

**Mystic River Boathouse Park Implementation Committee
Special Meeting Minutes
Stonington High School Commons, Pawcatuck, CT
Saturday, December 7, 2019
4:00 p.m.**

The Stonington Mystic River Boathouse Park Implementation Committee held a special meeting on this date, Saturday, December 7, 2019 at the Stonington High School Commons at 4:00 p.m.

Present were Nick Kepple, Chairman; Mike O'Neill, Vice Chairman; Breck Perkins, Steve Planchon, and Sandy Tissiere, Recording Secretary; as well Danielle Chesebrough, Stonington First Selectwoman; Chad Frost, Principal, Kent + Frost, Ron Goodin, LEED AP BD+C, Crosskey Architects and interested citizens

Members Absent: Tim O'Brien, Steve White, Tom Switz, Mike Crowley, Farouk Rajab, Jim Kelley and Kathryn Burchenal

Chairman Kepple thanked the community for attending and the school district for making the facilities available. Chairman Kepple gave an outline of the program agenda. Chairman Kepple introduced the park committee members present and acknowledged their work on the committee. Chairman Kepple spoke of the first community meeting where the community voted almost unanimously for the acquisition of a piece property for the Mystic River Boathouse Park to provide the community a park, a rowing center and access to the river and, how the committee was formed, thereafter, to create the park. Chairman Kepple said the purpose of today's forum is to update the community on the park and the boathouse. Chairman Kepple said that he has been involved in several community projects and he is impressed by two things with this project: the level of involvement by the community and the park committee and the level of effort for this project by the committee, the town staff and the community who has assisted in the project to date. Mr. Kepple shared a quote from the April 2019 minutes made by the former chair, which sums up the 300+ hours the committee had thus far put into the park project. The effort was captured by this quote from Chairman Simmons: "Chairman Simmons said that, from the beginning, this project was going to be complicated but if you are going to dream, dream big and see how it progresses." Today you will receive a status report on this dream.

1. **Call to order**

Chairman Nick Kepple called the special meeting to order at 4:10 p.m.

2. **Pledge of Allegiance**

The group joined together for the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. **Presentation regarding the Mystic River Boathouse Park**

Nick Kepple introduced Chad Frost to present the Mystic River Park presentation. Mr. Frost's presentation summarized the previous presentation from a year ago. Chad Frost discussed since the time the park and boathouse plans were presented, the boathouse design was not well received by the community and the historic component of the park became more important. Chad Frost said the determination of the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) that one historic building had to remain on the property and the resolution process to the current status of the Memorandum of Agreement with SHPO has been a year-long process. Mr. Frost ended with the projected timeline of the project and the costs of the park.

Nick Kepple shared some history of the property saying the town started negotiations in 2015-2016 to purchase the property. When the town started the process, there was a realization it was a contaminated site from the environmental studies provided by the seller. With this realization, research was done on the availability of state remediation funds so it was always in the plan to explore, pursue and utilize these state funds. Once the property was purchased, prior to the committee was formed, the town applied and was granted a \$200,000 planning and assessment grant from the state. The committee has used this grant to hire Chad Frost to perform this assessment.

4. **Presentation regarding the Hart Perry Boathouse**

Mike O'Neill presented a history of the Stonington High School Crew team. Mike O'Neil shared the advantages of students participating in the crew program. Mike O'Neill explained the Friends of Stonington Crew run the program; it is volunteer parent organization with a Federal 513c status which raises about \$100,000.00 a year to run the program; 50% of the program fee is paid by fund raising. Mike O'Neill said the biggest challenge the crew team faces now is they have outgrown their facilities; the training facility has been moved several times over the years. The Stonington Community Rowing Center, that has a new Federal 513nc status, it is a new program and the Friends of Stonington Crew will become a sub-set of it. The Stonington Rowing Center will provide access to the upper Mystic River and year-round community programming to all ages and abilities to maximize the use of the park. Mike O'Neill presented how the house will be moved 90 feet north of its current location and connected to the new boathouse by a

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hyphen room. Mike O'Neill went through the process of development of the design of the boathouse to resemble a barn structure that will complement the existing house. Mike O'Neill introduced Ron Goodin, Crosskey Architects, to continue the presentation. Ron Goodin started his presentation by sharing how he became involved in the design process of the boathouse and his work with the Mystic River Park Committee, the Friends of Stonington Crew, the Town of Stonington and SHPO to develop a Memorandum of Agreement that met the requirements of SHPO. Ron Goodin continued with a description of the boathouse, its relation to the house and the functionality of boathouse to meet the community rowing needs.

5. Comments from the Public

The following is comments and questions from the public:

Are the old (boathouse) building design and new (boathouse) building design the same height? Mike O'Neill answered the new building is about 10 feet taller in height.

Is the boathouse the same height as the house? Mike O'Neill answered the boathouse is higher than the house but the house will be raised four feet above grade to meet flood requirements.

Are there dormers on both sides of the building? Mike O'Neill answered, yes, there are dormers on both sides of the building.

By rotating the front portion of the building, using some of the southern exposure for the solar panels, does that make a significant difference in the energy produced? Mike O'Neill answered, with the size of this roof, there is enough energy to run about three of these buildings.

Will you have geothermal heat for the building? Mike O'Neill said the solar panels could provide enough energy for the use of the building.

From the maintenance aspect, this exterior looks like more maintenance, will the town pick up the bill for it? Mike O'Neill said with the previous design, the building was maintenance free. To meet SHPO requirements, the house will have to be clapboard and require painting. The boathouse siding will be either a pine or cedar product with a coating on it that will last 35 years. The goal is to use materials that require as little maintenance as possible.

Is it right to think, there is language in the agreement between the town and crew, there will be rent paid and, at about that time, maintenance costs? Nick Kepple said the terms of agreement between the Town of Stonington and the Stonington Rowing Center is in draft form and the idea is the park maintenance would be the responsibility of the town and the building operations and maintenance would be the responsibility of the Stonington Community Rowing Center. Nick Kepple continued saying once the boathouse is built, it will become town property and leased back to the Stonington Community Rowing Center.

How many singles and doubles will be available for the community? Mike O'Neill said there will be a seasonal mix of boats available with a total capacity of 36 boats in the building.

Matt Beaudoin said I was an opponent of the original draft and you guys did a fantastic job on this building, I'm really excited about it. Will there be community access and will there be boats there for community use? Mike O'Neill answered the idea is this becomes a water access base for the river for all types of recreation. There will be rowing programs but the vision is there will rentals as well. Are the racks going to be movable in the boathouse bay? Mike O'Neill answered the racks are movable and can be adjusted for the needs of the program.

There was a question for Chad Frost about the 1.3 million hardscaping surface. I'm sure you vetted many surfaces but giving we are creating this living shoreline and creating a mostly permeable site and it being one of the most expensive line items, is it because we have to cap the site. Chad Frost answered the remediation requires the cap and it allows us not to do too much infiltration on the top of the soil. Chad Frost said the advantage of the remediation being part of the design is there are the aspects of the park that will be paid for through grant funding.

Nick Kepple said he'd like to emphasize the point of usage made by Mike O'Neill regarding the use of a community rowing center and the expanded use of the building. This can't be emphasized enough. There has been 20 years of high school rowing but the reason this project has so much interest is there are so many people in the community that have an interest in rowing.

A citizen expressed their concern of an increase of traffic in that area and the parallel parking along the shoulder of the road. Chad Frost said there is concern with the traffic and they are trying to implement traffic calming along the road. Parallel parking has been shown to be a traffic calming aspect. Chad Frost said they are working with the traffic commission regarding the best solution for parking for the park.

First Selectwoman Danielle Chesebrough asked Mr. Kepple to explain what is adaptive rowing. Nick Kepple answered adaptive rowing is to make rowing access available to individuals with impairments. Nick Kepple spoke of the Noank Adaptive Rowing program and noted that members of the Stonington High School Crew team volunteered their assistance with this program.

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Liz Stern, Lords Hill, said I was one of the few proponents of the first design and so I'm delighted to sit here today and say I didn't think I would be as happy with the second design as I was with the first and I'm very grateful, thank you.

Nick Kepple said there could have been an hour and a half presentation of the particulars of the park aside the boathouse, about the combined benefits of this amenity. The view scape and the improvements of being the gateway to Mystic; the health benefits of being able to have a picnic beside the water; the kayaking and paddle boarding; the educational benefits; the celebration of the history of the site and the economic development and property value benefits.

Mike O'Neill and Nick Kepple recognized Rob Simmons and his wife, Heidi Simmons for their commitment to this project and making it happen.

A community member said she rowed in high school and college and when she moved to the area could not find a rowing facility. She continued by saying it is great to see this project of a Stonington Rowing Center that will offer the opportunity to the community.

There was a straw vote taken with the community attendees. The majority ruled in favor of the new park and the boathouse designs so the vote was unanimous.

Mike O'Neill recognized and thanked First Selectwomen Danielle Chesebrough for being one of the first rowers in the Stonington High School Crew program and thanked John Flaherty and the Friends of Stonington Crew for all the hard work they do and Ron Goodin for coming to present.

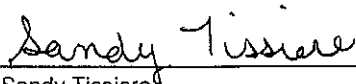
6. Comments from the Committee

There were no further comments by the committee

7. Adjourn

As there wasn't any further business to conduct, the meeting was adjourned 5:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted



Sandy Tissiere
Recording Secretary