

Mystic River Boathouse Park Implementation Committee
Regular Meeting Minutes
Stonington Police Department, Pawcatuck, CT
January 7, 2019
7:00 p.m.

The Stonington Mystic River Boathouse Park Implementation Committee held a regular meeting on this date, Monday, January 7, 2019 at the Stonington Police Department at 7:00 p.m.

Present were Rob Simmons, Chairman; Mike O'Neill, Vice Chairman; Mike Crowley, Farouk Rajab; Scott Bates, Tim O'Brien, Jim Kelley, Breck Perkins, Steve Planchon, Nick Kepple, Alan Strunk, Kathryn Burchenal, Sandy Tissiere, Recording Secretary; Chad Frost, Principal, Kent + Frost, Jason Vincent, Director of Planning, Town of Stonington, Jim Sullivan, Director of Finance, Town of Stonington; Barbara McKrell, Public Works Director, Town of Stonington, members of the press and interested citizens

Members absent were Tom Switz and Steve White

1. **Call to order**

Chairman Simmons called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

2. **Pledge of Allegiance**

Herb Holmstedt, Mystic Heights resident, led the group in the Pledge of Alliance.

3. **Comments from the Public**

Chairman Simmons opened the floor to public comments. Jim Short, Denison Avenue, thinks the boathouse project is a really good idea but the parallel parking on Route 27 is not a good idea. Mr. Short said he drives the road daily and has lived on that road for 45 years. Mr. Short said he had walked the site and it is a tight site for what you propose; it is a beautiful idea but I don't think parallel parking is a go.

4. **Approval of minutes**

The minutes from December 1, 2018 and December 3, 2018 were presented for approval.

A motion was made by Scott Bates and seconded by Mike Crowley to approve the minutes of December 1, 2018 as revised.

Discussion: Chairman Rob Simmons noted, generally speaking, the minutes record decisions that are made but in this particular instance the public input was critically important to the special meeting that was held and, as a consequence, I asked Sandy Tissiere to identify and relate to the extent possible the comments from the public.

The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

A motion was made by Scott Bates and seconded by Mike O'Neill to approve the minutes from December 3, 2018.

Discussion: Chairman Rob Simmons noted a typographical error at the top of page three, the word "mater" should be "master". Sandy Tissiere will correct this error before submitting the final approved copy to the town.

The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

5. **Correspondence**

No correspondence was presented. Chairman Simmons noted the Board of Education has assigned a designated Stonington Board of Education representative. Chairman Simmons introduced Farouk Rajab and welcomed him to the committee.

6. **Old Business**

• **Discussion – Park Time Line**

Chairman Simmons said Chad Frost would be presenting on the park time line and principal cost. Chairman Simmons introduced Barbara McKrell, Public Works Director and Jim Sullivan, Director of Finance, who were both in attendance of the meeting to assist with any questions.

Chad Frost shared an overhead presentation titled Project Update – Schedule Update, Preliminary Cost Estimate. Mr. Frost explained the information within the presentation was an estimation as there are many variables that will affect the project as it progresses. Mr. Frost reported the meeting with the DEEP (Department of Energy and Environmental Protection) went well and they are very supportive of the project concepts and willing to assist the town. Mr. Frost said the SHPO (State Historic Preservation Office) meeting was a good meeting and commends Stonington on their preservation efforts; there is ongoing

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discussion of options and alternatives. Mr. Frost discussed anticipated permitting providing information on 21 of the anticipated permits that could be needed. Mr. Frost emphasized these are permits that might or might not be needed and there could be other permits needed not known about yet, as the project progresses, permitting needed will be determined. Mr. Frost shared the project schedule emphasizing the dates could fluctuate depending on the schedules of other entities involved. Mr. Frost presented the park construction as \$3,230,000 with the eligible costs for the remediation grant being \$2,790,000 resulting in a cost to the Town of Stonington at \$440,000. Mr. Frost spoke of available town funds of \$435,000 and escrow remediation funding that add up to \$520,000 in available funding. Mr. Frost talked about there could be various other grants and alternative funding as well the possibility of the Stonington Public Works department doing some of the site work to offset costs. Chairman Simmons said the application for grants is a substantial process and invited Jason Vincent to comment as he has been collaborating with Mr. Frost on the process.

Mr. Vincent added it is very important to remember where we are at in this process, this is a vision, a conceptual design for a park that is going to have a phased in approach of implementation and a complicated permitting process. Mr. Vincent said it is critical we have a vision we can communicate to other people and to try and source funds; we need to pursue the vision and attempt to find the funds and we don't want to value engineer at this stage of the project. Mr. Vincent said the course is "what is that vision" and how to communicate it to the permitting agencies to find out where those competing interests overlap and intersect and that is what we are working on. This project is at stage 1 conceptual design as we want to make sure the public vision was part of this process.

Chairman Simmons shared that some people are concerned by generating a master plan with the general public at six public meetings to find what is wanted, that allowed the committee to come up with a master plan that is a final plan. Mr. Vincent answered this document is not the final plan; the final plan will depend on the permitting process and other factors that compromise ideas. The vision is something you want to achieve but may need to be incrementally.

Chairman Simmons spoke of some cost savings by work being done in house by Stonington public works and invited Barbara McKrell to speak. Barbara McKrell said any clean removal from possible demolition materials could be done by public works. Ms. McKrell said the public works department has their own equipment now and have worked on other community projects. Ms. McKrell said there could be a cost savings on labor.

Chairman Simmons spoke of various private organizations that have offered donations to the park project as well. Chairman Simmons said it is his understanding there is an availability of \$435,000 in town funds and \$85,000 in escrow for remediation asking Jim Sullivan if these monies are designated for remediation of the property or the shoreline or both.

Mr. Sullivan said the \$435,000 is not designated for anything as it is part of the bond issuance; the designation of the \$85,000 would be a question for the town attorney on how to access that money. Jim Sullivan said there is there about \$525,000 in available funds. Mr. Vincent and Mr. Frost discussed they have been judicious in the spending of the funding and explained the process that will be used to request more funding.

Chairman Simmons invited questions from the committee. Mike O'Neill said one of the bigger costs is the hardscape and asked if excess materials from other construction projects in town could be used for fill. Chad Frost answered the hardscape is a large cost but the fill isn't a substantial part of it but it has to meet environmental remediation specifications. Mr. Planchon asked about the 21 permits, were any of those timelines expected, like the coastal timeline will take a year, were any of these known or is this new knowledge. Mr. Frost answered he was optimistic the coastal permit would be six months but in speaking with Keith Neilson (Professional Civil Engineer, Docko, Inc.), he found the timeline would be longer due to the processing of the permit. Mr. Frost continued this is a complicated project with many agencies involved so the timelines will fluctuate with the schedules of those agencies. The committee discussed how this park is a complicated project with many varying factors such as permits but the wait will be worth it as the town will have a park that will be what the public wanted and last for generations. Mr. Kepple spoke of the signage and markers to depict the educational historical importance of the park and asked what portion of the cost description were represented in the presentation. Mr. Kepple continued saying in regards to the role of the historic education piece in the vision, specifically, as you will be talking to the historic preservation commission, that he would suggest there be

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expressions created by the MRBPIC, the Board of Education and the Mystic Seaport that reinforces restoring and integrating the historic nature of this park which has always been incorporated into the park plan. Mr. Frost said it has been an ongoing process of sharing the importance of history of the site with the various agencies and commissions involved and the Mystic Seaport has been very instrumental in finding and sharing information about the site. Mr. Frost said regarding the question of the cost, it is included in the site hardscape and site improvement lines. Chairman Simmons said at the next meeting, he was going to suggest subcommittees and one of those will be for the history and education of the site. Mr. Bates opined he grew up the hill from the site and didn't know any of the history of the site and mentioned this because he doesn't know many people who knew this history either. Mr. Bates said this process is great because it will connect people to this history for the first time and going through this process, it is an important goal to have. Even more important this is a daunting timeline and permitting process but if we are talking about history, we should talk about future generations as well who will have access to that waterfront where no one had ever had before. While it is a big challenge for all of us, we need to be patient and it is worth doing. Tim O'Brien asked where in the cost estimates are the permitting costs and are the cost estimates we have in line or are there unknowns that could be a cost driver. Mr. Frost said the cost of the permits were based on the amount of the typical fees that is known but is working with the various agencies for the actual costs. Mr. Crowley said he was impressed with the presentation saying it is good there is a timeline and it should be shared with the community. The committee discussed how to share this with information. Chairman Simmons said the Stonington Town Hall IT Department are working on a Face Book page which will feature all town projects. Breck Perkins complimented Chad Frost on his presentations and said fourteen months in regulatory is not a long time; he is working on projects that will take three years to get through regulatory so hats off to you. Mr. Perkins asked if there were federal grants available for the project. Jason Vincent answered federal grants have a different set of standards so they would like to keep the project at the local level before that would be a consideration.

A motion was made by Nick Kepple and seconded by Mike Crowley to adopt the proposed park timeline and intended anticipated costs as presented.

Discussion: Tim O'Brien said he is supportive of the motion but suggested, as there was a lot of information, there be an introductory paragraph to accompany the document. The committee discussed the information that should be included in the introductory paragraph. Jason Vincent and Chad Frost will create the paragraph with the information discussed.

The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

- Discussion – Park Anticipated Cost
Summarized in the presentation.
- Discussion – Structures on the Property
Summarized in presentation.
- Discussion – Environmental Site Assessment and Remediation Planning
Jason Vincent said he'd like to remind the committee the planning and zoning application has been submitted to rezone the property from RH-10 to Maritime Heritage District and that it is not going to be to adopt the master plan as that is a vision document. What this is going to do is change zoning to allow a box for the architect to work within. This will create some flexibility in the design of the site plan to allow for the design the public has suggested.

7. New Business

There is no new business.

8. Comments from the Public

Chuck Stevens, Mystic River Park Commission, spoke of the December 3, 2018 agenda having a discussion item under Old Business of renaming the park and it is not on the current agenda. Mr. Stevens continued saying 1) this item has not been resolved and 2) it had not been requested to have the name changed to the Stonington Boathouse Park. Mr. Steven reiterated the Mystic River Park Commission did not suggest the name of Stonington Boathouse Park but requested consideration of renaming the park to avoid confusion with the Mystic River Park located downtown. Chairman Simmons said he did not put the item on the agenda as the focus for this meeting would be on the funding and the timeline. There certainly have not been any decisions made about the name,

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members are aware the request is in but there is a long way to go in the project. There has been no change and we have not forgotten the request.

Herb Holmstedt, Mystic Heights, said he loves the idea of information being put on Face Book. Mr. Holmstedt said he also agreed with the introductive paragraph and what will be in it but what isn't included is anything about the boathouse so something should be included about it. Mr. Holmstedt said another thing that comes up at every meeting is the parallel parking on Route 27 and I know someone determined where it came from but if we can change it, we should and have less parking spaces and keep it onsite. Chairman answered at the last meeting it was agreed a letter would be sent to the Board of Stonington Police Commissioners to ask for their guidance.

Paul Sartor, Mystic, said he was impressed with the presentation. Mr. Sartor said we know these are ballpark estimates but I don't believe you don't have enough facts in there to cover it, you not only showed us numbers but you showed us how you got there and I appreciate the comments from Jason that we don't value engineer now. We go with what we want and go as far as we can and then make those decisions. Mr. Sartor said he feels it is good that the committee is keeping the public informed and regarding the presentation, there are not too many details to include all of them in the introductory paragraph.

9. Comments from the Committee

Breck Perkins suggested, with the two additional curb cuts that will go in for the south entrance of the parking lot, the parallel would slow traffic that approaches the curb cut and would be a benefit to the safety of the egress of the site. I think a traffic study would show that and should definitely be seriously considered. Chairman Simmons said there will be a workshop with the State, Stonington Police Department and other interested parties; it is a controversial topic and, again, it is part of our goal to work within a framework of public acceptance yet also work within a framework of the best science we can get on the topic.

10. Adjourn

As there were no further business to discuss the meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:



Sandy Tisiere
Recording Secretary