

Mr. Jeremiah Valliant, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m. in the Circuit Court Room in the Charles County Maryland Courthouse at La Plata.

Members present: Commissioners H. C. Byrd, Milton T. Hickman, J. Clifford Hutt, Lewis Jones, Jr., Richard E. Lankford, Jeremiah Valliant.

Officers present: K. Thomas Everngam, Legal Officer; Robert M. Norris, Jr., Executive Secretary.

Visitors present: An estimated 200 persons were in attendance in the courtroom including members of the press, watermen, seafood packers and dealers, and some officers of Maryland Marine Police and Virginia Commission of Fisheries, Senator Frederick E. Markus, of Maryland, and other officials.

Mr. Valliant stated that the public hearing was being held to consider the properly advertised proposal of the Commission that the Potomac River be closed to tonging on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, until further notice. He said the Commission feels that precaution should be taken in the beginning of the season to prevent a repetition of the situation that developed last year. Also that there is a great concern about conserving the oyster supply for next year and future years in the face of no 1967 spatfall and a light 1966 spatfall.

Mr. Valliant introduced several distinguished visitors, including Senator Markus and asked for comments from the floor. He requested that each speaker identify himself or herself. He reminded the group that the Potomac River is still closed on Saturdays, regardless of this day being included for action in the statement above.

The public hearing continued with discussion, questions, answers and suggestions from individuals until 8:45 p.m., at which time, due to absence of further comments from the citizens, Mr. Valliant said the public hearing portion of the meeting was closed. During the public hearing approximately twenty persons spoke to the subject, some of them several times - included were packers, buyers and tongers. Roughly 1/3 were in favor of consecutive working days with hours per day limited; 1/3 were in favor of staggered working days; and 1/3 favored unlimited days with a few suggesting that limit be put on the number of bushels to be taken in one day. Those from a long distance wanted consecutive working days, while those living on, or near, the river generally agreed that staggered work days would be acceptable. The consensus from the majority, including Senator Markus speaking for oystermen in his four counties, indicated that they felt the Commission had used good judgement in previous conservation efforts; namely, closing the river for three days temporarily in the fall of 1966 to prevent waste of the oysters; they also said they felt that the Commission would try to be fair in the current situation. At one point during the hearing, Mr. Hutt asked the Chairman to explain that this is a temporary proposal (i.e., closing for three days) to determine the situation and that the Commission will add to the three days if supply of oysters is short. Mr. Valliant emphasized this saying that we would like to start at a point where we have assurance that overproduction will not occur - that the Commission can open additional working days later. He said overproduction would hurt the reputation of Maryland and Virginia oysters for quality; that the product on market must be kept as fresh as possible.

At 9:00 p.m. the Commission went into executive session. After lengthy consideration of the testimony developed during the public hearing and discussion by the Commissioners, Mr. Hutt offered a motion, seconded by Mr. Jones, as follows:

"That the Potomac River be open for tonging oysters Monday, Tuesday and Thursday until further notice." The motion was unanimously approved by all six Commissioners voting "yes".


Dr. Byrd agreed with the proviso that the Chairman make a statement to the press that a telephone conference will be held at the end of the week to determine if additional days should be added to above working days.

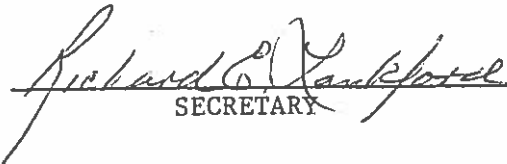
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Mr. Valliant said that each Commissioner is invited to a conference Monday, October 9, 1967 at noon at Wilkerson Restaurant, at Potomac Beach, with representatives from Virginia Institute of Marine Science and Chesapeake Biological Laboratory relative to the PEPCO generating plant at Morgantown, Maryland.

Chairman announded that the next meeting will be held at the Statler-Hilton Motel in Baltimore, Maryland at 2:30 p. m. Saturday, November 18, 1967.

The meeting was declared adjourned.

  
CHAIRMAN

  
SECRETARY