

# Legal dispute over oil tanker terminal settled

**John MacCormack**

Sep. 1, 2020 | Updated: Sep. 1, 2020 4:37 p.m.



A Jetty Boat leaves the Port Aransas Marina taking fishermen to try their luck on the north jetty as a man fishes at left. Deep water Drilling platforms are visible on Harbor Island. A proposal to build a terminal for giant crude haulers right across from the Port Aransas Marina and city park is drawing pushback from locals. Tuesday, Feb. 25, ...

Photo: Bob Owen, Staff-photographer / Bob Owen

A bitter fight between the Port of Corpus Christi and the city of Port Aransas over plans to bring increased industrial development to Harbor Island has been settled.

The dispute centered on the port's ambitions to build a desalinization plant and an oil tanker terminal right across the ship channel from the Port Aransas city marina and a public park.

The yearlong wrangle prompted multiple lawsuits and charges of heavy handed tactics by the port, which canceled the city's long-term lease for its marina property

All the stories, all the time

Unlock Express News for 95¢

**SUBSCRIBE**

News

Coronavirus

Weather

Business

Election 2020

Sports

Lifestyle

Food

Opinion

Newsletters

“The Port and the City now have a workable framework to address development on Harbor Island ... This agreement also ends all of the litigation between the City and the Port,” Port CEO Sean Strawbridge said in a press release.

Port Aransas Mayor Charle Bujan also expressed conciliatory sentiments in a similarly worded press release.

Environmentalists quickly accused the city of capitulating.

“Basically, the port got everything they wanted and the city got nothing. They got rolled,” said John Donovan of the Port Aransas Conservancy, which is leading the fight against the project.

One of the state’s most popular beach towns, Port Aransas each year attracts more than 5 million visitors, drawn by the fishing, white beaches and seafood.

It also borders the Corpus Christi Ship Channel, through which thousands of barges and large ships pass each year, including VLCCs (very large crude carriers) that can carry up to 2 million barrels of oil and are longer than three football fields.

Key to the port’s plans for Harbor Island is to build four berths for VLCCs and to dredge an 80-foot-deep channel 10 miles into the gulf to accommodate them.

Many in Port Aransas fear the project will harm the bays and estuaries and will degrade Port A’s seaside charm. From here out, however, the environmentalists will not have an ally in the city.

**On ExpressNews.com:** [Battle of Port ‘A’](#)

Under the settlement, the city will drop both its lawsuits and its opposition to various environmental permits that the port is seeking from regulatory agencies, including the Texas Commission of Environmental Quality and the Army Corps of Engineers.

The city also agreed not to provide support to any groups opposing the project and not to rezone any property on Harbor Island owned by the port.

The port, in turn, agreed to recognize the city’s regulatory authority over the portions of Harbor Island that fall within the city limits. The parties agreed in addition to hire a third party inspector to review the industrial components of the project.

Among the city’s concerns had been its responsibility to provide fire and accident protection for a large industrial project. The port has agreed to pay the city \$200,000 a year for five years for training and equipment for city’s volunteer firefighters.



NEWS

LIZ HARDAWAY

**'It takes a community' to help get the homeless off the streets,...**



NEWS

MADALYN MENDOZA

**Nueces County beach closure will not be enforced in Port Aransas...**

The port also agreed to reinstate the city's marina lease, which runs to 2048, or to not interfere with the city's efforts to develop another waterfront area.

Environmentalists responded with anger to the news of a settlement that was reached without public input.

"The Port of Corpus Christi held the city marina hostage and cost the community's taxpayers a huge amount of money that is still needed to rebuild its own city services after Hurricane Harvey," said Tammy King, vice-president of the Port Aransas Conservancy.

"Strapped with large legal fees, they had no choice but to agree to these conditions. The agreement should not be a sign that the Harbor Island industrialization is wanted or should be in this ecologically sensitive area," she added.

To Ellen Krueger, a conservancy member who manages the Trout Street Marina, the settlement is "mind-boggling."

"They have kept it a secret from us," she said of the city council, which on Aug. 20 approved the agreement in a 7-0 vote.

As of Tuesday morning, she said, no one in Port Aransas had seen the agreement. Hours later it was posted on the city's website.

"They think the taxpayers don't have a right to make any decisions on anything. They should have had a public hearing," she said.

## Sign up for the Express Briefing newsletter

Stay informed about the decisions that affect you and your family the most.

By subscribing, you agree to our [Terms of use](#) and acknowledge that your information will be used as described in our [Privacy Policy](#).

---

[TOP](#)

**ABOUT**

- [Our Company](#)
- [Newspaper Delivery Safety Procedures](#)
- [Privacy Notice](#)
- [Your California Privacy Rights](#)
- [Interest Based Ads](#)
- [Terms of Use](#)
- [Advertising](#)
- [Careers](#)
- [e-edition](#)

**CONTACT**

- [Archives](#)
- [Customer Service](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Newsroom Contacts](#)