



A Geosyntec Company

2/11/22

Ingrid Allen
Town Planner
Town of Highland Beach
3614 S. Ocean Boulevard
Highland Beach, FL 33487

**Re: Accessory Marine Facility Code Amendments Relative to Boat Lifts
 Town of Highland Beach**

Ms. Allen,

This correspondence is provided as additional discussion and opinion regarding changes to Town of Highland Beach code relative to 'Accessory Marine Structures' and specifically boat lifts as defined within sec. 30-68 of municipal code. Items are discussed relative to potential changes to specific requirements of the current code.

1. Requirement for Accessory Marine Facilities to receive Planning Board approval

The requirement that all accessory marine facilities receive planning board approval (ref. Sec. 30-68 Supplemental district regulations (g)(3)) is not a common requirement within coastal communities. Boat lifts are generally allowed with restrictions without planning board approval. Board approval is typically reserved for sites with special and unique circumstance (see item 6. below) or for variance requests from the standard provisions defined in code. The requirements for lift installation are generally defined by code in terms of limitations to the location (setback) and overall size of the structure. These limitations meet the intent to minimize impacts to adjacent properties, allow for safe navigation and minimize impacts to view.

2. Requirement of setbacks for all zoning districts

Requirements for minimum setbacks for all zoning districts are a standard practice and are a key provision to meet the intent to minimize impacts to adjacent properties, allow for safe navigation and minimize visual impacts. The zero-foot setback for multi-family zoning within the Town's current code is anomalous and does not provide a sufficient setback to meet the intent. Required minimum setbacks for boatlifts and docks vary considerably by jurisdiction. The nominal width of lots within a municipality are generally relevant to this provision. Areas with larger lots tend to have larger setback requirements, while areas with smaller lots have lesser setback requirements to allow for reasonable use.

3. Limits to waterway encroachment

Limitations to the distance structures can encroach into a waterway are a standard practice and meet the intent to allow for safe navigation and minimize impacts to adjacent properties and views. Encroachment maximum distances on the order of 25 feet (relative to the waterway edge) are fairly common, though additional restrictions for narrow waterways are also common practice. In general, a fifty-foot effective fairway width is a common design standard for residential canals.

4. Limitations to pile maximum height

Limitations to maximum pile height is not a common practice but does meet the intent to minimize impacts to view. This approach also addresses a related issue relative to overall vessel size. Limitations to pile height restrict the ability to lift vessels beyond a certain size which addressed both issues of view and waterway navigability. In terms of maximum height, it should be defined relative to a fixed vertical datum. Pile heights generally on the order of 12 feet (NAVD 88) (which equates to something on the order of 8 feet above dock height) meet the lifting requirements for most vessels.

5. Limits to seawall cap and dock width

Limitations to Seawall cap and dock total width meets the intent to limit impacts to adjacent properties, waterway navigability and view. A total width of 8 feet (inclusive of the seawall cap and dock) is consistent with general practice.

6. Special and unique circumstances - Sewall discontinuities and corner lots

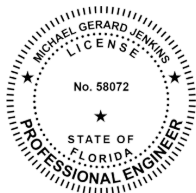
Regulation of boat lifts through minimum setbacks, size and height limitations are generally sufficient to meet the intent to minimize impacts to adjacent properties, allow for safe navigation and minimize impacts to view for waterways that are generally uniform in dimension adjacent to the regulated property. The majority of conflicts are associated with areas where there is a discontinuity in the waterway such as an abrupt restriction in the waterway width, corner lots or lots that extend into a waterway. Application of uniform code provisions to address these areas are problematic as each circumstance is unique and requires consideration of the specific current and intended use and access to the waterway. These issues are further complicated by the range of boat types, sizes and performance characteristics which may be germane to both the use and potential for impact to adjacent properties. Such instances likely warrant further consideration by the Planning Board.

Sincerely,

Applied Technology & Management, Inc.



Michael G. Jenkins, Ph.D., P.E.
Coastal Engineering Principal



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