

1 **..Title**

2 **Task Force to Study Residential Marine Vessels** – For the purpose of gathering information
3 necessary for the Annapolis City Council to make informed decisions about residential and
4 commercial marine vessels in city waters, creating a task force to investigate three critical areas
5 regarding houseboats, floating homes, and other residential marine vessels: 1) the impact on the
6 city's maritime industry, 2) the advantages and disadvantages to the community, and 3) the
7 impacts on city operations; and requiring the task force to submit a report to the Council for
8 possible action.

9 **..Body**

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11 **CITY COUNCIL OF THE**
12 **City of Annapolis**

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14 **Resolution 46-24**

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16 **Introduced by: Alderman Arnett**

17 **Co-sponsor: Ald. Savidge**
18

19 **Referred to:**

20 Maritime Advisory Board
21 Port Wardens
22 Environmental Matters Committee
23 Rules and City Government Committee
24 Economic Matters Committee
25
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27 **A RESOLUTION** concerning
28

29 **A Task Force to Study**
30 **Houseboats, Floating Homes, and Other Residential Marine Vessels**
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33 **FOR** the purpose of gathering information necessary for the Annapolis City Council to make
34 informed decisions about residential and commercial marine vessels in city waters, creating
35 a task force to investigate three critical areas regarding houseboats, floating homes, and
36 other residential marine vessels: 1) the impact on the city's maritime industry, 2) the
37 advantages and disadvantages to the community, and 3) the impacts on city operations; and
38 requiring the task force to submit a report to the Council for possible action.
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Maritime Industry

WHEREAS, Residential Marine Vessels include a wide variety of boats and barges, including but not limited to:

- **Houseboats**, a dwelling built on a boat that has a motor;
- **House-barges**, a dwelling built on a barge without a motor;
- **Floating Homes**, another name for a house-barge;
- **Liveboards**, a boat that a person uses as their home;
- **Charter Boats**, a vessel rented to passengers with or without a captain and subject to Coast Guard regulations;
- **Bed and Breakfast Charters**, a recreational vessel that offers overnight stays for a fee and is subject to Coast Guard regulations;
- **Short-term Rentals**, marine vessels rented for short-term stays without leaving the dock; and

WHEREAS, Protecting the City's waterfront and boating community is a high priority, shown by the creation of Waterfront Maritime Zoning Districts in 1987 to address the development pressures on the Annapolis Maritime Industry and to preserve the Maritime Industry's presence in Annapolis; and

WHEREAS, In 2020, the City Council established the "Maritime Task Force" with 34 active members, which recommended policy aimed at protecting the maritime districts and strengthening the City's maritime industry that led to new restaurants, more diverse businesses, and a framework for enhanced water access; but that task force did not address on-the-water uses; and

WHEREAS, The City Council lacks details needed to make informed decisions on protecting the maritime industry; and

Community

WHEREAS, While Annapolis is only 7.2 square miles of land, it has 17 miles of waterfront along the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries; and

WHEREAS, The 2021 Maritime Task Force report states, "the character of the maritime districts is a top priority for residents" throughout the City; that character includes watching boats from City Dock, participating in sailboat races year-round, and riding on powerboats and yachts around the Severn River and into the Chesapeake Bay; and

WHEREAS, The City needs to assess how residential housing in boat slips affects the availability of slips for powerboats and sailboats. These boats are essential for fostering and maintaining the City's maritime community atmosphere, even for residents who do not live directly on the waterfront; and

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2 **WHEREAS,** In June 2024, Ocean City, Maryland, banned the use of houseboats for short-term
3 rentals "to protect the public's health, safety and welfare," according to Ocean
4 City's Ordinance 2024-12, and the Annapolis City Council needs to determine
5 whether similar issues might also disadvantage the Annapolis community; and
6

7 **City Operations**

8 **WHEREAS,** The City Council finds there is a need to assess the adequacy of existing
9 municipal laws, ordinances, staffing, permitting, and regulations governing the
10 use, occupancy, safety, and environmental impact of residential marine vessels;
11 and
12

13 **WHEREAS,** The Council aims to develop a fair and equitable method for assessing fees for
14 marinas and residents living on vessels, as these residents rely on essential city
15 services funded by property taxes. While some argue that this situation resembles
16 residential rentals on land, the City Council requires accurate and reliable
17 information on the issue; and
18

19 **WHEREAS,** The City needs to determine how to manage utilities for residential maritime
20 vessels, including connections for drinking water, electricity, and sewage
21 removal. For instance, the City's pump-out boat, which removes sewage waste
22 from boats, operates five days a week from May through November. During the
23 colder months, from November until late May, it operates only on Wednesdays
24 and Saturdays, depending on the weather. Will this schedule be sufficient?
25 Additionally, do private marinas have the capacity to fill in any gaps?
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27 **WHEREAS,** Sausalito, California, is home to over 400 floating homes located in five
28 residential marinas. These floating structures are required to have permanent
29 electrical, sewer, and water connections above the waterline, complete with
30 backflow prevention devices. Should the City of Annapolis consider
31 implementing similar requirements for floating homes in its marina slips?
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34 **Task Force Creation & Setup**

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36 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE ANNAPOLIS CITY COUNCIL** that:

- 37 1. A Residential Marine Task Force is hereby established to conduct a comprehensive
38 review of municipal laws, ordinances, staffing, permitting, and regulations pertaining to
39 houseboats, house barges, liveaboards, bed and breakfast charters, and chartered boats.
- 40 2. This task force shall be a collaborative effort, with at least 15 members appointed by the
41 Mayor and confirmed by the Council, representing various stakeholder groups and
42 ensuring diverse perspectives.

1 recommended and adopted by the Maritime Task Force Strategy Report of
2 2021;

3 **b. Permits and Fees.**

- 4 • Develop guidelines for permitting, licensing, and inspection of marine
5 residential and commercial vessels;
- 6 • Report on the impact the state-authorized slip tax would have in
7 Annapolis;

8 **c. Slips.**

- 9 • Determine how many slips exist in Annapolis, the type of slips, size of
10 slips, and whether the slips can handle residential marine vessels without
11 disrupting boating traffic;
- 12 • Distinguish between municipal and privately owned slips and analyze
13 potential regulatory and taxation differences for each;

14 **d. Liveboards & Charter Boats**

- 15 • Develop recommendations for tracking and regulating liveboards,
16 including registration, permitting inspection, and enforcement procedures;
- 17 • Review City rules and regulations regarding commercial charter boats in
18 City waters and recommend updates, including the use of commercial and
19 residential vessels as charter boats,
- 20 • Develop recommendations on charter boats as short-term rentals;
- 21 • Develop recommendations on how to ensure safe management of charter
22 boats in marina slips;

23 **e. Utilities & Water Quality.**

- 24 • Determine the impact on water quality from discharged graywater into
25 City waters and recommend solutions;
- 26 • Determine how marinas would handle potable water and sewage disposal
27 from residential marine vessels;

28 **2. Community,**

- 29 a. Report on the impact residential marine vessels might have on boat passage
30 through City waterways, with a focus on narrow and busy channels next to marina
31 slips;

- 1 b. Develop recommendations for addressing the economic impact of marine
2 residential and commercial vessels on the community, such as noise impacts,
3 safety issues, and slip prices;
- 4 c. Analyze the impact of marine vessels as short-term rentals on nearby
5 communities and recommend whether they should be regulated and, if so, what
6 the regulations should entail.

7 **3. City Operations,**

- 8 1. Conduct a thorough review of existing laws, ordinances, and regulations related to
9 residential and commercial living on the water, which includes vessels that may
10 be used as short-term rentals or charters and recommend changes:

- 11 • Consider best practices from other municipalities with similar challenges;
- 12 • Identify any gaps, inconsistencies, or conflicts in existing laws;
- 13 • Address public safety concerns, including fire prevention, emergency
14 response, and sanitation;
- 15 • Addressing environmental concerns, including water quality, waste
16 disposal, and habitat protection;

- 17 2. Review City fees to determine whether the fees cover City costs regarding law
18 enforcement, public utilities, and inspections:

- 19 • Assess the feasibility of implementing a slip fee, including potential
20 revenue generation, administrative costs, and impacts on vessel owners;
- 21 • Develop recommendations for determining a fair and equitable method for
22 assessing a fee in lieu of property taxes for marine residential and
23 commercial vessels, including factors such as vessel size, value, and
24 usage;

- 25 3. Assess the City staffing requirements associated with the recommendations;

26 **AND BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED BY THE ANNAPOLIS CITY COUNCIL** that this
27 resolution shall take effect upon passage.