

Explanation of the Need for Dedicated Water Front

Our activities require us to have a dedicated water frontage for several reasons. The most basic of these is the fact that the docks and the boat launching need to be easy to access, while the public cannot be allowed on the docks, between the docks, on the boat launching ramps, and in the water surrounding the docks for safety and security reasons.

People unfamiliar with boat operation should not be present on a dock while boats are arriving or casting off, since they can easily cause accidents by falling off the slightly moving docks, crowding limited space, or attempting to help without knowledge of seamanship. The public should also not have unimpeded access to rigged powerboats with keys in ignition ready to be driven out at all times when rescue is needed. It seems obvious that there are members of the public who would gladly take a power boat for a joy ride notwithstanding any legal or safety issue.

For keel boats these issues have sometimes been addressed by installing gates at the entrances to the docks as is done in some marinas. However, dinghies have to be put in and out of the water several times a day which is nearly impossible to do if the dock is obstructed by a gate. The use of the docks is intermittent (usually, certain times of the day), but very intensive. The boats are brought from the storage areas to be launched every time members go sailing. Every day there are organized sailing events where everyone comes to the dock and leaves together. At such times there is continuous traffic between the dock and the storage area for about an hour before all boats leave the dock and for about half an hour when they come back to shore. Besides that, there are members sailing at any time of the day. On a typical weekend day, boats are moved between the storage areas to the docks about 100 times (24 boats, sailed at least twice each). Launching boats (before every sail) requires lines to be passed between the team members and an ability to get on and off the dock quickly. Having gates on the docks would make these simple activities very cumbersome, or even impossible. Crossing a public space between the club property and the water would also lead to conflicts with the public when boats block the proposed pathway, members of the public enter the boat storage area, or the ramps are used as children's playground. Hence, replacing dedicated water frontage with gates and locks on the docks as seen in some marinas which cater to keel boats would not allow for efficient operation of the club. Denying a dedicated water frontage to a dinghy sailing club would lead to a severe degradation of our experience by preventing the club from running efficient and safe activities.

Installing gates on the docks would also create other safety issues. It would not prevent members of the public from swimming among the docks even if it is forbidden. Yet, people cannot be allowed to swim among docks since this would constitute a significant safety hazard. It is very difficult to see a swimmer from even a small boat which needs to manoeuvre carefully in order to dock. A collision between a boat and a swimmer would certainly result in a serious injury of the swimmer. Experience of Jericho Sailing Centre in Vancouver teaches us that despite using full-time security guards there have been incidents of people swimming among sailing boats. Thus, gates on the docks instead of dedicated water front would produce significant safety issues while adding unnecessary policing costs to the operation of the park. Needless to say, the club, or even several clubs together would not be able to sustain their operation at the present cost to the members if they were required to hire a number of full-time personnel. Community clubs are affordable to the general public since they are run entirely by volunteers. Hiring security would not only be ineffective, but would require us to at least double our membership fees, which would then become unaffordable to most of our members.

The club property needs to have enough water frontage to accommodate two docks at a distance from each other which enables manoeuvring boats under sail (our boats are too small to attach motors to and hence, the sails have to be raised before leaving the dock) for the purpose of docking and leaving the dock. At least one of the docks needs to be equipped with ramps on both sides to enable launching and retrieving boats on the leeward side of the dock in winds coming from any direction.

Finally, the docks for small craft need to be floating docks anchored in the water and moving depending on the water level. Only a floating dock arrangement enables small boat sailors to dock and leave the dock without outside help. If the docks had a fixed height, with the yearly variation of the water level in the Lake Ontario (about 3 feet) it would often be impossible to safely enter or leave a boat moored at the dock. However, the floating docks are dangerous to anyone who does not know that they move with wind and waves. Moreover, gates installed on the docks would prevent the docks being taken out of water at the end of the sailing season to keep them from being destroyed by ice and to perform necessary repairs.