

**Mystic River Boathouse Park Implementation Committee
Park Management Subcommittee
Special Meeting Minutes
Cisco Webex Virtual Meeting
Wednesday, January 27, 2021
5:00 p.m.**

The Stonington Mystic River Boathouse Park Implementation Committee- Park Management subcommittee held a virtual special meeting on this date, Wednesday, January 27, 2021 via Cisco Webex meeting platform.

Present were Nick Kepple, Chairman; Mike O'Neill, Vice Chairman, Breck Perkins, Tim O'Brien, Mike Crowley, Steve Planchon, and Sandy Tissiere, Recording Secretary; as well as Richard Ward, Stonington Recreation Administrator

1. **Call to order**

Chairman Nick Kepple called the meeting the order at 5:03 p.m.

2. **Pledge of Allegiance**

The group joined together for the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. **Comments from the Public**

There were not any public comments.

4. **Approval of Minutes**

A motion was made by Mike O'Neill and seconded by Mike Crowley to approve the December 1, 2020 minutes as presented. The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

5. **Discussion – Lovelace House Discussion**

- Discussion – Use of Park, Boathouse and Lovelace House
 - Discuss SHPO requirements for remediation
 - Discuss park facility requirements
 - Discuss potential town park and recreation activities
 - Discuss Friends of Stonington Crew interest
 - Discuss possible alternative funding sources for the project

Chairman Kepple spoke about his suggestion a Park Management subcommittee be formed saying he felt it would be beneficial to have a smaller group comprised of committee members and town officials meet to assist in moving the discussion of park and the park related activities along. Chairman Kepple continued saying he has had discussion with Danielle Chesebrough, Stonington First Selectman and Susan Cullen, Stonington Director of Economic and Community Development who asked him if this subcommittee was really necessary. Chairman Kepple said the subcommittee should discuss the agenda items to report to the full committee meeting on Monday and also discuss whether to continue with the subcommittee.

Referring to the first item in the discussion items, Chairman Kepple said he had received an email from Deb Downie, Board of Selectman liaison to the MRBPIC committee, telling him as an update to the remediation grant application, it is in the plan to move the house as on the master plan but the grant application will not include any house renovations as that would not fall under remediation. At this time, there isn't any town money available to renovate the house, but as an idea, instead of focusing on the town using the house, the subcommittee could look for strategies to form partnerships to allow the renovation and use of the house in the future. Chairman Kepple said the draft Brownfield grant application will be circulated to the committee prior to the Monday, February 1, 2021 meeting.

Regarding the discussion of potential town park and recreation activities, there has been discussions between the subcommittee and the Stonington Recreation Department. Chairman Kepple asked Mike O'Neill to speak to this discussion item.

Mike O'Neill told the subcommittee he had a meeting with Danielle Chesebrough to learn more about what the town's goal is with the park. Mike O'Neill said his goal with the Friends of Stonington Crew and the MRBPIC is 1. Understand how the park is going to be utilized; 2. Understand what the Friends of Stonington Crew's role in the park is going to

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be; 3. Who is going to manage it? and 4. How the park is going to be used and what needs to be programmatically in the buildings themselves for the park to operate as a park. Mike O'Neill spoke of a conversation he had with Danielle Chesebrough and Deb Downie that determined the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) would not be contributing grant money for the renovations of the house and the town does not have any money set aside for renovations.

Mike O'Neil reiterated the Friends of Stonington Crew were initially looking at a self-contained boathouse and was not planning on this unexpected renovation of the house that has happened and has to be dealt with. Mike O'Neill continued saying The Friends of Stonington Crew has been looking at what can be done and they are now looking at stripping the boathouse down to a simple structure so they can contribute to the renovation of the house. Mike O'Neill said what he proposed to Danielle Chesebrough and Susan Cullen is the Friends of Stonington Crew would take care of the build out of the house (changing rooms, bathrooms, second floor for office space) and they would propose a partnership with Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center so they could use the building for their programs as well. It would require the town moving the house, the foundation for the house and the remediation of the house which all could be covered in the grant remediation grant with the exception of moving the house.

Mike O'Neill said he feels this is the best structure to move forward and get the ball rolling on this project. Mike O'Neill told the group he has drafted a beginning MOU that he has sent to Danielle Chesebrough and Susan Cullen for review and to discuss as a starting point.

Mike O'Neill told the group what he is working toward is an agreement between the Friends of Stonington Crew and the Stonington Community Rowing Center, LLC, which is new 501C being put together to manage the public aspect of the park process. Chairman Kepple asked about the boathouse structure and what was going to be included. Mike O'Neill said the boathouse will be a simple open structure without heat. Mike O'Neill said it remains to be determined the exact extent of what SHPO will require to keep in the house for historic integrity until SHPO has inspected it. Steve Planchon asked if the boathouse would be roughed in so utilities can be added later. Mike O'Neill answered the walls would be open cavity walls. Steve Planchon asked who could get an actual list from SHPO on what is needed to be done so there can be a plan made. Mike O'Neill answered that would be a next step in the process and the committee needs to find out the guidelines to renovate the house. Mike Crowley opined he likes the direction the Friends of Stonington Crew is going with the project. Chairman Kepple said he thought the ideas that the Stonington Community Rowing Center have are great noting the creativity of how the building will be built and the ideas of how to utilize the house and the engagement of other non-profits is fantastic. Chairman Kepple suggested to the subcommittee a vision on how the park and house would be used, for example, a week in the life of the park be created. The group discussed the various uses for the park and the building and how the activities could be scheduled.


6. Comments from the Public

There weren't any public comments.

7. Adjourn

A motion was made by Mike Crowley and seconded by Steve Planchon to adjourn the meeting at 6:04 p.m. The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,


Sandy Tissiere
Recording Secretary