

Town of Stonington
Board of Selectmen and
Mystic River Boathouse Park Implementation Committee
Joint Special Meeting Minutes
Stonington Police Department, Pawcatuck, CT
March 5, 2018

The Stonington Board of Selectmen and the Mystic River Boathouse Park Implementation Committee held a joint special meeting on this date, March 5, 2018 at the Stonington Police Department at 7:00 p.m.

Present were Rob Simmons, Chairman, First Selectman; Tom Switz, Scott Bates, Mike Crowley, Steve Planchon, Jim Kelley, Alan Strunk, Kathryn Burchenal, Sandy Tissiere, Recording Secretary as well as Jason Vincent, Stonington Director of Planning; Chad Frost, Kent and Frost, Catherine Hewitt, Westerly Sun and members of the public

Members absent were Kate Rotella, Selectwoman; John Prue, Selectman; Mike O'Neill, Vice Chairman; Frank Todisco, Bryan Bentz, Breck Perkins, Steve White, and Nick Kepple,

1) Call to order

Chairman Simmons called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

2) Pledge of Allegiance

Jamison Magowan, Stonington High School Student, led the committee in the Pledge of Allegiance.

3) Comments from the Public

No comment

4) Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Tom Switz and seconded by Mike Crowley to approve the minutes from February 5, 2018 as presented.

The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

5) Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

6) Old Business

Discussion - Report of the Lease Sub-Committee

Attorney Nick Kepple was not present but asked Mr. Steve Planchon to report for him. Mr. Planchon said Mr. Kepple had eight lease documents from different municipalities and private groups the sub-committee reviewed. The committee examined and discussed the documents noting the pros and cons and what could apply to the Mystic River Boathouse Park project. Mr. Planchon asked the committee to turn to the Draft Lease Outline in the agenda packet explaining this is the starting point for the lease and there will be a more detailed document will be ready for discussion at the April meeting. Chairman Simmons reiterated the town has purchased the property and will implement the design of the park project and secondarily, a boathouse committee is going to raise private funds to build a boathouse on the property. Mr. Simmons explained the draft lease outline would be a document that would be used to lease access to a portion of the park and one of those tenants would be the Stonington High School Crew team. It was discussed who would use the boathouse. Chairman Simmons said it is his understanding there will be three bays and one of those bays will leased to the Stonington High School Crew team and the other two could be leased to other groups. The use of the park by the public was discussed as well. Chairman Simmons said the document is a work in progress and will have more precise detail and put into legal form. Tom Switz said he did not see insurance mentioned in the outline and this is something that should be considered. Chairman Simmons asked it be noted in the minutes there needs to be a discussion on the issue of insurance

Discussion - Project Update and Review

Mr. Chad Frost started with an environmental update. Mr. Frost shared a map showing the locations of the areas approved for additional testing. Mr. Frost explained the areas of concern were petroleum, some VOCs (volatile organic compound) and PCBs saying an additional eight more testing wells were drilled. Six of these wells were outside the building and two were in the garage. In the garage, there was petroleum found and it is isolated to below the shed. In three of the wells, there were data loggers installed to measure the ground water against the tide to provide additional information. The area where the PCBs were found was tested again and they did not find anything so they will follow the proper steps with the state saying it was just a fluke test. Mr. Frost said regarding the VOCs, it has been identified and isolated and will be part of the remediation plan. Mr. Frost said final reports are not in yet; it is good news the remediation is isolated to small parts of the property.

Mr. Frost discussed coastal access using four Sandborn maps. The first map was from 1890 where nothing existed on the site; the second map was from 1903 showing the house, another structure and the beginnings of the mill; by 1911, the northern part of the mill had doubled in size and the southern half of the mill was added; the small building was replaced with a larger building and an additional building had been constructed and a building had been built at the end of the dock; the last map from 1924 showed the land had gotten bigger once the mill became operational, with an addition to the building. It was asked if the inlet was under the building and Mr. Frost answered they had drilled down and hit something hard so they think there could be a pipe that went through the inlet but it really isn't clear. Mr. Frost explained how the land changed over the years saying the road was high and the river was

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low. Mr. Frost told the committee the expectations of coastal access need to be discussed regarding the access was intended for boats, kayaks, canoes or will the shoreline be available for the public to walk or sunbathe. Mr. Frost explained if there were people using the water's edge for wading or swimming an extreme level ecological risk assessment that would have to be done. Chairman Simmons shared at the previous meeting when Dr. Rebecca French and Kim Bradley from SERCA were there to provide information on creating a living shoreline; his thought was the primary focus for the Mystic River Boathouse Park was for people to access the water by a dock or wharf. Mr. Frost discussed the purpose of the living shoreline and what was involved in creating a living shoreline. The committee, by consensus, decided there will be continued development of the living shoreline giving the public access to river by view of the water from the park or a boardwalk and launch boats by a ramp, wharf or dock.

Mr. Frost presented a conceptual spatial analysis of the park with placement of the boathouse and parking. This plan looks at the programmatic level on how much space is available and what is needed. Due the tapering of the shoreline, in the concept plan, it is being suggested the boathouse be bent a little to best meet the needs of bringing the long Crew boats in and out to the river. Also, with the boathouse being angled, the space could be utilized behind it to enable larger vehicles such to enter from Route 27 through the parking lot and go around the building and exit from the other side; there could also be parking behind the building as well. The parking lot is designed to hold 32 cars. Mr. Frost showed spoke of placement of the dock and what was needed to build the dock where it would be most beneficial. The suggestion is to use the existing wall as a historical element in the design, however, it is a titled wetland that would be filled. Mr. Frost explained the wetland is functioning due to the manmade structure that had been built there. If the committee would want to go this route, and hardening this off, it would recreate these areas. Mr. Frost discussed the location of the parking and the number of spaces needed. Mr. Frost explained the access to the building and the parking lot in conjunction with the building and access to the water. Mr. Frost said this is a conceptual plan of what it could look like. The committee asked Mr. Frost to send them the conceptual plan by email for review.

7) New Business

Discussion – Briefing on the Boathouse Architectural Bids

As Vice Chairman O'Neill was not in attendance, Chairman Simmons reported there was 26 hard copy responses to the boathouse RFQ (Request for Qualification). Mr. Vincent said this is an exceptional number of bids. Chairman Simmons said this project the source of incredible interest and enthusiasm among the architectural community not only in Connecticut but surrounding states. Mr. Simmons went on to state this is impressive response to this our RFQ and a very positive development when it comes to further promotion of the boathouse portion of this project and raising funds.

Discussion – Mystic Little League

Chairman Simmons showed the Rossi Mill and behind it the Rossi Park saying there appears to be room there for up to 100 cars. Mr. Simmons said that every parking space at the park takes away from the park itself and the park shouldn't be lost to parking. Chairman Simmons said he has had discussions with the head of the Mystic Little League and agreed to have continued discussions regarding offsite parking for the Mystic River Boathouse Park. The committee will have to consider the number of spaces needed for the park onsite and the amount of parking needed for events and regattas. The committee discussed parking issues around accommodating the elderly and disabled and what conflicts could arise around the scheduling of the park usage and the Little League usage for parking.

A motion was made by Scott Bates and Steve Planchon to authorize the Chairman and his designees to explore the option of shared parking for the Mystic River Boathouse Park and the Mystic Little League.

The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

8) Comments from the Public

Ms. Sally Cogan voiced her concern as to why you are thinking of rebuilding the hard wall and the advantage it would give and what disadvantage it would give. Chairman Simmons answered the advantage it would give the public a solid platform to view the river or to have a picnic and engage in recreational activity other than kayaking, paddling or rowing. Ms. Cogan asked she thought it was protecting what is now a tidal marsh. Mr. Frost explained the area is currently contaminated fill and needed to be capped with at least two feet of clean material to make it environmentally safe for the public; there needs to be encapsulation of the edges to keep the fill from eroding away. Mr. Frost said there has to be some sort of structure to contain the fill and the thought was to use the existing structure, refurbish it and use that structure to contain the fill making more useable space in the park.

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9) **Comments from the Committee**

Steve Planchon said to answer the question of insurance from Mr. Switz, it can be found at the top of page 3 in the Draft Lease Outline. Jim Kelley asked what percentage or number of the parking spaces are required for handicapped parking. Chad Frost answered two, one van and one normal for that amount of spaces. If it works out with the Little League, there could be more. Mr. Vincent said another option would be temporary signage for spaces for events. Mr. Switz asked about the status of the State Grant. Mr. Vincent answered said we are still working on the environmental portion with the state funding and the budget we have been working with is \$120,000 out of the \$200,000 that is available and if we don't use the remainder of that budget for change orders we might be able to reposition that money for other purposes. Chairman Simmons closed by saying at a time there seems to be a lot of bad news, this is a big good news project for the town Stonington; a legacy project for those of us who have lived here a long time and never had problems accessing the water. These days it is increasingly difficult to secure a piece of property that could have been sold and used for homes or commercial use with no access to the water. This project is a big plus for Stonington to provide the community access to the Mystic river for essentially free of charge for the foreseeable future. Mr. Simmons said he appreciates the talent and ability represented on the implementation committee, the project manager and Mr. Vincent and although this has not come to us easily but we are doing our best to make it work.

10) **Adjourn**

A motion was made by Rob Simmons and seconded by Scott Bates to adjourn the meeting 8:12 p.m.
The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

Respectfully submitted



Sandra Tissiere
Recording Secretary



Stacey Haskell
Recording Secretary