

**Mystic River Boathouse Park Implementation Committee  
Special Meeting Minutes  
Cisco Webex Virtual Meeting  
Monday, January 4, 2021  
6:00 p.m.**

The Stonington Mystic River Boathouse Park Implementation Committee held a special virtual meeting on this date, Monday, January 4, 2021 via Cisco Webex meeting platform.

Present were Nick Kepple, Chairman; Mike O'Neill, Vice Chairman, Breck Perkins, Tim O'Brien, Mike Crowley, Tom Switz, Farouk Rajab, Jim Kelley, Katherine Burchenal, Rick Broberg, Deb Downie, Stonington Board of Selectwomen liaison and Sandy Tissiere, Recording Secretary; as well as Chad Frost, Principal, Kent + Frost; Susan Cullen, Stonington Director of Economic and Community Development; Leanne Theodore, Stonington Director of Human Services; Richard Ward, Stonington Recreation Administrator, Stonington Human Services and Chris Gasiorek, Vice President of Watercraft Preservation and Programs  
Members Absent: Steve Planchon

1. **Call to order**

Chairman Nick Kepple called the meeting the order at 6:06 p.m.

2. **Pledge of Allegiance**

The group joined together for the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. **Seating of Alternates**

No alternates were seated.

4. **Comments from the Public**

There were not any public comments.

5. **Approval of minutes**

The minutes from the December 7, 2020 Regular meeting were presented for approval.

A motion was made by Farouk Rajab and seconded by Mike Crowley to approve the minutes of the December 7, 2020 Regular meeting as presented.

The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

6. **Correspondence**

There wasn't any correspondence.

7. **Old Business**

• **Discussion – Brownfield Grant application update**

Chairman Kepple reported the State of Connecticut bond commission voted to bond for about 9 million and it has been discussed that perhaps the project be scaled back and request less money. Chairman Kepple turned the floor over to Susan Cullen for explanation. Susan Cullen reported the State of Connecticut bond commission bonded for 9.5 million for the entire program and up to 1 million of that money is going to be set aside for assessment projects and assessment and remediation projects. Susan Cullen said the maximum request is 2 million dollars so the lower the amount that is requested to achieve what is needed will make us more competitive. The full application is due April 7, 2021. Susan Cullen said that she and Deb Downie will meet this week to do some value engineering and revisit the rubric and fine tune information. Susan Cullen said she will send the draft application to the committee prior to the next meeting for review.

• **Project Budget Update**

Chad Frost gave an update of the coastal project saying all the engineering assessments of the living shoreline prove it should work and there wasn't anything alarming that wouldn't allow it to be a feasible shoreline alternative.

Susan Cullen reported the assessment grant has been closed out before the December 31, 2020 deadline. Susan Cullen reassured the committee that other sources of funding for the park project is being worked on.

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- Discussion – Park Management Subcommittee Update

Chairman Kepple said the last subcommittee meeting was cancelled because more discussion was needed with the recreation department regarding use of the building. Leanne Theodore said there have been discussions within the human services and recreation department regarding different options for the use of the building. Leanne Theodore continued saying they are looking at being a great partner in programming specifically for use of the shore and outdoor programs but hadn't factored in the use of the house or the indoor space of the house. Rich Ward added he is very excited about the opportunities for programs and looks forward to working with everyone.

Kathryn Burchenal asked the question if it was too late to ask the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) if the shed could be kept instead of the house as it would be more useful. Breck Perkins answered the whole master plan would have to be redone if this was a consideration and it would be prohibitive. Mike O'Neill said there had been a lot of consideration of both structures and it was decided the house was the best structure to keep. Chairman Kepple said that SHPO was adamant about the keeping the house and the decision had been made; it is a necessary part of the project and the subcommittee will work on finding the best use for it within the park.

Rick Broberg asked about the plans for layout of the house. Mike O'Neill answered there are some ideas but the layout of the house can't be decided until the use of the house is determined.

Mike O'Neill suggested a small group go to Glastonbury to look at what they have done on their site as it is a similar site and situation. Chairman Kepple said, from the research he has done, there are incredibly wide ranges of use of shoreline space by communities from very simple to remarkably elaborate so there is a wide range of choices.

The date of the next subcommittee was discussed and was determined it should be in the next few weeks. It was suggested the visit to the Glastonbury be done before the next meeting. Breck Perkins asked for two things, one is if a deadline could be put on getting the program sorted for the house and, the second regarding the application, would it be possible to phase or create several phases instead of doing drastic valued engineering to achieve a goal. Susan Cullen answered her understanding of the grant is it is one and done. Deb Downie added it is a one-time thing but it is important to realize that the initial plan didn't include the house so there isn't money in the budget for it. Deb Downie said the budgeted money might be used for the development of the park but the house may have to be redone over time.

8. New Business

Mike Crowley asked about the remaining budget moving forward. Susan Cullen said she didn't expect to give a budget breakdown for this meeting but will share the information at the next meeting.

Chairman Kepple shared with the committee the boathouse committee had developed a business plan around the rowing center about how it could be an operation that could operate in the black and could be a source of money for development of the house. The process of the town of Stonington taking a loan to be paid back by the Friends of Stonington Crew and Stonington Rowing Center as part of their lease for the property was discussed. Also, fees from the recreation programs being used for funding was discussed. Mike O'Neill mentioned another source of funding for renovation of the house and ongoing park costs could be the rental of the park for events. Chairman Kepple said the challenge will be to make some choices soon about the component of the boathouse and how to craft a hybrid plan where it is town owned property and the blend of town programs and rowing center programs. Tim O'Brien said the idea of taking this type of loan out is not unique to the town of Stonington and it has been worked on but it is important to find a balance so as not to end up in a bad fiscal position. Leanne Theodore said the recreation department is charging minimal fees for their programs and they have a limited budget so they are focused on bringing in revenue to pay for contracted staff as well as extra furniture, equipment and structure upgrades. Leanne Theodore continued saying with their limited budget, they would not have the resources to contribute to the repayment of a loan.

9. Comments from the Public

There weren't any public comments.

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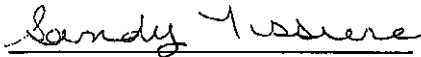
**10. Comments from the Committee**

Mike O'Neill spoke of Jason Vincent who was a big part of the getting the park started and how it would be good to find a way to recognize and honor him in the park. It was vocalized how Mr. Vincent's dedication and contributions to the town will be felt by future generations; how he was a great person and offered their condolences go out to family.

**11. Adjourn**

A motion was made by Jim Kelley and seconded by Tom Switz to adjourn the meeting at 6:54 p.m.  
The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,



Sandy Tissiere  
Recording Secretary