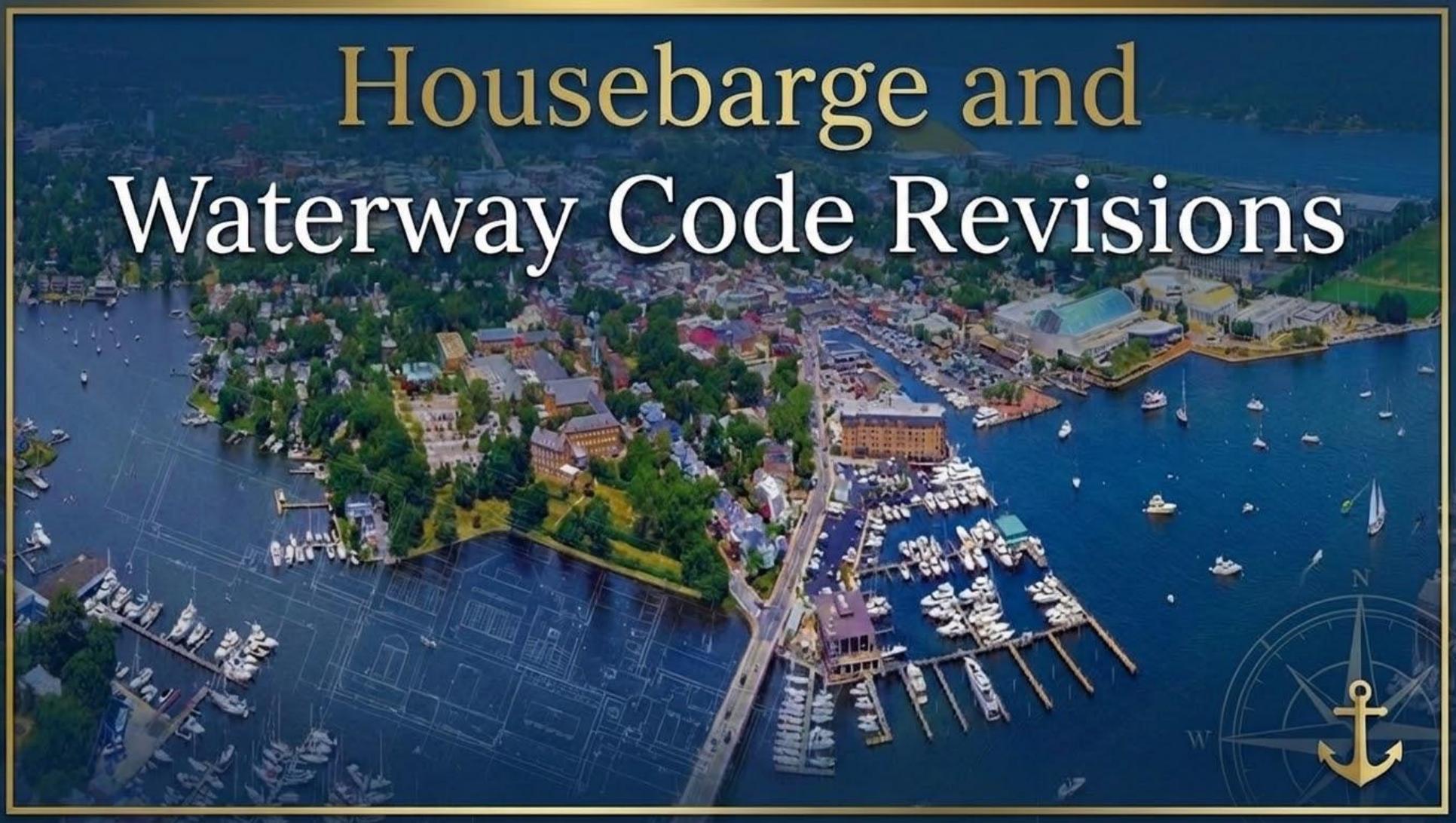


# Housebarge and Waterway Code Revisions



# Leadership Direction for Annapolis' Waterways

Soliciting guidance on Title 15 City Code updates for City waterways and adjacent lands



## Key Decision Point for the Council: Establishing Policy for Stationary Vessels

### Determining Permissible Uses



Offices



Construction



Residences



### Short-Term Rentals (STRs)



Deciding whether to allow Houseboats, Floating Homes, and all other vessels as short-term rentals



## The Current Challenge: Title 15's Effectiveness



Administration  
& Council



Currently, Title 15 is not effective in permitting or prohibiting houseboats, housebarges or short term rentals on boats.

Before we work with our Office of Law to change that, we need to know what this Administration and Council want.

# Recent Examples



**Housebarge unable to propel itself**

(it is currently not legal to have a vessel in City waters that cannot propel itself)



# Recent Examples



Houseboat with additional small boat attached for rent in Back Creek

(This practice is currently prohibited. The renter was unaware that attaching another vessel to the floating home exceeded the harborline and created a navigational hazard.)



# Recent Examples



Houseboat on the lift in Back Creek. Used as a short term rental.

Currently neither the Harbormaster nor Planning and Zoning are able to address short term rentals on boats.



# Do we want short term rentals on boats in City Waters?



Unique accommodations on a comfortably equipped 43-foot Hatteras yacht, close to historic downtown Annapolis and the Naval Academy.

**“THIS LISTING IS FOR  
ACCOMMODATIONS ONLY;  
BOAT MAY NOT BE DRIVEN!”**

Motor Yacht Example



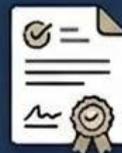
# CURRENT CODE GENERAL ALLOWANCES FOR HOUSEBARGES



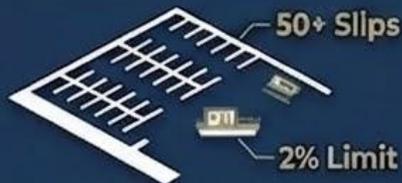
Maximum dimensions:  
46' L x 20' W x 14' H.



Subject to Mooring/Docking  
Time Limits.



Permit required via P&Z with  
concurrence from P&Z Director,  
Harbormaster, Fire Chief, &  
County Health Officer.



Docking limited to Marinas  
with > 50 slips and only 2%  
housebarge occupancy.



Requires 2 designated  
parking spaces.



Private Dock Prohibition.

# CURRENT CODE EXCEPTIONS



Pre-existing house barges docked before Feb. 13, 1984 (placarded)



Temporary construction-related barges



Repair/restoration/refit ( $\leq 120$  days)



Unoccupied sales display barges:

  $\leq 60$  ft: max 2 per marina

 60 ft:  $\leq 180$  days per year



Barges designed for office, storage, or fueling

# Background



The Task Force, created by Resolution 46-24 in April 2025, was mandated to study three key aspects of residential marine vessels, including houseboats and floating homes:

1. The effect on the city's maritime industry.
2. The benefits and drawbacks for the community.
3. The consequences for city operations.



# Resolution 46-24 Task Force to Study Marine Vessels



The task force was a collaborative effort, with at least 15 members appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the Council, representing various stakeholder groups and ensuring diverse perspectives.

# Task Force Recommendation



**Recommendation:** Enact an ordinance prohibiting the use of house barges for rental purposes.



**Consequence:** This includes making it unlawful to obtain a City business or rental license for such use.



# Comparable Cities – Key Regulatory Approaches to Houseboats & STRs

## Ocean City, MD



Commercial houseboat use prohibited. Legislative intent emphasizes public health, safety, welfare, and marina preservation.

## Nantucket / Newport Harbor, RI



Houseboats and floating businesses prohibited from public waters and moorings.

## Tisbury (Martha's Vineyard), MA



Classified as non-water-dependent floating businesses; general prohibition (2023). Limited exemptions (e.g., maritime art galleries).

## Brookhaven, NY



Floating homes and residential houseboats require a special permit. Operating without approval is prohibited.

## Beach Haven, NJ



Occupancy restricted to self-propelled vessels meeting sanitation & navigation standards. STRs prohibited – must be owner-occupied.

## Wilmington, NC

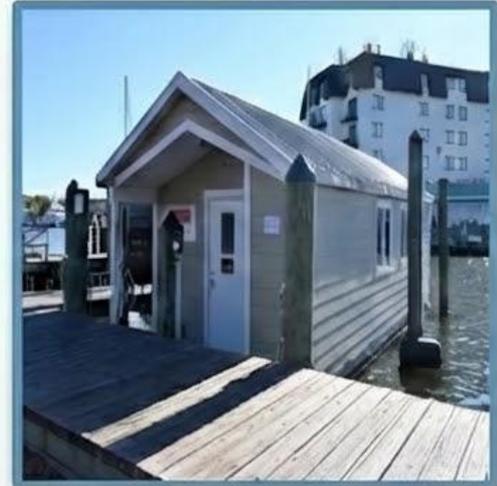


Purpose-built STR house barge marina, single operator. Located away from core downtown viewshed.

# Do we want to allow Housebarges in City Waters?



## As an Office?



# Do we want to allow Housebarges in City Waters?

For an individual owner or family to live on as their primary residence?



# Do we want short term rentals on boats in City Waters?



Unique accommodations on a comfortably equipped 43-foot Hatteras yacht, close to historic downtown Annapolis and the Naval Academy. **THIS LISTING IS FOR ACCOMMODATIONS ONLY; BOAT MAY NOT BE DRIVEN!**



Motor Yacht Example



Housebarge Example

If Leadership does want to allow house barges, are there maximum dimensions?



# Positive Outcomes for allowing STR on boats

They could provide a unique waterfront getaway for visitors.



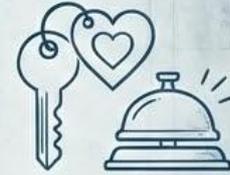
## WATERFRONT & AMENITIES

- **Waterfront views, modern and stylish interiors, and high-end amenities.**



## ATMOSPHERE & ACCESS

- **tranquil, serene atmosphere**
- **easy access to vibrant neighborhoods and curated local experiences.**



## GUEST EXPERIENCE

- **Guests also appreciate the seamless check-in process, thoughtful hospitality,**
- **and the option for private, on-demand services like private chefs and massage.**



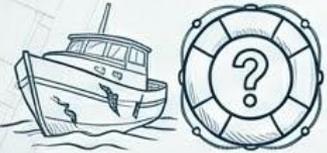
# Negative Outcomes for allowing STR on boats



Requires hiring a **new specialized staff member** (marine surveyor & planning expert) with an annual salary over \$80,000.



Marinas can charge far more for slips used by STR boats, possibly **driving up slip fees** and limiting recreational boat opportunity.



Vessels may not meet **safety standards** for dwelling, impacting emergency services' ability to assist occupants.



Risk of significant **negative neighborhood impacts**, including noise complaints.



STR housebarges have **higher profit margins** as they do not pay property taxes.



Permanently plumbing vessels may **increase fire risk**; grey water discharge will **impact water quality**; STR boats not paying amusement taxes.

# STAFF IMPACT



## SAFETY & INSPECTION NEED

If Short-Term Rentals are permitted, vessels must be inspected to ensure they are a **safe place for dwelling.**



## REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS

A qualified inspector must be **both a marine surveyor and an expert planning and zoning.**



## FINANCIAL & STAFFING BURDEN

This staff member **does not currently exist**, and and the **annual salary** would likely be **more than \$80,000 per year.**

# Houseboat Task Force Recommendations



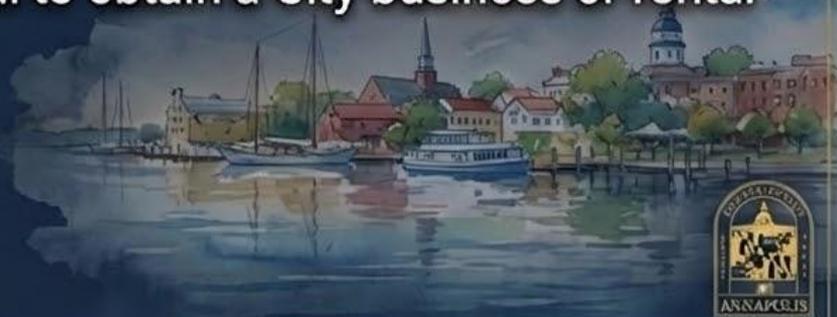
The report generated by the Houseboat Task Force was extremely well done and very detailed.



## Summary of recommendations:

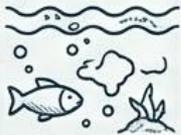


- Based on the data and analysis reviewed, the Houseboat Task Force recommends that the City of Annapolis enact an ordinance prohibiting the use of house barges for rental purposes.
- This would include making it unlawful to obtain a City business or rental license for such use.



# HARBORMASTER'S RECOMMENDATION

The Harbormaster's Office supports the Task Force's recommendation to prohibit **Short-Term Rentals (STRs) on houseboats and other vessels**. While these rentals offer a unique waterfront experience, the prohibition is necessary due to significant concerns regarding:



**ENVIRONMENTAL  
CONCERNS**



**MARINA & BOATING  
IMPACTS**



**EQUITY & TAX  
IMPACTS**



**PUBLIC  
SAFETY  
RISKS**



**STAFFING &  
ADMINISTRATIVE  
BURDENS**



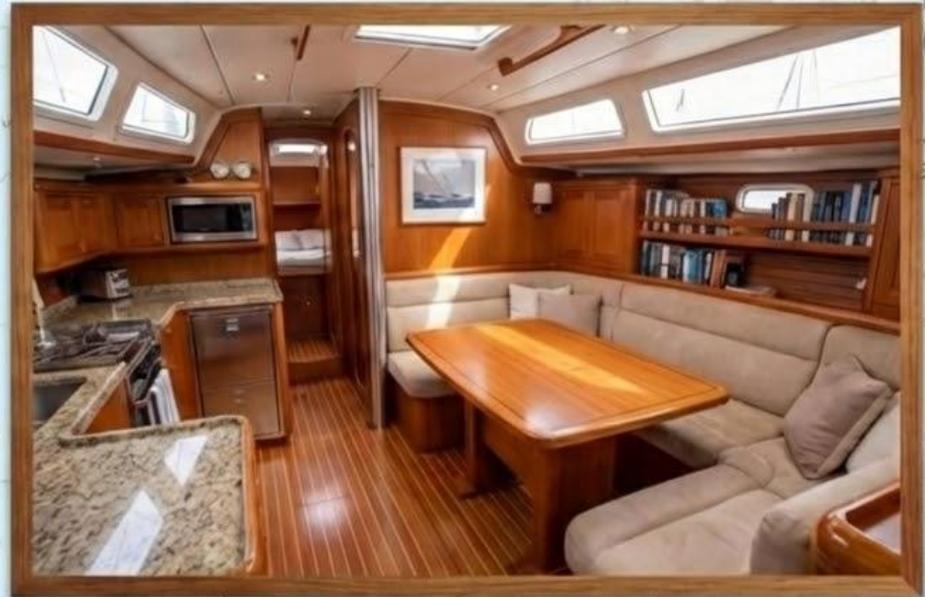
**SURROUNDING  
NEIGHBORHOODS  
QUALITY OF LIFE**

# LIVEBOARD

A person who resides on a boat as their primary residence, or the boat itself, which is designed or modified for long-term habitation.



Typically featuring living quarters, a galley, and bathroom facilities, these vessels range from sailboats and trawlers in marinas.



**Neither the Task Force nor the Harbormaster believe that liveaboards or legitimate charters should be further regulated.**

# Additional Title 15 considerations

The Harbormaster recommends the City **prohibit anchored boats** in City waters during **winter months**.



# Anchored Boats



## Should the City consider prohibiting anchored boats during the winter months?



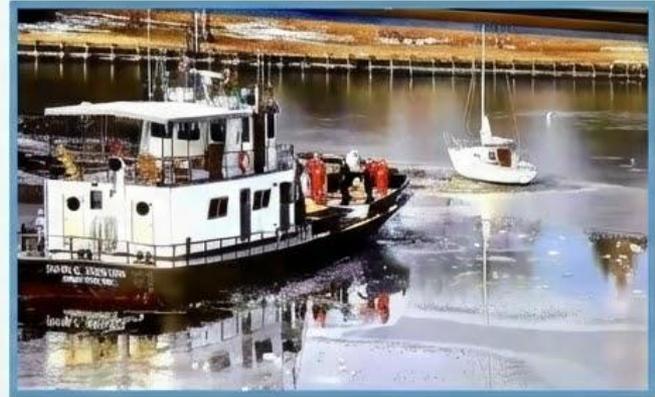
The occupants of these vessels frequently require assistance.



These boats occasionally pose a navigational hazard due to dragging anchor. They sometimes strike other boats and docks.



These vessels are often derelict and are frequently abandoned.



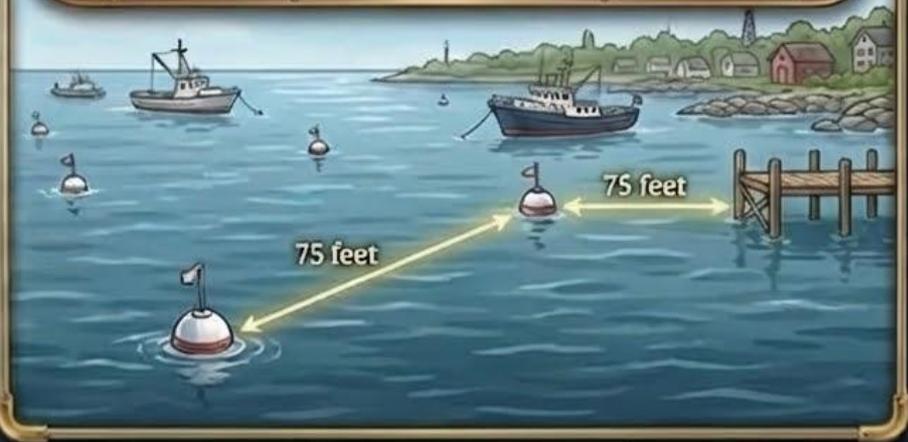
**Should a restriction on anchoring be implemented from December 1st through March 20th?**



# Mooring Legislation: Revised Sections 15.02.030 & 15.10.110

Revised Sections 15.02.030 (Definitions) and 15.10.110 (Moorings) clarify mooring rules by defining and separating annual and transient moorings, and updating installation distance to the current and correct parameters.

Moorings, not vessels (as previously written) may not be installed in City waters within 75 feet of any structure, shore or private mooring, or in a position that obstructs navigation as determined by the Harbormaster.

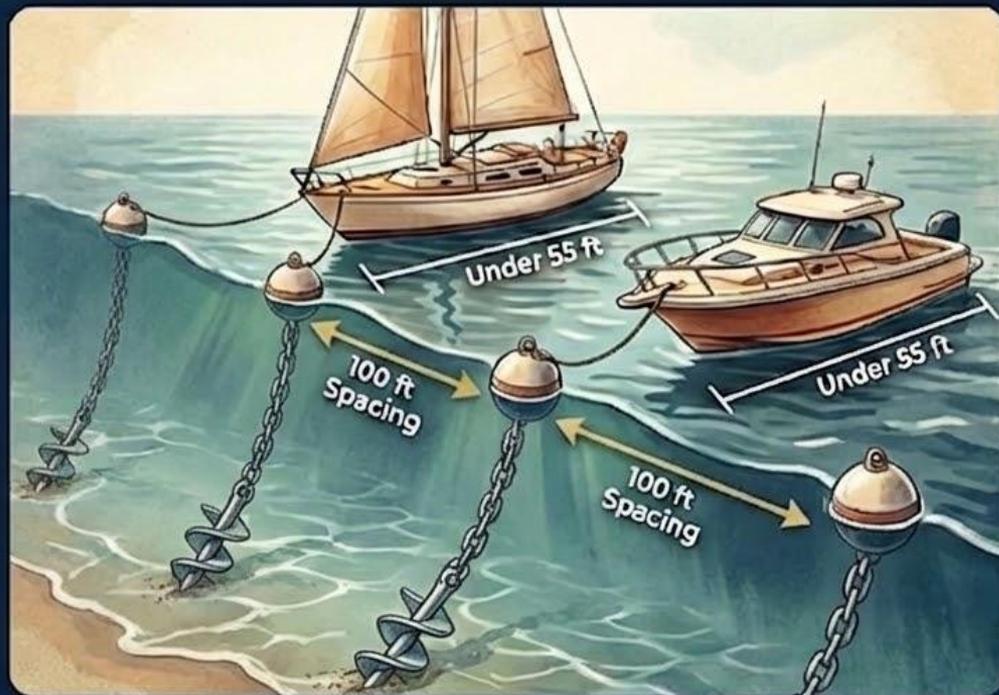


# TRANSIENT MOORINGS

## Regulations and Vessel Accommodation

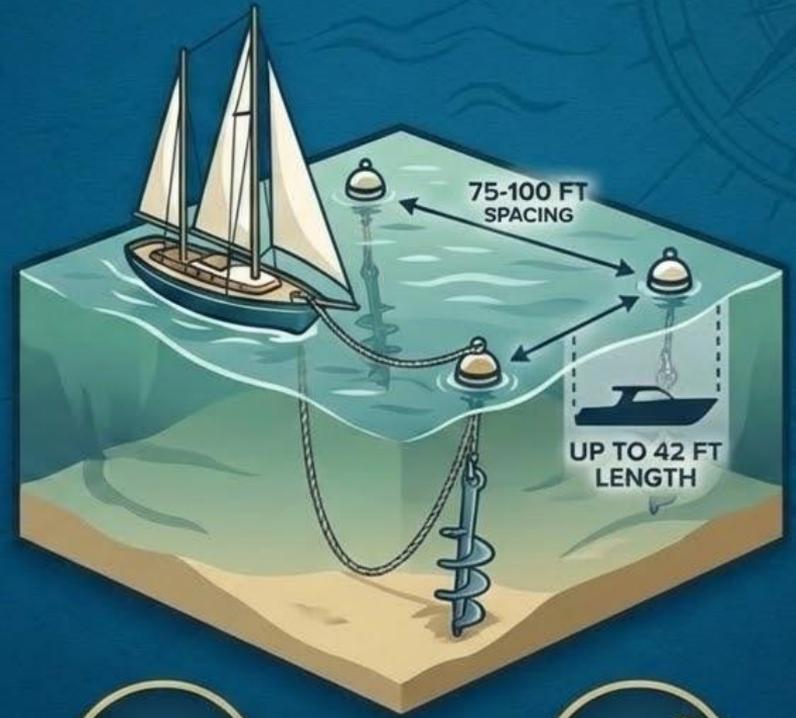
⚓ **Spacing:** 100 feet apart

⚓ **Vessel Capacity:**  
Up to 55 feet in length



# ANNUAL MOORINGS

Annual Moorings are placed **75 to 100 feet apart** and can accommodate up to **42 foot vessels**.



SPACING: 75-100 FT



MAX VESSEL: 42 FT

# IN SUMMARY

We are requesting guidance and direction as to how City leadership would like to proceed.

