylvania could require about 1,300 tractor-trailers on Waterside Drive. Barge transport would also be expensive. De-watering the sediment for six months and retesting was raised as a possible method, but speakers questioned where 57,000 cubic yards could be stored. The geotube idea would use hydraulic dredging to fill large fabric tubes, creating a ring around Bird Island. Sediment could then be placed behind the tubes. Seagrass and other plantings could be established on top to hold the material in place and reduce its return to the dredged channel.
- **Centerport Harbor.** Shoaling has made navigation in and out of the harbor more difficult. The county dredge is reportedly committed to the South Shore next year; an application for Centerport might be possible for the following year. Some residents expressed concern about dredging's possible environmental or shoreline effects. No dredging decision was reported.

4. Parks, Landscaping and Historical Improvements

- **Gristmill Park plantings.** The Centerport Garden Club and Town of Huntington completed the first phase of native landscaping near the parking lot, with hopes for additional work next year. Anne Wesp was thanked for ongoing area maintenance.
- **Pond-area historical signs.** Two new interpretive signs were installed after a lengthy planning process—one relating to Grist Mill Park and another to Heron Park. They are prototypes for possible additional signage around the pond.

5. Traffic, Pedestrian and Wildlife Safety

- **Resident petition and survey.** Alexandria Martinez reported at least 720 signatures toward a 3,500-signature goal. The effort seeks safer conditions near Centershore Road and Prospect, motivated in part by a vehicle collision that injured a Canada goose. The survey is intended to gather residents' experiences and preferred improvements for presentation to the town.
- **Safety measures discussed.** Suggestions included wide speed humps, improved stop signs and warning signs, enforcement or monitoring, pedestrian protections, wildlife signs, and public education. No particular engineering solution was adopted at the meeting.
- **CHCA's continuing advocacy.** CHCA described prior road walks and discussions with town representatives about unsafe conditions near the pond and Center Shore Road. Funding constraints may require improvements in stages; the petition may help demonstrate broader community support.

6. Upcoming Activities and Public Announcements

- **October 24 — Voting information.** The meeting announcement identified this as a voter-registration deadline and the start of early voting, with Greenlawn Fire identified as an early-voting location. Residents should confirm current election details with the election authorities.
- **November 7 — Raptors Day.** CHCA plans to staff a booth at the Vanderbilt Museum in support of wildlife rescue activities.
- **November 17 — Next general meeting.** The next CHCA general membership meeting was announced for this date; officer elections are expected.
- **December 3 — Proposed CHCA holiday gathering.** The Vanderbilt Museum offered complimentary planetarium space and a show. December 3 and an evening timeframe were discussed, but the date and details remained tentative.

7. Follow-Up Items

- **CHCA officers / board:** Prepare and circulate the November officer slate and proposed limited bylaw amendments through Constant Contact.
- **CHCA and safety advocates:** Continue discussion with town officials; pursue feasible incremental traffic-calming measures.