

**Mystic River Boathouse Park Implementation Committee
Regular Meeting Minutes
Cisco Webex Virtual Meeting
Monday, March 1, 2021
6:00 p.m.**

The Stonington Mystic River Boathouse Park Implementation Committee held a special virtual meeting on this date, Monday, March 1, 2021 via Cisco Webex meeting platform.

Present were Nick Kepple, Chairman; Mike O'Neill, Vice Chairman, Tim O'Brien, Mike Crowley, Tom Switz, Breck Perkins, Jim Kelley, Katherine Burchenal, Rick Broberg, Deb Downie, Stonington Board of Selectwomen liaison and Sandy Tissiere, Recording Secretary; as well as Fran Hoffman, Chad Frost, Principal, Kent + Frost and Chris Gasiorek, Vice President of Watercraft Preservation and Programs, Mystic Seaport Museum

Members Absent: Steve Planchon and Farouk Rajab

1. Call to order

Chairman Nick Kepple called the meeting the order at 6:03 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 February 8, 2021 special meeting were presented for approval.

A motion was made by Mike O'Neil and seconded by Tom Switz to approve the minutes from February 8, 2021 as presented.

The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

6. Correspondence

There was email correspondence from John Thornell from the last meeting that was circulated which contains links to videos. Chairman Kepple encouraged the committee to view the videos as they capture a lot of the activities that will be available to the boathouse users.

7. Old Business

• Discussion – Brownfield Grant application update

Chairman Kepple reported Susan Cullen and Deb Downie continue to work on the completing the grant application incorporating comments and edits they have received. Deb Downie said the goal is to have it done and submitted by the end of March.

• Project Budget Update

Deb Downie reported the assessment grant has been used up on gathering information which has contributed to the creation of the remediation grant.

• Discussion – Park Management Subcommittee Update

The Park Management Subcommittee hasn't met this month.

• Discussion - Stonington Community Center Update

Mike O'Neill said the Memorandum of Understanding between the Town of Stonington and the Stonington Community Rowing Center is in progress.

• Discussion - Committee Reappointments

Deb Downie encouraged the committee members if their appointment is about to expire, please contact Stacy Haskell, Executive Assistant, Selectman's Office, Town of Stonington to renew.

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8. New Business

Discussion – Living Shoreline

Chad Frost shared the Living Shoreline Feasibility Study and provided a synopsis of information and background that had already discussed. Chad Frost discussed one area of concern is the barren strip of land just above sea level they are paying attention to and this is what this assessment is focused on. Chad Frost said what is currently growing there is Spartina which would be a good plant to encourage to grow along the shoreline. Chad Frost said for animals, there had been talk of oyster castles, but there are native oysters (ribbed mussels) already living out there. Chad Frost spoke of the engineering study of the physical parameters that determined the factors of erosion of the area including tide ranges and sea level rise. Chad Frost said ice became a driving factor in the determination of what would grow in a living shoreline. Chad Frost described the different living shoreline possibilities used to determine what should be recommended. Chad Frost said the one determined to be the best preferred option was one that didn't include oyster castles as they have not succeeded this far north and need to be below the water. In this particular instance, they wouldn't be below the water mark and the ice would be an issue with them as it would come down and rip the oysters off the rack on the top of the oyster castle and could dislodge the oyster castle. Chad Frost said the recommended plants and animals include the ribbed muscles and Spartina which are growing symbiotically and will create a living breakwater. Chad Frost discussed upward of that, would be a sloped extended marsh and a frontward marsh for marsh migration.

Chad Frost discussed The Living Shoreline – Site Exposure saying this was the background data that went into the Living Feasibility Study such as site elevation, exposure, and other information necessary for the assessment.

Chad Frost presented the Mystic River Progress Set sharing this plan shows the fine design and some of the details, specifically on how the dock rails and retaining areas need to work, there will be a bulkhead underneath between the dock and the land, the grading and the lighting. Chad Frost pointed out the grading that will be needed under the boardwalk and around the peninsula because the park is going from an elevation of two to an elevation of seven. Chad Frost discussed the lighting that will be used in the park and said it is recommended there be lighting under the railing of the boardwalk that isn't super bright but will give some surface lighting. Chad Frost talked about the different types of testing that can be done to determine what kind of plants will grow along the shoreline.

Chad Frost finished the presentation with the Mystic River Boathouse Park Design Detail which showed the options for the street trees, shrubs, ornamental grasses, ground covers and the marsh plants.

Rick Broberg said his biggest concern for the dock and the pilings was the ice and were there any provisions for icing events? Chad Frost answered if we do the docks to a full commercial grade marina standard, with the ice we are expecting, the docks should be fine.

Fran Hoffman asked about the type of lighting saying, if you are talking about impact to the ecosystem, lighting is not a good thing. Fran Hoffman continued saying I don't know when the discussion is going to happen about how much and when lighting is going to be used but I think it will be an issue. Fran Hoffman said, along those same lines, the type of plants that are used, it is very important to use natives. Fran Hoffman continued saying the report was quite sophisticated and asked if parts of the report could be pulled out for an educational piece about living shorelines, something that piques interest in the public to create something similar on their own property. Chad Frost answered the question about the lighting, saying, as the park will close at sunset, the lighting at night would be focused on the parking lot and the under railing light would provide just enough light so if there is somebody is out there, it is safe for them and also, for the police driving by will be able to see them. The lighting under the railings will be pointed inward so it isn't shining on the water. Chad Frost said they did specify to use native plants as much as possible but some the trees may not be native. Chad Frost said, about making the living shoreline relatable to the average person, the report is a highly detailed engineering report, it can be made relatable to the public by signs in an exhibit.

Chairman Kepple said that the house could be used for educational purposes regarding the park and living shoreline through displays and signage.

Chairman Kepple said it is important not to lose sight as the sub-committee that the Stonington Community Rowing Center is going to do amazing things for active recreation but I think Chad's reports are just a window into how fascinating and dynamic the environment is there and we shouldn't underestimate the power of teaching components we can provide to this park.

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9. Comments from the Public

There weren't any public comments.

10. Comments from the Committee

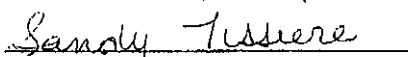
Breck Perkins asked if there is schedule with regards for the permitting the process and is there a budget for the work set forward in the design? Chad Frost answered not at this time; the town has used all the money for the initial assessment and until the next round of funding comes up, there isn't any funding to start the permitting process. Chairman Kepple said it is important to keep in mind, the land was purchased, an assessment grant was pursued and secured and it allowed the development of a master plan, some study work and the beginning of permission for permitting and the whole process of determination of the implications of this property being part of a historic district. Chairman Kepple said now there is the remediation grant being sought to solve the remediation issues at the site while the Stonington Community Rowing Center will complete their Memorandum of Agreement with the town for the boathouse on the site. Chairman Kepple said that in between the remediation and the boathouse, there is a lot of other stuff that needs to be done in the park.

Breck Perkins said his question is, regardless of the funding stream, and whether we receive that money in eight months or a year, some sort of a plan should be put together with the regards to the permitting, the execution of the construction, then ultimately the opportunity for the boathouse to be constructed. If that could be somewhat solidified, then we would have something to work with and it would be helpful for furthering this process. It would set off a bunch of predecessors to our goal. Chairman Kepple said this is a good idea but the remediation grant will not provide money for permitting. Deb Downie said the remediation grant will have some money for permitting but not money for the town permitting. Breck Perkins said there are all sorts of EPA and federal permits that need to be acquired before we can do much of anything so I was hopeful to at least to get those bits and pieces done. Chad Frost said in his proposal there are some permitting fees. Chad Frost said, in the preliminary conversations with the DEP and the Army Corps of Engineers, it was discussed to lump the whole project into one permitting process because it would be advantageous to permit the coastal remediation with the environmental remediation with the boathouse docks and the fill. Chad Frost said he has provided the committee with a document with information on the permitting process and the estimated cost. Chad Frost said it would be discussion with the town on when and how the permitting process should start and how it should be paid for.

11. Adjourn

A motion was made by Mike Crowley and seconded by Breck Perkins to adjourn the meeting at 7:22 p.m.
The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,



Sandy Tissiere
Recording Secretary