

**Mystic River Boathouse Park Implementation Committee  
Park Management Subcommittee  
Special Meeting Minutes  
Cisco Webex Virtual Meeting  
Tuesday, December 1, 2020  
5:00 p.m.**

The Stonington Mystic River Boathouse Park Implementation Committee- Park Management subcommittee held a special virtual meeting on this date, Tuesday, December 1, 2020 via Cisco Webex meeting platform.

Present were Nick Kepple, Chairman; Mike O'Neill, Vice Chairman, Breck Perkins, Tim O'Brien, Mike Crowley, Steve Planchon, Deb Downie, Stonington Board of Selectwomen liaison and Sandy Tissiere, Recording Secretary; as well as Susan Cullen, Stonington Director of Economic and Community Development, Richard Ward, Stonington Recreation Administrator and one anonymous caller

**1. Call to order**

Chairman Nick Kepple called the meeting the order at 5:07 p.m.

Chairman Kepple welcomed and thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

**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. Discussion – Lovelace House Discussion**

- Discussion – Lovelace House Discussion
  - Review cost models for various options for the relocation and rehabilitation of the 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 of how the subcommittee came about because of a committee discussion of the use of park by the public. At the last committee meeting, Mike O'Neill had raised the question about who was responsible for the costs of moving and renovating the house and what the basic impact of the use of the house was going to be on the park. Chairman Kepple suggested that as the subcommittee takes up the issue of the park, the subcommittee spend some time thinking about sorting out the use of the historic building on the property to determine what impact it has on the use of the park. Chairman Kepple reminded the subcommittee, that he didn't want them to lose sight the main function of this subcommittee is to be sorting out how the park will get managed. Chairman Kepple turned the meeting over to Mike O'Neill.

Mike O'Neill started the conversation saying the house is a big component of the park and pivotal to the park moving forward which has been undefined for a while. Mike O'Neill provided the subcommittee a brief history of how the issue with the house came about. Mike O'Neill continued saying, during the initial review of the park project, there weren't any indication the structures had any historical value as they were listed as being built after 1945 on the street card. Mike O'Neill said once the master plan was proposed which removed all the buildings from the site, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) got involved and through that process, SHPO determined all the buildings had to remain on the site. Mike O'Neill explained how the house location was partially in the parking lot of the master plan so when SHPO got involved, the committee presented several different scenarios where the boathouse could be potentially moved to on the property to facilitate the best use of the house. Mike O'Neill continued saying SHPO eventually approved the house being moved 88 feet to the north and flip it to the north side of the boathouse structure with the requirement the house be restored and utilized as part of the park. Mike O'Neill said he spoke to Rich Ward about the recreation department using the park and the house and he is interested in use of the property. Mike O'Neill said there has also been a discussion regarding the need for public restrooms in the park.

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Mike O'Neill spoke of the different scenarios he has distributed to the subcommittee on what can be done with the house providing the minimum that can be possibly done to what's the maximum that can be done and what are the potential steps in-between. For scenario #1, Mike O'Neill said he has provided the initial overview of what is the bare minimum that can be done to move the house to the location agreed to by the state which is to, basically, tear down the shed, provide structural fill, build the foundation and move the house to the foundation. Mike O'Neill said this could be the first step for the town to take toward utilizing the house; to do this process, if we do get the funding from DECD, there are monies to cover some renovations but what isn't covered is the backfill and foundation resulting in about a \$50,000,00 cost to the town.

Susan Cullen asked Mike O'Neill to clarify which monies he was referring to, as there are four or five pots of money that are being used to pay for different things in the project. Mike O'Neill answered in Chad Frost's (Principal, Kent + Frost) original draft DECD grant, there was remediation money for the house and the relocation of the house.

Susan Cullen said there are two different DECD grants, one, the assessment grant that has been being worked on that is almost completed; and the second is a remediation grant that hasn't been applied for as the notice of funding eligibility and deadline hasn't been released by the state. Susan Cullen asked Mike O'Neill if he was speaking of this being part of the budget of the new grant that hasn't been applied for yet. Michael O'Neill said, as he isn't writing the grants, he is relying on Chad Frost for information regarding funding.

Susan Cullen recommended in the very near future to have a discussion of which pots of money exist, how much money is in those pots and what those pots are allowed to purchase. Susan Cullen told the subcommittee there are five pots of money presently and she is working on this for herself but it could be something that they can do as a larger group.

The subcommittee discussed different ways the foundation of the house could be inclusive of the remediation grant, i.e. the soil would have to be excavated for the foundation of the house or the slab the house sits on could be part of the cap.

Chairman Kepple said he thought what Mike O'Neill was referring to when he commented about the use of the state remediation funds related to the house, he's relying on projections from Chad Frost which were based on discussions with the DECD. Chairman Kepple continued saying he recalled there was a budget that Chad Frost submitted to the committee for the entire project including the boathouse but especially for the park portions of it. Chairman Kepple said not only Mike O'Neill but also the committee were under the impression of his analysis that some of the Brownfield remediation monies could be used.

Deb Downie said the town does have money left over from the bonding and it is enough based on an estimate from Chad Frost to construct the park infrastructure but doesn't include the remediation. Deb Downie said there are other potential grant applications being looked at, one possibly for the boardwalk, one for some work associated with the living shoreline, and a number of different ways to bring in enough funds.

Steve Planchon asked Deb Downie what was the remaining dollar value on the first grant. Deb Downie answered whether he was referring to the first grant or the bond. Deb Downie continued saying here isn't much left over from the first grant as time is almost up for it and it is being finished up. The money left over from the bond is approximately \$534,000 but the cost estimate to build the park, without the touching the house or remediation, is somewhere around \$515,000. Tim O'Brien said the important point Deb Downie made was the grant had an expiration date whereas the bond does not so the project can keep moving forward.

Susan Cullen said the assessment grant for \$200,000 expires at the end of the year and there has been one final change order for a certain amount of information in terms of the living shoreline and the submerged aquatic vegetation, which are items that we were trying to push forward to not get the 18 permits but to be able to have as much information as we can to move that forward. Susan Cullen said the second grant that has been worked on is the Brownfield grant

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which had to be redone as the state changed the format and we are now waiting on the state to release a new deadline and bond authorization which hasn't happened due to COVID.

Mike O'Neill said, as part of the next meeting, the subcommittee should prioritize what will be paid from the different pots of money determining what is needed for the park and what is elective. The subcommittee discussed there could be additional funding available for different aspects of the park as well but it was important to keep in mind, it would be better to do some aspects at the same time so as to save money.

Breck Perkins brought up the point the house has be moved or there won't be funding for park. Deb Downie asked if the house has to be moved. The subcommittee discussed the Memorandum of Understanding with the State Historic Preservation Office which requires the house be moved as part of the park project.

Tim O'Brien said if the town has the burden of moving it, the question is, does the town have a need for it? Tim O'Brien said he would like to hear from Rich Ward regarding the interest and possible use of the house for recreational use to contribute to a town use discussion as well as the historical discussion. Rich Ward said what the recreation department was looking at would be a finished park and building available. Rich Ward continued saying he has put together a list of different benefits for the town if it had the park and house available. Rich Ward said the greenways connecting to the waterways could contribute to a lot of different kayaking events, paddle board, fitness, and many ways to use the park that would benefit the residents.

Mike O'Neill said the boathouse that is being proposed is a very simple unheated structure with a second floor training area. Mike O'Neill said he proposes the house should be a public space with public bathrooms, storage space and office spaces on the second floor for the recreation department and possibly The Friends of Stonington Crew.

The subcommittee agreed it was important to determine how the house was going to be used to decide what kind of funding will be needed and where it can be found. The subcommittee agreed to another meeting on Tuesday, December 15, 2020 at 5:00 p.m.

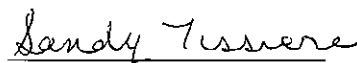
**5. Comments from the Public**

There weren't any public comments.

**6. Adjourn**

A motion was made by Nick Kepple and Mike O'Neill to adjourn the meeting at 6:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Sandy Tissiere  
Recording Secretary