

**Mystic River Boathouse Park Implementation Committee
Special Meeting Minutes
Cisco Webex Virtual Meeting
Monday, February 8, 2021
6:00 p.m.**

The Stonington Mystic River Boathouse Park Implementation Committee held a special virtual meeting on this date, Monday, February 8, 2021, 2021 via Cisco Webex meeting platform.

Present were Nick Kepple, Chairman; Mike O'Neill, Vice Chairman, Mike Crowley, Tom Switz, Steve Planchon, Jim Kelley, 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; Richard Ward, Stonington Recreation Administrator, Stonington Human Services and Chris Gasiorek, Vice President of Watercraft Preservation and Programs, Mystic Seaport Museum

Members Absent: Breck Perkins, Tim O'Brien, Farouk Rajab and Katherine Burchenal

1. **Call to order**

Chairman Nick Kepple called the meeting the order at 6:04 a.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 January 4, 2021 special meeting were presented for approval.

A motion was made by Mike O'Neill and seconded by Tom Switz to approve the January 4, 2021 minutes as presented.

The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

6. **Correspondence**

There was an email from John Thornell with an update of the Stonington Community Rowing Center (SCRC). Chairman Kepple suggested the conversation about the SCRC be discussed at the March meeting. The committee concurred to discuss the email at a later meeting.

7. **Old Business**

• **Discussion – Brownfield Grant application update**

Chairman Kepple said, after review of the draft Brownfield grant application, the committee is looking for some input on why the amount of the budget in the grant is lower in comparison with the earlier proposed budget. Chairman Kepple opened the floor to Susan Cullen and Deb Downie to lead the discussion on the status of the Brownfield grant application.

Susan Cullen provided context to the many things that have happened since the last meeting. Susan Cullen reassured the committee by changing the budget and changing the grant application request, they are not changing the master plan for the park. Susan Cullen said the way the grant is written is to make it as eligible as possible to move things for the grant application in the right direction. Susan Cullen said the amount of funding requested is based on how much grant money was actually allowed in the notice of funding application; the state only approved 9.5 million dollars for all of Connecticut and 1 million dollars of that money will be going to assessment only grants leaving 8.5 million dollars for the 169 towns to compete for. Susan Cullen spoke of a phone meeting that she and Danielle Chesebrough, Stonington First Selectman, had with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to learn more about the background information of the Memorandum of Understanding between the town and SHPO which provided them an idea on what was needed to start moving forward. Susan Cullen said she learned from SHPO, the MOU was not negotiable and that unless they wanted to go through the full MOU process; that no piece of it could be adjusted and it was not flexible which was good

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to know for the process going forward. Susan Cullen said that by taking the shed down, SHPO considers that an adverse impact and there would be, other than this Brownfield grant, no federal or state money eligibility. Based on the this information from SHPO, Susan Cullen said, when the state notice of funding availability came out with how much money was available, they wanted to place the grant strategically to be as competitive as possible to move the project forward. Susan Cullen explained the town wants to fulfill the promise to the taxpayers with this park and would be able to clean up and establish the park but may not be able to do it as quickly as was hoped; with the original budget of 2.4 million dollars, it would have been able to be done but that amount can't even be requested because it is over the maximum. Susan Cullen explained the rating and ranking system and where Stonington wouldn't have advantages so it was necessary to write the grant as competitive as possible in other ways. Susan Cullen said they took all the information that was available to work within the budget and take the first step in the right direction to fulfilling the promise to the taxpayers about cleaning up this property and opening it as a park. Susan Cullen assured the committee the town is still committed to the master plan and will continue to pursue other avenues of funding to take the park in a positive direction towards completion and this grant budget is not the overall budget for the park but for this phase in the project. Susan Cullen explained there are characters limits in the grant so there was paragraphs that had to be edited and encouraged the committee to review the grant and contact her office with any questions or provide any edits.

Chairman Kepple opined that after the state funding was released in early January, the committee was told that 1.5 million was being sought so it was the committee's perspective the budget went from 1.5 million to \$730,000.00. Chairman Kepple said he understands there is less funding available at the state level but wants to ensure that the maximum amount is being requested based on what is needed for the park. Chairman Kepple had other questions regarding the wording in the grant and Susan Cullen asked him to send her an email with his questions. Mike Crowley said he thinks that Susan Cullen and Deb Downie did a great job and if the grant amount of \$732,000.00 is awarded and added to the remaining budget of about \$532,000.00, that should be enough to build the park and this should be the main objective. Mike Crowley said it is obvious there won't be enough money to get everything that is wanted but it would be enough to get the park started the best we can with the amount we have.

Chairman Kepple said it is important for the community to know this grant won't be enough to complete the master plan but is for the remediation of park. Susan Cullen said, although there are things in the master plan that aren't being included in the grant application because they are not eligible, there are other things that are being funded in other ways. Susan Cullen and Chairman Kepple discussed a detailed budget sheet for the project that will be distributed to the committee for review.

- Project Budget Update

Chairman Kepple recognized Chad Frost and his team for their excellent work on the project saying the project wouldn't be where it is without them. Chad Frost told Chairman Kepple he will to continue to support the project as needed and would like to present the living shoreline studies as a presentation at a future meeting.

- Discussion – Park Management Subcommittee Update

Chairman Kepple said this item could be discussed at the first meeting in March.

- Discussion – Stonington Community Rowing Center Update

Mike O'Neill reported the next step will be getting the Memorandum of Understanding between the town and the Stonington Community Rowing Center completed.

8. New Business

There wasn't any new business discussed.

9. Comments from the Public

There weren't any public comments.

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10. Comments from the Committee

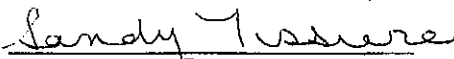
Chairman Kepple congratulated the Mystic Seaport Museum on the grant that was received. Chris Gasiorek told the committee the Mystic Seaport Museum received a Mellon grant in conjunction with Brown University to help create an exhibit looking at past issues with slavery and maritime history crossover.

Mike Crowley thanked Chairman Kepple for taking over the Chairman seat for the committee, he is greatly appreciative. Chairman Kepple recognized the committee and their effort and thanked Susan Cullen and Deb Downie for contributing their time and expertise to the park project.

11. Adjourn

A motion was made by Mike Crowley and seconded by Jim Kelley to adjourn the meeting at 7:11 p.m. The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,



Sandy Tisiere
Recording Secretary