

How I built a marina in Haapsalu

Viktor Siilats, the founder of the Grand Holm Marina that has by today operated for four summers in Haapsalu, tells us how he became a marina-owner.

Text: Viktor Siilats

My first contact with Haapsalu took place in 1983. I had just started to work in ETV (Estonian Television) and my ex-colleague from the Academy of Sciences gave me a hint about an interesting and also somewhat dangerous issue. Namely, besides his work Tõnu Karu was the guardian angel of the mobility-impaired people and it was from him that I learned that the issue of disability was not to be touched upon in the Soviet press, since we were living in the “society of happy people”.

However, this seemingly preposterous thought proved a harsh truth. Even the architecture was designed in the manner hindering the mobility-impaired people from appearing among the others too easily.

I was young then and full of action and nothing seemed impossible. Nevertheless, very soon it appeared that the impossible still existed and the whole issue was guarded by the watchful eye of the “organs”, that is, the EKP (Estonian Communist Party) and the KGB.

When there’s a will, there’s a way, I thought. And since there was a progressive-minded staff in ETV broadcasting for children and young people, I decided to introduce the issue of the disabilities through disabled children, which seemed to be possible.

Making the programme then brought me to Haapsalu, to the rehabilitation centre for the mobility-impaired young people, where I learned about several unhappy cases of human fate. Nostalgic and peaceful Haapsalu suited well to my purpose and emphasized the mood I was in while making this programme.

The programme got finished, was left for about a year on the shelf as forbidden material, since a tovarish Bachvärk, the director of the pensioners’ department of the Ministry of Social Affairs said first in the studio interview that a pig was not a bird and therefore needed not the ability to fly, in order to explain that disabled people do not need to be among other people everywhere. After exiting the studio Bachvärk went straight to the EKP headquarters, complaining that a youngster had pushed him against the wall and made him say things that he did not want to say.

A year later, when the director general of the ETV was on holiday, I convinced the Acting Director General Mart Siimann to broadcast the programme and the warm and supportive reaction of the audience ensured imminent rebroadcast, the disclosure of the issue of the disabled to the public, the “Prillitoos” programme and also made me a totally unwanted person in the ETV house.

Therefore it was only natural that on my later boat trips I have tried every now and then to skip to Haapsalu. The geographic position of Haapsalu is simply superb: only an hour’s drive from Tallinn and at the crossing point of several waterways. The West-Estonian islands are also close at hand. In Haapsalu yacht club there was always a spot where to park the boat, the people in the yacht club were a friendly and cheerful lot, the food was good, the service was good and the fuel tank was filled whenever necessary. At the time the Haapsalu Maritime Days were an annual event.

Everything changed from the day when the yacht club owner Pärnu Sadam, or Rein Kilk, decided to sell the club.

The buyer was a furniture-manufacturer and roof coverings trader from Tallinn. The yacht club had switched hands several times before, but never so bad as now: first the fuel sale was put to an end, then came some bullies with their BMW-s and close-cropped hair, driving their cars to the very edge of the wharf, playing wildly loud music and jumping into the water between the boats, but often also from the boats of other people, yelling loudly as they did. That actually served them right: swimming in the marina is pretty much the same as bathing in the cesspool or taking a shower in the sewer. I felt sorry for their young girlfriends who tended to do the same stupidities. I once asked one, whether she, the future mother, gave the slightest thought to where she swam?!

Keeping the boat in Haapsalu became unsafe and there were less and less reasons to stop in Haapsalu. The new owner kept walking from one boat to another during the daytime, a beer glass in his hand, talking drunk, and at night or rather, in the morning around five a clock sung very loud and absolutely off the tune into the microphone. Those unhappy Finnish families that came to ask him to keep it quieter because their kids were sleeping in the boats, the performer replied that this was his marina and if they didn't like it, they could well sod off. I saw it with my own eyes how a family with small children set sail early in the morning. My friends offered to place a bet on whether the yacht club would be sold in one or two years, if things continued the way they were. Unfortunately that bet did not happen and retrospectively it is very difficult to say what date I would have gambled on, but in less than a year the yacht club was on sale.

The rock singer-furniture manufacturer's business was hard up and by selling the yacht club he could have saved the situation, especially that he owed part of the purchase sum to the Port of Pärnu (Pärnu Sadam) as well.

I was interested and found out that the marina was bought for 2.2 millions and the sales price was 3.2 millions, which meant the prospective buyer had to pay for all the inefficient managing. As I was in no hurry, I started the sales negotiations with the seller, but the other party did not condescend to be present. Several times. And he never called nor answered the phone later on and therefore these negotiations came to nothing.

By spring 2003 Haapsalu municipality had also realized that the yacht club plot was in the wrong hands and they wanted to know whether I was interested in buying. I explained that I was, but that I never managed to meet the seller and therefore the municipality decided to become a "mediator" and bring us together.

The meeting took place and to my big surprise a Kurmet Ossip, that trader of roof coverings, showed up, declaring that this rock star was actually not the owner and that the yacht club belonged to him, Kurmet, and is on sale, but not for 3.2, but 3.5 millions.

Since the aim of the negotiations is usually to lower the price, not to raise it, the deal was off right away. Moreover, it appeared that a substantial part of the yacht club's 7000 m³ was under water and the other, also substantial, was subject to building ban. In addition they tried to sell me among other things the so-called guest wharf, which on a closer inspection proved to be part of the neighboring plot. When leaving, I still warned Kurmet that there were a good number of seaside plots on sale in Haapsalu and that I had already made up my mind about buying. That I would be glad if it was him who got my money, but if he did not want that, then there was nothing to do and someone else would have that.

Kurmet only gave me a shrug at that ...

Buying of the neighboring plot to the Haapsalu Yacht Club

It didn't take long until the neighboring plot with that guest wharf came on sale. I expressed my interest and the representative of AS Lääne Kalur, Mr. Raine Kaljula, kindly agreed to meet me.

It was at the agreed time and at the agreed place, that is, in Mr. Kaljula's office, that we met for the first time face to face.

"Do you have any idea who just left my office?" Raine asked.

"No. How should I know that?"

Raine showed me a business card: Kurmet Ossip!

Somehow, Kurmet had found out about our meeting and my interest in the neighboring plot and demanded a meeting half an hour before my appointment.

"He came here, was somewhat nervous-looking, threw me his business card and said I should know him. To be honest, I didn't. I have heard bits and pieces about you, Viktor, but nothing about him. But now I know what he's like."

"So, and what did you talk about?"

"About these plots at Westmeri 3 and 6. He also wants to buy. Well, the price is no secret, 2.3 millions. He quickly said that 2 millions is his final offer and at that price he'd take it right away, so I should think about it, and then he left."

"So, and have you already thought about it?"

"Well, no, I would first listen to your offer, too."

My offer was very simple. When the price for the plots is 2.3 millions and Kurmet offered 2 millions, then I, too, offer 2 millions. And Mr. Kaljula can then decide, would he sell the plots to someone who needs them in order to develop maritime business in Haapsalu also in the future, or to someone who tells lovely stories about his beautiful plans to build a new and beautiful yacht club, but who might also prove big-mouthed and might do nothing at all.

"Well, I've heard about you and I don't think you'd buy this land to simply let it stand empty. And one has to take risks, so as far as I'm concerned, we might close the deal right here and right now."

And so we did, without any contract or anything and our next meeting was to take place at the notary's in a month's time.

We went to the hotel "Promenaad" to celebrate our deal. It appeared from our conversation that Raine Kaljula was an extremely likable and versatile person. A good conversation. We left almost as good friends.

"But how are you going to explain to Kurmet now that he offered two and I offered two – so why did you prefer me all of a sudden?" I asked, worried. That's the beer that goes straight into your head and makes you softhearted.

"Leave it to me, I'll find a way to explain it," Raine said.

"But Kurmet said that this two millions was his last and final offer, didn't he?"

"He did."

"Fine, then I'll offer 2.1 millions, that is one hundred thousand more, so you can tell Kurmet that Siilats outbid him."

"That won't do, we already closed the deal," Raine argued.

"Why not, let's make it 2.1, that's up to me to decide when I want to pay more," I insisted.

"We can't do that, what would people say?"

“What would they have to say, if we closed a new deal? Don’t worry about me; I’ll survive the price just fine.”

“Alright, let’s make it 2.1, then. But we also spoke about another object, too. If we come to an agreement about that, then we’ll cut that one hundred thousand off the price!”

Agreed. A deal again.

I went to the yacht club and Kurmet Ossip was there. He hardly answered my greeting and looked dourly past me. I still tried to make a friendly conversation, with us being neighbours soon and that it would be nice to cooperate and if he still has plans to sell his plot in the future, I would have even more reason to buy now.

Kurmet told me not to start having any ideas just because he was driving that kind of modest car. That he actually has enough money and that he had built and developed everything by his own hands, although he was from South-Estonia...

I could only stammer that I’d never thought otherwise, but Kurmet was already in his white car – I think it was a Toyota – and speeded off for Tallinn.

A short while later Raine Kaljula calls me, a little anxious: “Do you have any idea who just called me?”

“No.”

“Kurmet, of course, who else!”

“So, and what did he say?”

“He said he’d made the biggest mistake in his life and offered three millions for the plots.”

“Oh. I see. And what did you tell him?”

“Tell you what, I told him that the plot that was on sale for 2.3 millions in the morning could not be bought for 3 millions in the very same afternoon. That this had to be a mistake. Besides, we had already closed the deal with Mr. Siilats.”

It appears, in Haapsalu you can find the kind of people who uncommonly to Estonian nature stay true to their word!

Haapsalu Yacht Club wishes to be a mediator

A couple of days have passed and Raine calls me again, worried: “Say, what have you been telling about our deal in the yacht club?”

“Nothing. I told Kurmet that we’d be neighbours soon and we’d start a friendly cooperation. Why?” I stammered to answer. Sometimes I really do talk too much.

“You know, I got a phone call from Sven, that yacht club captain on Kurmet’s payroll. Do you know him well?”

“Yes, I do.”

“And what have you told him about our deal?”

“I-I-I haven’t told him anything at all!”

“But Sven told me you’d called him and asked to contact me. So I asked, why didn’t Siilats himself call me?”

Sven said Siilats was too embarrassed to call. That the thing was, Siilats had made a too quick and too emotional decision and offered too much for the plots. That he actually needed the money badly elsewhere. He asked whether it would be possible to lower the price before going to the notary’s.”

“Most interesting, indeed. And what did you tell him, then?”

“I said that when Mr. Siilats has any troubles, he’d call me personally and tell me about his concerns. And if Mr. Siilats wants to negotiate the price, we can talk about that, too, and lower the price, if necessary, but only directly. No mediators needed.”

I assured Raine that I had not asked anyone to be my mediator, that I had no money problems concerning this purchase, the price agreed upon is still in force and I do not wish to bargain for a lower price.

“That’s very good to hear, so we’ll meet at the notary’s!” I heard a cheerful voice say. And in a month’s time the deal was closed officially.

Preparations for opening the new yacht club

There was very little time left by the summer season of 2004. Barely a few months. But the wish to show what a yacht club in Haapsalu should look like was big. The reconstruction project for the former food-canning factory and later the glass factory was drawn up at lightning speed. The concept of marina building-yacht club was ready for a long time already. What would someone arriving to the marina by sea need? First of all a place at the wharf and safe mooring, then straight to the pub for a welcome-drink and a fine meal. For some reason, all the Estonian marina pubs are at high places and mainly with a view on the dry land. My marina pub must be as close to the sea as possible, so that the way from the wharf to the pub door between the red and the green light would be as easy as it can be. Supplying the stock must be as easy as having a drink or a meal, so there must be a store nearby, because a boat bar may never dry out completely!

In addition, washing facilities, club space and a shelf for exchange books, a conference room, sauna, a small laundry and accommodation facilities.

It’s as easy as that! It would be good to have something unique as well. In my marina you can find uniqueness in an original freight hoist that reminds you of the original function of the house, and a solid wood dance floor with the stage that the skilled carpenters of Haapsalu, led by a long-distance sailor Arne Tuisk, put their heart and soul into. The visitors have also been fascinated by a later addition – the weather stone.

Haapsalu construction company “Ehto“ led by Raivo Raudsepp can work miracles and the house was finished in two months! I guess the man was attracted to sea then already and realized that he was actually building a marina for his own future boat.

However, things did not go smoothly all the time. Since the land surveying and registration was a confusing business at the time and the corresponding laws were changed simultaneously, then in order to have the plots registered properly the decision was made to leave one existing wharf to one plot and another one to the other plot. As a result the wharfs and plots went to different owners, but nobody bothered to make a fuss about it since Lääne Kalur allowed the neighbours from Haapsalu Yacht Club to use its wharf and land for free.

With the change of ownership the situation, too, changed and for some reason, the yacht club belonging to Kurmet Ossip started to think that the previous agreements with Lääne Kalur were still in force and that the wharf belonged to him undisputedly. The theory was supported by the argument that the wharf was not attached to land! That it had been a separate wharf from the very beginning, standing in the sea, something like in England where people wait for the tides. However, the municipality did not share that opinion. The disputes began, leading nowhere, naturally, whereas according to my lawyer the yacht club contested “everything that could be moved”.

At the same time, to end the disputes, I was offered to buy the yacht club, but my interest in that object had already subsided and the threats from the yacht club council chairman, an ex-judge Harri Ots to keep contesting everything simply went in at one ear and out at the other.

Then the Health Protection Inspectorate and the Rescue Board were sent to check on us. Our ventilation, one of the biggest, the best, the most expensive and the most powerful ventilations in Haapsalu, was allegedly not suitable; that we wouldn't get an approval before a private enterprise engaged in health protection have not provided a paid consultation.

All this nonsense was witnessed by an army of officials whose primary task seemed to be making sure that the new marina would not be ready for work by the beginning of the season. Nobody seemed to take any interest in the fact that the ventilation system in the neighboring yacht club consisted of only two holes in the wall.

Yet, there were people who supported the new marina and the deputy mayor of Haapsalu, Jüri Kurba and the city secretary Erko Kalev did everything they could so that on the opening day of the Hanko-Haapsalu Regatta the marina had all the necessary acknowledgments and certificates and the new yacht club was ready to let its opening bells chime!

(Part 2, beginning in Navigaator 3/2007)

How I built a marina in Haapsalu

In Part 2 of the story Viktor Siilats, the owner of the Haapsalu Grand Holm Marina tells us about the joys and also the worries he experienced when building up the new marina.

Text Viktor Siilats

In the previous issue of Navigaator I told about how the old and run-down Haapsalu yacht club offered me to buy it and how that unclosed deal gave me an idea to create a new one, my own.

Unexpectedly even to myself I discovered that the seaside town Haapsalu had no official marinas and that I had the honour to be the first to build one. The story of creating the first official marina stopped at the opening bells of the Grand Holm Marina...

Only few people know that while the cameras were flashing and the guests gathered were listening to the greeting speech, the fireplace makers were hammering in the last nails into the sheet copper fireplace hood and the cleaners were brushing up the club rooms.

Nothing new under this sun. The first Estonian private television channel EVTV was created in one month and the hosts of the opening programme who were carelessly leaning on a palm tree were actually holding that palm upright. To spend two months on building up a marina was actually even too much luxury.

Naming the Marina

I have already told before, why the marina was named Grand Holm Marina. To be brief, I wanted to call it Westmer Marina, but that name was not allowed, and the municipality came up with the idea of Suur-Holmi Marina. Then the national names committee appeared in the persons of a Tiit Sepp and his wife, informing us that Suur-Holmi Marina wouldn't do at all. A much better and prettier name would be the historical Veskiholm. The Sepp duo even expressed their hopes that one day I might restore the old mill, too.

Nonsense, the locals said. There had never been any mills, that was a new land, achieved by filling in the sea. And since all that farce seemed to drag on endlessly, it was easier to give the marina a name in English, rather than keep arguing with the officials about the Estonian one.

Difficulties with the aquatic area

Applying for the aquatic area for the marina became an issue in itself. I wrote a corresponding application to the Maritime Administration and they replied that this was not under their jurisdiction. That such issues belonged under the local governments. However, as soon as the Haapsalu municipality and the city council had determined the Suur-Holmi aquatic area, I got a note that this would not do and the municipality must determine other coordinates altogether.

I got the feeling that the old yacht club was trying to hinder me in any way possible. After all, the owners had threatened me that if I didn't buy it from them, they would cause me endless inconveniences, start numerous legal processes etc. No compromises would help in the meetings with the state representatives, since the task seemed to be to hinder the building of the new marina at any cost, rather than come to any agreements.

Thus, fighting on several fronts I discovered not only the dilettante absurdity of the legislation but also a very strange circumstance. Namely the Tallinn-originated owners of the neighboring yacht club, being so highly competent in legislation and having excellent contacts due to the council chairman being an ex-judge, had dedicated all their energy to destructive aims and sadly neglected most of the legal issues concerning their own club.

This knowledge gave me strength to overcome any obstacles in my way, because the day would come when the cup would be full to the brim and then the checkmate would be the simplest thing on earth.

Strange traders on our yard

There were other weird setbacks, too. On the request of the municipality we concentrated on the opening of Grand Holm Marina to the Hanko-Haapsalu Regatta arrival day. Hanko is the twin town of Haapsalu. The obligatory components of the Regatta included arrival, mooring, awarding prizes, dinner and on the day of departure, buying cheap Estonian alcohol to take it back to Finland. Opening and supplying the alcohol store of the marina was even more important and more difficult than opening the marina itself, but we managed to do that. I was more than surprised when on the closing day of the regatta a big white van arrived on the marina territory and started selling alcohol to the Finnish guests without saying anything. Our own shopkeepers were so intimidated by such egregious action they could not say anything.

Friendship is friendship, but business is business! And one has to protect their lessee's business as if it were his own, so that the lessee would be able to pay the lease in the future as well. But as to the friendship, I've seen it in the maritime days of Tallinn's twin town, Kotka, how your kinsfolk who'd pretended to be your best buddies, refused to sell you beer after the official hours had passed.

I've also seen how the Finnish police are called for when someone is trying to sell an invalid boat ticket at the queue in the port. All in all, a few words and the van vanished from our territory as quickly as it had appeared, and what was most interesting, the Finnish guests seemed to understand everything perfectly or at least they pretended they had.

The cook escapes through the window

Speaking about the lessees I should mention that the original concept of the marina was that the whole place would be run by a capable family from Haapsalu. Such a family, family Tõlk was found surprisingly quickly. The father of the family was working on catering on the big cruising ships and the daughter also had some experiences in service and trade. The corresponding company was formed quickly, the team was set up and the goods obtained. Together we racked our brains, putting together the menu and choosing the suitable interior. Our friends and acquaintances helped us to refine our choice of goods and soon our pub and shop offered besides Monastirkaja Izba also the best French, Italian and Spanish wines, which made our Swedish guests very happy.

The importer of these wines, the owner of AS Tridens, Juho Ojasoo personally gave us a training course on wines. I, too, took part there and I can't remember how it ended.

The only problem was with cooks. Finally it seemed the right person had been found: an older gentleman in a white uniform who had worked as a ship cook. He went, as it is customary, from table to table every now and then, asking about the food, but also to just talk.

Very soon the cook became aware of my person. Not as simply the owner of the marina, but also as a grateful listener, who to tell about his craft. And I believed him until I happened to order veal one fateful evening, and discovered to my horror that the cook just didn't know how to prepare it. By that time he'd become my "good buddy": "See, look at those two there! Guest artists. Well, pickpockets. From Tallinn. The girls came to check the playground earlier in the day already, but those guys arrived in the evening with a sure plan already. Just look at how they're watching! Obviously professionals! Soon they'll get down to action, no question there. Let's keep an eye on them..."

The next day, when I went to ask Helen Tõlk whether the cook was alright, she told me she didn't know, that the cook had just escaped through the kitchen window, leaving all his utensils behind.

We haven't seen that cook ever since, but family Tõlk managed to quickly find him a replacement and despite the incidents the season could continue well enough.

Later, due to the wish to offer something extraordinary in the marina, the family Tõlk was replaced by Carmen Catering OÜ from Tallinn and we have worked with them for several years and the gourmet food of whom is widely known to be of high quality.

Nevertheless the efficient Tõlks have written their name in the history of Grand Holm Marina.

31 anonymous phone calls on Midsummer's Eve

So, quietly arranging the business matters it was soon Midsummer's Eve. The first Midsummer's Eve in the newly opened marina. The whole staff made preparations for the evening grill party, including the marina captain Valdo Kivi, who among other things has obtained experience driving President Lennart Meri's boat and managing Paslepa marina, and was now carefully considering, where to have the fire, because the territory was too small.

I was sitting in the marina, on the deck of my boat, enjoying an afternoon drink, when my mobile phone rang. A call from an undisclosed number. A very rare thing these days, but still: sometimes the phone does not show the number of someone calling from abroad.

I picked up and heard a weird-sounding voice:

"Pederast! Fuck you!"

And they hung up. After a while a new call and the same words, and then again and again.

For a change, they called my name and then in high-pitched voice: "Fag!"

Altogether a couple of dozen times!

I must admit that this kind of expressions usually used by the anonymous commentators on Delfi.ee and also Kipper.ee forums, that were as if to test my so-far conservative sexual orientation, sounded pretty vile on the phone.

Ever since the Soviet times I've hated all the authors of anonymous letters, the informers and such.

Who could it be? The calls were very short, but in the background I still heard the same music that was coming from the old yacht club. Even the distorted voice sounded somewhat familiar.

And it didn't take long until the phone all of a sudden started to display the caller's number. How can someone be so stupid and use their everyday-phone for such things?

And here's a little tip for the anonymous callers: never administer alcohol or psychotropic substances when on such a serious mission, otherwise you'll simply forget whether the caller's ID is switched on or off.

Altogether my phone registered 31 of these calls.

The next day, which, as we know, is a holiday, my phone rings again and the caller ID shows: Kurmet Ossip, the owner and chairman of the board of AS Haapsalu Jahtklub (the old yacht club). I hadn't heard anything from Kurmet ever since he tried to foil the purchase of the Grand Holm Marina plot (see previous issue of Navigaator, 3/2007).

Our dear chairman of the board is talking about something and I cannot make anything out of it. He mentions his property and something else as well.

Finally I interrupted his speech: "Kurmet, if you wanted to apologize for these thirty one anonymous calls, then say so, but otherwise we have nothing to talk about."

Kurmet hung up quickly.

Everyday-joys of the marina

The life in the marina went on as it usually does. The boats came and went, some stayed for longer, some guests were a good conversation.

With our guests we studied the old sea maps that I had used when sailing far away and that were now hanging on the yacht club walls to see the routes our visitors had taken. Sometimes doing so brought about a happy realization that we'd been at the same places, perhaps even at the same time, at the same marinas and the same pubs. It's almost eight years now that I have been pretending to be that Estonian Hemingway spoke about – the one you can meet in all the different ports of the world and all the flags in Grand Holm Marina are from my own different boats.

Very often they asked me whether an investment like a marina was worth it.

Naturally, a block of flats would be more profitable. But if the person who asked that saw a family arriving from Finland, all cold and shivering and ready to see the sea from a totally different perspective through the sauna window, these questions cease immediately.

Once an open RIB-speedboat (inflatable boat) arrived. Ten people on board. After mooring nobody moved for quite some time. Then, after a while their frozen fingers started to move again one by one, until their hands were finally free from the seat handles.

If you've been in a similar situation, looking for a safe harbor, mooring in the storm, hoping for warmth, then there's nothing that can compete with the feeling you get from offering people all that which you've needed and had yourself at one time or another.

Some locals who go sailing have been wondering why our captain is acting funny and going out on his own inflatable boat to meet the guests in order to see them to their mooring spots.

But there's nothing worse than the Estonian sailing culture, where the notion of Sunday sailing is nearly inexistent. "The old fish", who are familiar with the local conditions, can manage their small and primitive sports boats just fine when they're sober, but many "floating summer cottages" arrive in Estonia with a crew of two only, not having six or seven people on board. These two are so exhausted from the long rocking that they want to see the mooring spot as quickly as possible and also get there safe. Moreover, in the windy Tagalaht (Back Bay) of Haapsalu the bow often starts to play tricks even when the buoy has already been caught. And in most places in the world, except for the big part of Estonia, people get help on the mooring.

There's also a practical side to it: in Estonia the third-party liability insurance and therefore, however capable that person may consider themselves, the marina captain must ensure that the other vessels remain intact. For the same reason it is not allowed to move only by sail in the marina. Again, in the best spots in Europe things have been arranged so that the inflatable boat shows the way, pushes and pulls the bow, passes on and receives the moorings etc, and therefore we have no need to invent the bicycle, we simply need to go (that is, drive or sail) around and learn.

Things finally start to work out

The Marina's second year of operation also brought along the Estonian name for the marina. I think the family Sepp's name committee was dissolved and thus another obstacle was removed from the way of Suur-Holmi Marina.

Winning the court case over the aquatic area took until the third year. It appeared that there were no waterways or canals in Haapsalu Tagalaht and that the canal which was used in Czar Peter I era and through which the ships accessed Haapsalu through Noarootsi, had collapsed in the 20th or the 19th century. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications refused to execute the binding judgment. But in the long run even this obstacle was overcome, although it is known that a one-man amendment is planned to the law in order for the old yacht club to still have the upper hand.

Every now and then Haapsalu yacht club used to sue us, in order to have our activity licence revoked, but all the court sessions ended the same way: the opposing party never showed up and always kept the reasons for not showing up to themselves; therefore, the court did not start to review the matter. However, that did not hinder our neighbours from filing a new action, so that they could again not turn up.

Caution, the neighboring yacht club is filming us!

By the fourth season everything seemed to work just fine and there were no problems, until we made an interesting discovery: some boats sailing under German flags simply passed through our aquatic area we had fought for several years, and moored at the neighboring yacht club's wharf that had no authorization for use.

It could not have been about the price that was 100 kroons cheaper, which our neighbor could allow due to illegal operating and the lack of necessary investments.

Looking deeper into the matter we found out that a German had posted a description on his website, characterizing Grand Holm Marina as follows:

"In the tastefully furnished office of the Marina Captain you'll find Herr Kapitän himself: wearing old and worn slippers, a dirty T-shirt, beard unshaved, and proudly shows his guests the security of his marina. He zooms the camera on one of the boats where in the aft a

carelessly dressed young woman is having her morning coffee. The zoom is so powerful that even the label on the marmalade jar can be read. Then the camera moves over the bow of the boat, revealing an unmade bed...”

It was really frustrating for me to read this. Of course the captain is given a polite special uniform and of course he can be seen in oily work clothes, when he's working on the wharf or launching a boat. A bad thing that he happened to become the main character in the German travel guide. I should have been more demanding myself! I spoke about it with the captain and he agreed to pay more attention to his appearance in the future. Fine, but is there nothing better to do in Haapsalu than playing with the camera, monitoring our female guests and their beds and showing these to our foreign guests?

At this point my usually rather calm captain started to justify himself very vehemently. And he did that by giving me a very interesting and also absolutely final argument: our camera doesn't have a zoom at all and from this hazy big picture it shows you can barely recognize the boats, nothing more.

Of course! I should have known it better than anyone else, since it was me who had this used and ancient camera installed. Just for the record, we have a better and more modern one in use today.

So I wrote that German and promised that in the future we'll have the captain put on the parade uniform for a couple of hours every day so that he can meet the guests and I received the reply that I had got everything the wrong way. That he had described our captain in his brand new clothes, shiny white Helly Hansen T-shirt, while he, a German sailing enthusiast, was dressed in torn jeans and worn slippers, feeling rather uncomfortable.

We read the story again together with some specialists, after which I still had to contact the German to say that one had to be Goethe himself in order to understand the story as he'd meant it; besides, what was it about the zoom?

First the German tries to evade the subject, but then swears that he saw this zooming with his own eyes. Then, having heard that we have no zoom at all, he admits that he might have been wrong and quickly changes his travelogue.

But there's no smoke without fire! Very soon our employees notice that someone from the neighboring yacht club, a former border guard Toivo Rohtla is recording our captain's activities with a video camera.

Nothing to do with such people, the captain is a bit upset, but no big deal.

Until one day I notice that Rohtla is filming me, my family, my friends.

What we eat and what we drink. Disgusting! And although I hate spies and although this kind of action is a serious offence and although everyone in Haapsalu knows that Rohtla is stalking us and claims to have over three hours of recordings about me, I cannot do anything about the man who allegedly goes fishing with Haapsalu police, nobody can.

But at least that zooming-story got all sorted out, because that German stopped at the old yacht club and that's probably where they demonstrated him the doings of our guests.

What will the future bring?

Jokes aside, a couple of times a week some German boats happened to arrive at our marina, whereas the marina captain and wharf boys offering their help were often turned down. At best we were simply ignored, at worst called names.

That, however, never hindered these yachts from demanding fuel and other services from us the next day.

No idea, whether the reasons were the rumors about Grand Holm Marina zooming scandal, the instructions of that German or the fascinating legend the local yachtsmen told about the old yacht club's "one hundred years of history", saying it originated from the days of the fishing-kolkhoz and telling stories about their fathers and grandfathers having "for decades" stood front of the yacht club on the boat bridge that was actually set up illegally only three years ago.

Let me hereby remind you that those legendary yachtsmen had throughout the times stood on the wharf in front of Grand Holm Marina, just like the yachts visiting Haapsalu. I have personally cleared the seafloor after, or rather – under them and therefore remember it very well.

Anyway, since the Maritime Administration had the navigation markings removed at the old yacht club because there was no public waterway, the Germans began to run ashore on mud and stones. Of course nobody blamed the old yacht club and Toivo Rohtla, who were putting the yachts to danger, but Suur-Holmi marina, who tried to warn the yachts trespassing the marina without permission, also making futile attempts to explain the Estonian legislation to them.

Since there was no help to be expected from any of the authorities, we gave up in the end and started to carry out the project that had been approved by the municipality and was now sitting on the desk unused because of our stupid hope to comply with these four or five local yachtsmen and grant them a passageway to our neighbours.

The project was magnificent and would after completion offer the marina protection from the waves and add thirty more mooring spots to the seventy we already had. The plans include building a hotel, a slipway that would become a theatre or concert hall during the summer and many other things.

Having had invested more than ten million kroons into Haapsalu, I've recently started to have doubts whether it was a sensible idea after all.

The deputy mayor Toivo Hein, who approved the much-discussed landing stage, has later on said to the media that my activities put Haapsalu to shame in the eyes of our foreign visitors.

Never have the remains of a wooden wharf or a rusty electric hoist that ruin the view of Haapsalu nor the dangerous wooden balcony hanging over the water at our neighbor's yacht club earned such a harsh criticism.

Life has shown that it is wiser to do nothing and simply wait until the prices of the cheaply obtained properties go up.

Should I, in the light of all this, sell my marina after all? Because by buying or creating something new, one is bound to gain new enemies only. And it seems that these very same Finnish yachtsmen who came to me in Helsinki and Hanko, convincing me that Haapsalu needs quick and radical changes, aren't actually ready for these changes. It seems they want to see Haapsalu as a cheap, Soviet and decaying backwater, where the toilets stink and the drain at the showers does not work properly. That would provide our visitors long topics for discussion and fun-making and that altogether sums up as a fine and extreme travel experience.

Yet, does any of this strike me as news or a surprise?

Besides, by doing and creating things one can also gain new friends! Recreational sailing in Haapsalu is on the way of revival again, Grand Holm Marina receives more and more local vessels every day.

It's about us, no question there. These new yachtsmen may be doing their first miles on the sea, they do not know all the knots or are not very familiar with Neptune yet. But they really go out to the sea every day, rather than cry for the lost kolkhoz-times.

But the future belongs to them, because they are real, their eyes sparkle and there is this feeling of solidarity between them. And the skills can be acquired quickly, I know that from my own personal experience.

Looking for the border checkpoint

For the guests arriving to Haapsalu by yacht or boat this summer the situation is rather sad: on the wharfs and home page of the town's only marina there are big signs in red – the marina will be closed for this season. Why? The reasons are brought out below.

Prologue

Suur-Holmi Marina wishes to apply for a port certificate and therefore summons the government committee. The committee comes to Suur-Holmi Marina and issues a few precepts that must be met before the marina can be declared open for ship traffic. The Marina meets these precepts, except for one: to grant the access to the international border inspection and checkpoint through the aquatic area. Suur-Holmi firmly declares: there is no checkpoint neither at Suur-Holmi marina nor the neighboring plots, and never has been and therefore this order cannot be executed.

What is the truth? Navigaator starts to look into the matter.

1) From the Annex 3 of the Regulation of the Government of the Republic on “The Border Checkpoints Open for International Traffic”, that the location of Haapsalu checkpoint is Haapsalu marina (entered into force on March 30, 2008).

2) Since the annex does not provide the address of Haapsalu marina, we search the Port Register of the Maritime Administration, as on March 31, 2008. There is no marina under that name in Haapsalu. There are three ports – the Port of Haapsalu, Suur-Holmi Marina and Westmer Port and to our knowledge only Suur-Holmi Marina is a marina and a guest port.

3) Is the checkpoint located at the Port of Haapsalu, the name of which is somewhat similar? We ask from the Border Guard Administration and receive a reply that the checkpoint open for international ship traffic is located at the address of Holmi 14. That is not the address of the Port of Haapsalu.

4) Our data is absolutely different. In order to confirm these, we read from the Riigi Teataja that at the address of Holmi 14 there is Veskiviigi Port of Haapsalu, still in the planning stage and cannot therefore be opened for ship traffic as yet.

Can it really be that a checkpoint open for international traffic is situated in a non-existent port?

5) We decide to visit the spot and verify the existence of the checkpoint, since only one's own eyes are to be trusted. Before that we check from the State Borders Act, what a checkpoint must be like. From the § 10 clause 1 we can read that a checkpoint is “a delimited and marked part of a road section or water body, or of the construction works and territory of a railway station, airport, river, lake or seaport which is open for international traffic and where border control and other control related to border crossing is performed.”

6) We set out on the search for “a delimited and marked part of the construction works and territory.”

7) Nothing. Even at Holmi 14 we cannot find anything resembling a checkpoint. We ask from the local sailors who say that in the previous years the border control has been formalized at the Border Guard cordon and that only in exceptional cases the officials have come elsewhere to formalize the papers.

8) Inquiries to the Border Guard Administration confirm our impression of nothingness. They tell us that “the Border Guard has no space of their own at Haapsalu Marina.” The formalizing and checking takes place on the vessel coming in or going out of the marina.

Hmh, but as far as we know, Haapsalu yacht club has neither a marina nor a yacht club building. What is the Border Guard’s knowledge that the marina is the yacht club port at Holmi 14 based on – are these the data from the days of the fishing kolkhoz?

The question arises, whether the Board Guard do not know the location of the checkpoint or they do not want to certify the place where they have been formalizing the border crossings for years? It would be exciting to know when and for what reason they last visited the Haapsalu yacht club and how many formulations they are planning to make in the next 10 years under the conditions of the Schengen visa regime.

9) Since we haven’t found any checkpoint so far, our eyes turn to the Suur-Holmi Marina as the only marina here... and hooray! Have we really discovered the checkpoint????!!!

The story of hijacking a port

From the tales of adventure we have read about the pirates hijacking ships. Hijacking of entire ports is quite rare. The most famous case of Estonians hijacking a port was the destruction of the city Sigtuna by the men from Saaremaa. Therefore an attempt at hijacking in Haapsalu nowadays sounds even more incredible, although this is the reason why the marina that operated successfully for four seasons, was closed to the sailors this summer.

The owner of the Grand Holm Marina, Viktor Siilats reveals the backstage events of the Marina issues.

Text Viktor Siilats

It all started with one phone call.

“Viktor, who do I have to turn to when I want to come to Haapsalu by my boat?”

The caller was Tõnis Palts.

“Probably to that guy,” I replied.

“What guy?”

“Well, the one you were telling those long stories in front of the whole Riigikogu, of course.”

“Oh, I had no idea you’d heard about that. I’m very sorry indeed!”

“Alright, come then and contact the marina captain prior to your arrival on the radio channel twelve.”

As a remark: when protecting the possible additional income of the Maritime Administration officials by being in the examination board of the courses for skippers of recreational vessels, Palts made me an example of bad yachtsman, placing my sailing abilities in doubt in front of

Riigikogu. For more on this and also the painful road of building a marina in Haapsalu, see previous issues of Navigaator (4/2006, 3/2007, 4/2007, see www.ajakirinavigaator.ee), and also the home page of Grand Holm Marina at www.grandholmharina.ee.

Palts and Parts come to visit

Anyway, after this call Palts' yacht Karmen became a frequent and most welcome guest at Grand Holm Marina.

Last year, one day in August Palts' boat was moored at the marina at the same wharf that later proved a cause for several problems, together with the Minister of Economic Affairs and Communications, Juhan Parts, and the members of their party on board. At that time, the Minister was not bothered by the non-existent waterway or the wharf allegedly blocking the non-existent checkpoint, nor even the fact that Grand Holm Marina was offering her services without a port certificate approved by the Minister.

"Viktor, do you think the state should support small ports financially?" Palts asked me in the presence of the minister.

At that moment I had absolutely no idea that this was a trap.

I said that I had made all the investments myself and did not need any support from the state. But to be honest, a small port cannot really make ends meet. So it's more just a pretty toy.

"Juhan, what do you think, if the state supported the small ports financially?" Palts kept asking Parts.

The Minister answered that he does not support the idea of subsidizing private enterprises, since that would inhibit the free development of economy.

It seems the Minister must have changed his views over the evening and the hospitality of Grand Holm Marina got paid by the political concept that Haapsalu marina was a nice place, only the owner seemed to be the wrong man.

The ex-mayor of Haapsalu, Teet Kallasvee, who five summers ago coaxed me into investing in Haapsalu, explained it as follows: the elections for local governments were coming and Haapsalu was one of the few towns their party has control over. That by allocating the sudden financial support to the development of small ports would ensure them another victory.

Very soon the mayor of Haapsalu, Ingrid Danilov, told me that it was nice of me to invest in Haapsalu marina at the time when nobody dared to do so, but now their "own people" of Haapsalu had taken interest in marina managing and that I was probably about to face several problems.

Ours and theirs

"Ours", as it appeared, were the competitor in boat selling, Sulev Paakspuu (AS Bellboats) and the party companions of Parts and Palts, Aivar Reivik and Arvo Oorn from AS Volta.

Previously, the owners of the neighboring plot to my marina had warned me that if I did not buy the former yacht club building and the corresponding plot right away, they would sell it to the very powerful people who would put my marina business to an end. My reply, as to any blackmailing attempts was, that I was not interested in that kind of discussion. Besides, the water area in front of the former fishing-kolkhoz yacht club building was very low and therefore unsuitable for a marina and the yacht club as an institution was long inactive. The only thing remaining was a run-down pub Kessu's.

Nevertheless, the owners of the neighboring plot seem to have power and energy. As the chairman of the Freedom Monument Foundation, Reivik has that close access to the decision-

makers, that both the unexpected support programme for the small ports and also the changes in the maritime acts serve him just fine and even enable him to retroactively finance the purchase of his plot from the support funds.

Then the scenario familiar from the 1940s was applied, where the owner of the property was ridiculed and called the public enemy and was deprived of his property. All that so the one coveting his property might keep it for himself. Cynical demagoguery in the arbitrary interpretations of victory and freedom served as effective means in manipulating the sea-ignorant public.

The public relations manager of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, Gea Otsa, was ordered to organize a massive media attack. And where else would she turn to than her previous workplace, the office of "Äripäev" where she was remembered kindly under the name of Gea Velthut-Sokka. Äripäev, that has never been interested in the problems of thousands of recreational boat owners, all of a sudden published a three-page-story with emotional photos and aggressive front page, the main content of which was the concern over whether the five yachtsmen from Haapsalu can sail straight to Kessu pub in the future or will they have to stand where they did in the recent past and walk those 50 metres on foot. The economic newspaper, that had so far advocated fair and honest tax paying, all of a sudden took a vehemently protective position towards black economy and tax-exempt income that the owners of the neighboring plot were illegally earning from their wharf without authorization for use. At the same time Gea Otsa skillfully managed to censor her ex-colleagues and thus there is not one syllable about the fact that Reivik's business partner, Arvo Oorn is accidentally the father of the spouse of the Deputy Secretary General of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Eero Pärasmäe.

The ex-mayor of Haapsalu, Teet Kallasvee and his party companion Andres Ammas managed to convince Andrus Karnau, the business editor of the newspaper Lääne Elu (a share of which belongs to Ammas), that he would raise many complicated issues concerning maritime business in his current and also the previous publications.

The whole business was supported by a competitor Paakspuu's boat tester Priit Veski (under the pseudonym PriitV) and his supply manager Indrek Orav (under the pseudonym Indrek66), whose task was to represent "indignant crowd".

Accusations started to pour down from the storm clouds over my head: Siilats has blocked the shipping lane, the waterway, the marina, the border checkpoint etc. The aim was to give the public the impression as if there was another marina next to mine, having been a marina far longer and being now a place where the good old yachtsmen from Haapsalu were now trapped. And in addition the readers who had not seen the navigation charts were misled by telling them about a navigable channel that should continue that way and that it was only my fault that the historical yawl could not sail to the front of the Rannarootsi Museum.

It didn't take long until Reivik offered through media to purchase my marina, hoping to obtain it for a cheap price.

Yet, there's no smoke without fire. A long time ago the fishing kolkhoz Lääne Kalur really did dredge both their port and also the gateway to their port, which I as their legal successor bought from them. Unfortunately that dredge did not lead to any other ports and the story that this dredge belongs to the townspeople or yachtsmen, is far from truth: the property of the fishing kolkhoz was a collective property, as we all know, therefore belonging to the members of the kolkhoz, and they had already received their remuneration.

Don't you try to write anything down!

Approximately the following conversation took place this spring in the office of the Secretary General of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications (MEAC). The participants recorded it for the protocol, that, however, never came to be, since the "son-in-law of my new neighbor simply forbade it.

The aim of the meeting was to create with about a half-a-year' delay the marina that I had allegedly been blocking since last autumn, that is, the new Veskiiviigi marina.

There were three different options under discussion: the first and the most expensive one for the state was to create the Veskiiviigi marina and reduce the existing Grand Holm Marina belonging to me, for the benefit of the new marina. The second option was to create Veskiiviigi marina and dig a gateway that would meet the necessary requirements around Grand Holm Marina. The third option, the cheapest and totally problem-free for the state would have been to create that Veskiiviigi marina and let the new owners take care of their gateway, as it has been customary in Estonia so far.

So, let's have a look into the council room to see what is going on there.

Around the council table are seated the Secretary General of the MEAC, Marika Priske, the Deputy Secretary General ("son-in-law") Eero Pärasmäe, the director of the department, Aivo Lind, a lawyer Gerli Lootus and the chief specialist Gerli Koppel. From the Maritime Administration, the director general Andrus Maide and his deputy in maritime safety, Rene Sirol, who is also the chairman for the Committee of (Not) Opening Ports for Shipping Traffic, are present.

In the times very difficult for the Estonian economic situation the top officials discuss a most important economic problem:

The Director General of the Maritime Administration, Mr. Maide starts with a lengthy speech, criticizing the present legislation, according to which every marina, regardless of its size, must apply for an independent aquatic area. The director general has obviously forgotten that all the legislative initiative proceeds from the Maritime Administration itself, therefore he is actually criticizing the typically rather stupid system that the Maritime Administration has come up with.

Maide's language is quite interesting, spiced with the humor typical to Hiiumaa, I guess, the best "pearls" being something like: "When we haven't been presented anything, then we have no idea what we have not been presented." Or: "See, here's this so-to-say natural canal that the fishermen once dug themselves."

Gerli Koppel: "I have a few questions to the Maritime Administration: You require approval for the hydro-technical work. I asked Erik Noor (surveillance department for ports) and he told me that if Siilats gave you this drawing for approval and he does not draw these boats here, you would approve the drawing without further remarks."

Rene Sirol: "We could do that, today, yes, his aquatic area reaches to that point and if he doesn't draw the boats and says that the space between the boats shall be this and that much, and we can see that maneuvering would not be problematic, there would be no reason for us not to approve it."

Gerli Koppel: "Did you ask him to do that, then?"

Rene Sirol: "Well, yes, we did, but he can tell us anything, like, he'd put the 12-metre ones there and so there would be enough space and there's nothing to do, then."

Andrus Maide: “Siilats knows very well that he has to grant that passageway! Therefore it cannot be approved without ships. But since I don’t work at the surveillance department for ports...”

Eero Pärasmäe (the Deputy Secretary General and the son-in-law): “These arguments Andrus brought out, that the passageway through the aquatic area has to be granted, have these been written down in any legal acts?”

Gerli Koppel: “No, not yet. They’re in the draft.”

Andrus Maide: “I have no idea how this is regulated... That means, it’s yet not explicated...”

And even though the present laws do not require the wharfs to be approved by the Maritime Administration and the surveillance department for ports has seemingly no arguments for not approving these wharfs, the Maritime Administration, by the orders of its Director General, did not approve the wharfs of Grand Holm Marina, requiring these to be completed first

Gerli Koppel: “How much is that dredging about 150-200 thousand? Is that only dredging or also the transporting depositing of the mud?”

Andrus Maide: “We don’t know that yet. In one of the conversations Siilats claimed, yes, that he would do it for 200 thousands. I don’t know what data he was relying on, but this is a speculative approach. I don’t know. I think it was Pärnu dredging pump that made that offer but we don’t know, it’s not that simple and I see no need in digging it.”

Gerli Koppel: “Veskiviigi Marina also claimed that this dredging would not prove too expensive. The only issue is that dredging is not possible until July, because of the fish.”

Andrus Maide: “And what would it be like in the future, someone else makes an aquatic area next to Veskiviigi, does the state then have to keep digging canals? If someone wishes to create an aquatic area, then creating the gateway to the port should be only the owner’s concern... !!!”

Long silence follows. The honorable Director General and everyone else have probably understood that this statement went totally wrong. Of course the creating of Veskiviigi gateway should be the concern of the marina owners and the state should neither interfere nor bear any expenses. It seems, the Director General of the Maritime Administration has spoken for the most sensible and cheapest option for the state!

But he composes himself very quickly.

Andrus Maide: “But what would happen, when Siilats’ coordinates were to be withdrawn? Nothing! The court case is inevitable anyway. Well, I... It’s just the same, what he will file an action for. That would just settle it.”

The conversation then concentrates on whether the idea of allegedly blocking the actually inexistent checkpoint could be used as an excuse to decrease Grand Holm Marina aquatic area and close down the marina.

Gerli Koppel: “The question here is, whether the Ministry of Internal Affairs will have an official recourse or the director of the Border Guard will not make a decision at all to make it official, this granting an access to that Haapsalu marina which is, like, a checkpoint open for international ship traffic. But unfortunately he called it Haapsalu Marina, not Veskiviigi... But that would be a very good argument for us.”

Unfortunately, although the director of Haapsalu Border Guard did play along in the beginning and misled even the Secretary General of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, regardless of the Schengen Area, the journalists from Navigaator, despite their efforts, did not manage to find neither Haapsalu marina nor the checkpoint there. No checkpoint was to be found at the neighbours of Grand Holm Marina, either. Then intervened the Minister of

Internal Affairs and it didn't take two months until the checkpoint was declared a mistake in the resolution of the Government of the Republic. Near the end of the summer the Haapsalu border inspection post was closed down altogether. The reason: lack of border-crossings. On searching for the Haapsalu border checkpoint, read the 2/2008 issue of Navigaator Navigaatorist (2/2008) or see www.grandholmmarina.ee

Meanwhile, the meeting continued in full swing.

Gerli Koppel: "One legal question: let's assume we proceed with option 1 and by the order of the Republic cut off that piece of his aquatic area. Suppose he does not remove his landing stage right away. Could the Maritime Administration then do it? Could we then remove it in order to grant the access to the other marina?"

Rene Sirol: "No, not directly by force, like you go there and..."

Andrus Maide: "I mean, when we've finished this (ed: the aquatic area of the new marina), two owners should have a say in this. That other one there, the previous owner, he didn't protest anything. When that (ed: new) aquatic area is established, it would be blocking and that's already between two owners and then the police has the right to interfere."

Eero Pärasmäe: "Domestic quarrel!"

Andrus Maide: "Solving of the domestic quarrel. And if you ask me, Veski viigi should now seize the initiative, because when it is blocked... it is obvious case of blocking and how to solve... all these cases are solved the same way."

Rene Sirol: "He had the right to place the wharf there, since he has the aquatic area, but he is not allowed to use it!"

Gerli Koppel: "But in the reality the marina has been operating, although having no permission. What have you done about that?"

Rene Sirol: "Nothing at the moment."

Andrus Maide: "You put it down nicely, that it would end badly."

Rene Sirol: "There was a time when the port of Tallinn operated the same way. What are we supposed to do?"

Gerli Koppel: "I know, that's our weakest argument, this principle of equal treatment."

Rene Sirol: "He should be lucky he was allowed to continue that long. He can't rely on that."

Gerli Koppel: "We can't rely on that."

Gerli Koppel: "Gerli, what do you think about this first option, the court?"

Gerli Lootus: "What sum would Viktor Siilats' claim amount to? How can he prove his claim?"

Marika Priske: "If he does not have the permission to operate as a marina and keep boats there, then there is no basis for any claims. What loss of profit could we speak about then?"

Gerli Koppel: "Very many ports have operated without the port certificate."

Eero Pärasmäe: "But they've never placed any claims either."

Gerli Koppel: "But they could..."

(giggling)

Andrus Maide: "Let's say, so far the general attitude has been tolerant, but when you start placing your claims, you have nothing to claim, since you have no basis for income, actually. To show that you've made investments for 16 millions – at least not in that aquatic area, definitely not. But nevertheless, how much would that be?"

Rene Sirol: "But he's bluffing!"

Andrus Maide: "Even if it is necessary to pay a part of this, it's much healthier..."

Eero Pärasmäe: "...than to dig a new canal."

Andrus Maide: “The matter with the digging is, you only get to one marina. If there were 3 or 4 more... Perhaps then the public waterway would continue that far.”

Gerli Koppel: “Why did you remove that navigation sign?”

Rene Sirol: “Because the public shipping lane ends right there.”

Andrus Maide: “At the moment.”

Rene Sirol: “Because of this situation.”

Andrus Maide (laughing): “According to Siilats, and it’s also been in the press that the waterway ends right there. It ended, when the Government of the Republic placed the aquatic area right in front of it.”

Gerli Koppel: “At the time nobody thought of the checkpoint being there after all?”

Andrus Maide: “At the time the owners were very passive. They, too, should have done something there. The question with the pontoon is not that the Maritime Administration will go and remove it by force, but the rearward owner will say that his movement is restricted. We can only help to remove it if such a decision is issued.”

Eero Pärasmäe: “I still do not represent the owner, I am still the Deputy Secretary General here, thank you!”

(all-round giggling)

Eero Pärasmäe: “My only interest is that all this crap would come to an end quickly.”

Gerli Koppel: “This crap is just about to start!”

Andrus Maide: “Three options and in any case someone will file an action. And Siilats will do that anyway, regardless of the option. Therefore my choice would still be option 1.”

Gerli Koppel: “I also like this option 1 the best.”

Andrus Maide: “That’s a sure thing.”

Someone tries to argue, predicting a court case lasting for three years. That every move will be sued and the initial legal protection will be applied for. The court may suspend the regulation.”

Andrus Maide: “Then let it be suspended, if nobody represents the next port there. Are we discussing the starting of operating of the next port or are we discussing the possible solutions to the present situation? If the Ministry has decided to decrease the area, then they would have no reason to take offence at the state. If Siilats contests that decision of the Government of the Republic... there’s nothing we can do about that. In that case, the dispute has to be between these very same... The two... And the state has done everything: allocated him coordinates and reduced the coordinates, taken the situation to legal basis, so that everyone would be treated equally. If we look at it from the viewpoint of the state, then the situation should be solved. If we concentrate on whether they can do anything, that goes beyond this table already. Then we’ll have to separately...”

Gerli Koppel: “With all the other options you’ll also go to court for three years, what’s the difference then.”

The other participants do not say much, including the Secretary General who is obviously influenced by the Director of the Maritime Administration. But the issue, whether Veskiiviigi marina will also be included in the legislative proceeding if the court suspends the regulation concerning the decreasing of Grand Holm Marina aquatic area, seems to be of general concern.

Meanwhile the Director of the Maritime Administration, who has as if seized control over the Ministry, declares self-forgetfully that the Ministry will include it, if necessary. Then the Government is also required to give a written reply!

Gerli Koppel: “Damn it, Veskiviigi marina cannot start operating with that wharf in the way!”
Eero Pärkmäe: “One thing is, that you go to court for three years, another, that you cannot start operating.”

Andrus Maide: “But you have to have a way home!”

Gerli Koppel: “That wharf must be removed!”

Andrus Maide and Rene Sirol together: “That’s it, then – domestic quarrel and the police.”

Andrus Maide: “The police will then remove that wharf. Because when the Government of the Republic lays down new borders, then these will withdraw. And at that moment the wharf must be removed!”

Meanwhile the council discovers an aquatic area called port of Haapsalu. It exists only in papers and has never operated as a port after its establishment. The water is too low there for navigation. But could that non-existent port be used as an excuse?

“Here’s another aquatic area from 1999. A port! Here you go, with the coordinates and everything!”

“It’s not a port, it’s only an aquatic area. It has not claimed any waterways.”

Andrus Maide: “It’s on a low spot at a dubious place. That was actually our argument, too – one port and another aquatic area, so the waterway should continue. If there had been nobody behind there, we wouldn’t have done anything either. So it develops, but the water to that aquatic area is only, like, knee-deep, as far as I know.”

Gerli Koppel: “We’ll have to find all the possibilities for Veskiviigi marina to start operating!”

Eero Pärkmäe : “In the public it would do good to mention that third port as well...”

The conversation then briefly touches upon the historical yawl, but the council then unanimously agrees that it doesn’t make any difference whether to call a historical vessel that was broken by drunk driving, is called a yawl, a yacht or a cog under construction – a low draught and the lack of keel allow these vessels to sail anywhere, so the argument of yawl probably cannot be used at all.

Eero Pärkmäe: “Let’s make up our minds now. I can understand we’ve reached a full consensus. Whereas I haven’t decided anything, so please no protocols. Don’t you try to write anything down!”

Andrus Maide: “He wasn’t even here!”

(giggling)

Eero Pärkmäe: “So we’ve reached the consensus to proceed with option 1.”

Gerli Koppel: “This draft for order must be done, but I have another question to Gerli, something that the State Chancellery also mentioned: can you substantiate this friction by the constitution?”

Gerli Lootus: “The court will say how substantiated this motivation is. Whether it is sufficient or insufficient. But it’s a job that has to be done, there’s no other way. The State Chancellery must agree!”

Gerli Koppel: “The State Chancellery usually does not initiate legislative proceedings. We’ll have to say For example, that something went wrong...”

Someone says that the aquatic area was allocated to him for business activities. That he was planning his business activities... But nobody pays any attention.

Gerli Koppel: “Then we’ve finished!”

Marika Priske: “Now, comrades, it’s been a pleasure! Constructive.”

Gerli Koppel: “Then let’s start drawing up that motivation. Can we count on your contribution?”

Gerli Lootus: “Arrangements shouldn’t be a problem; we’ll formalize it to DETERMINE not to revoke!”

Gerli Koppel: “Yes, yes, to determine new ones... annul the previous ones and determine the new ones.”

Domestic quarrel a la Haapsalu

After a while Minister Parts submits to the Government of the Republic the most disadvantageous option, that clearly includes the claim for losses – the option 1: to establish the aquatic area of Veski viigi marina and determine (decrease) the aquatic area of Grand Holm Marina.

But behold, the Government of the Republic rejects Parts’ draft resolution.

In a week’s time Parts submits basically the same draft again, but this, too, is rejected. Only on the third try Veski viigi Marina gets their aquatic area, only with the reservation that in determining the draught of the vessels to be served there, they have to take into consideration the already existing Grand Holm Marina. The aquatic area of Grand Holm Marina is not to be changed, revoked nor “re-determined”.

Immediately the “domestic quarrel” scenario is activated. The already familiar boat tester Priit Veski, whom the police caught stealing the guiding buoys for the landing stages last autumn, is the first this spring to “discover” with the help of divers that the anchors of the landing stage of Grand Holm Marina have shifted a little outside the aquatic area territory. Immediately the Veski viigi people start to “crash” into these anchors and naturally, they immediately inform the Marine Administration, who gladly issues a precept.

Although the brand new Veski viigi Marina has neither port certificate nor the authorization for the use of wharfs, it actively starts operating and the homepage of Haapsalu municipality advises the foreign guests to visit the under-construction Veski viigi – by jeopardizing their boats.

“This is not safe navigation!” the Swedish yachtsmen express their annoyance on their web pages and the number of visitors to Haapsalu decreases about ten times. At the same time, the running aground in the area increases drastically. Some German yachts avoiding Haapsalu run ashore at Voosi Kurk (Voosi Gullet), some are lured to the shallow by the confusing commercial of Haapsalu municipality, inviting people to enter the non-marked gateway to Veski viigi. Some run out of fuel on their way from Saaremaa to Tallinn, whereas earlier it was possible to fill the tank in Haapsalu. But our Border Guard does a good job saving everyone.

In the interests of the “domestic quarrel”, Lääne Elu writes about the incidents and the “heroism” of the marina captain of Veski viigi in solving these. The attitude is that of Armenian Komsomol: we create the problem and we try to solve it!

In the photo it can be seen how the local yachtsmen who were allegedly “trapped” last year and whom the Estonian public and also the officials so unanimously supported, and also a few brave foreign yachtsmen happily use Veski viigi Marina.

“We do not charge them any money, they give it to us,” the marina captain justifies the violation of the Ports Act by receiving no profit.

The committee led by Rene Sirol, who is already known to the readers, issues a legal instrument on the not opening of a port for shipping trade to Grand Holm Marina, but agrees after two months that the law would not facilitate such a decision.

Thereafter the Maritime Administration prolongs the approval of the wharfs until the end of summer and then does not approve them. At the same time the old landing stages with sunken

booms are approved at Veskiviigi. It is carefully observed that Grand Holm Marina, that meets all the requirements for safe mooring, would not offer any port services.

Therefore the marina is closed also to those in distress.

The 30 new and deep wharf spots designated specially for the yachtsmen stand empty the whole summer. After long and determined prolongation another, now already a legal instrument on the opening of a port for shipping trade is drawn up, but the Maritime Administration simply refuses to submit it to the Minister. On the orders of the Director General of the Maritime Administration the marina remains closed, although the law in effect does not really facilitate that, as the members of the council rightly noted. Perhaps one day the new one will.

At the same time most of the small ports in Estonia operate without the corresponding act and port certificate, but they are obedient and tame.

And so passes another summer season where both the state and town despite the difficult economic situation easily give up the money from tourism and also taxes. All that matters is that Grand Holm Marina would make no profit and would bear losses at any cost!

Haapsalu municipality sends a couple of more desperate letters to the Ministry, not with an aim to re-open their popular gateway, but to decrease the aquatic area of Grand Holm Marina for the benefit of Veskiviigi Marina, owned by “their own people”. The people from Veskiviigi express a similar wish. Unfortunately the Ministry that started the whole thing, replies now already negatively to these requests, putting the mayor and council of Haapsalu into a very stupid situation. The Government of the Republic decided that the aquatic area is to be given for longer than one year, since the payback period of investments into ports is a very long-term business.

Five years ago Haapsalu longed for a proper marina. As soon as it was finished, they started to wish for a new one immediately. It reminds you of a Russian fairy-tale of the Goldfish, where in the end the old woman is sitting by her broken wash-tub. Greed comes before a fall!