

Town of Stonington  
Board of Selectmen and  
Mystic River Boathouse Park Implementation Committee  
Joint Special Meeting Minutes  
Stonington Police Department, Pawcatuck, CT  
October 2, 2017

The Stonington Board of Selectmen and the Mystic River Boathouse Park Implementation Committee held a joint special meeting on this date, October 2, 2017 at the Stonington Police Department at 7:00 p.m.

Present were Rob Simmons, Chairman, First Selectman; Mike O'Neill, Vice Chairman; Tom Switz, Steve Planchon, Mike Crowley, Breck Perkins, Kathryn Burchenal, Jim Kelley, Nick Kepple, and Sandy Tissiere, Recording Secretary as well as Jason Vincent, Stonington Director of Planning; and Chad Frost, Frost and Kent

Late arrival: Scott Bates 7:17 p.m.

Members absent were Kate Rotella, Selectwoman; Mike Spellman, Selectman; Frank Todisco, Steve White, Bryan Bentz, and Alan Strunk

- 1) **Call to order**  
Chairman Simmons called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.
- 2) **Pledge of Allegiance**  
Mike O'Neill led the committee in the Pledge of Allegiance.
- 3) **Comments from the Public**  
There were no public comments
- 4) **Approval of Minutes**  
Chairman Simmons seated alternates Jim Kelley, Kathryn Burchenal and Breck Perkins.

A motion was made by Tom Switz and seconded by Mike O'Neill to approve the minutes from July 24, 2017 as presented. The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

A motion was made by Tom Switz and seconded by Mike O'Neill to approve the minutes from September 9, 2017 as presented. The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

- 5) **Correspondence**  
Chairman Simmons shared a letter addressed to Chad Frost and himself from Jan and Bill Michael, whom attended the public meeting, saying they found it informative and well presented. They wanted to share their comments and opinions via letter.

Chairman Simmons also shared a draft request for proposal for the architectural design of the boathouse. Chairman Simmons recommended the document be sent to the town attorney for review. Vice Chairman O'Neill, shared the intent of the document is to solicit potential architects for the project, he explained this is a first draft of the request for proposal and suggested it be reviewed and edited by the town attorney and Jason Vincent. Chairman Simmons told the committee, the document should be considered as received as correspondence for review. Chairman Simmons stated, for the record, that we are the park committee not the boathouse committee so that is an issue we must be careful about. The committee discussed the complexity of the project of building a boathouse that fulfills the wants and needs of the crew team as well as fits into the limited space of the park.

- 6) **Old Business**
  - **Discussion – Follow up on Community Forum**  
Chairman Simmons turned the meeting over to Chad Frost to share the results of the community meeting. Mr. Frost broke the comments into three categories:

Must Have	Would Like	Do Not Need
Pedestrian Connectivity Bicycle Facilities Public Boat Launch Public Water Access Shoreline Restoration Public Restrooms Exterior Public Shell/Kayak Storage Sustainable Design/Native Plants	Handicap Kayak Ramp Pavilion/Shade Structure	Outdoor Classroom Boat Wash Visual Gateway to Mystic Memorable/Iconic Space Public Art

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Chairman Simmons asked for results of the public outreach meeting be entered into the minutes (Attachment #1). Mr. Frost and the committee agreed the community event was a success. Mr. Frost said a lot of information was gathered which could be a good start to a mission statement.

- Discussion – Follow up on Capital Campaign Kickoff

Mike O'Neill thanked Chairman Simmons for hosting a wonderful kickoff party saying it was successful in raising funding. Mr. O'Neill discussed other donations being made, saying there are a lot of people who would like to see Hart Perry eulogized. Chairman Simmons discussed other fund-raising events that have happened as well.

7) **New Business**

- Discussion – Mystic River Boathouse Management

Chairman Simmons discussed the question of how the park will be managed considering the many entities involved i.e., the town, the Boathouse Committee, The Friends of Crew and the Stonington High School Crew Team. Chairman Simmons shared he asked George Sylvestre, as an interested party, to research a solution to this question and Mr. Sylvestre agreed. Chairman Simmons continued this discussion into the next item of discussion.

- Discussion – Site visit to other Connecticut Boathouses

Chairman Simmons told the committee, himself, the town attorney and George Sylvestre contacted Old Lyme and Guilford to visit their boathouses who agreed to a visit on October 11, 2017 from 10 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Chairman Simmons said anyone on the committee or the public would be invited to participate. These visits involves the entire committee which would constitute a special meeting. The committee discussed the reasoning of choice for Mr. Sylvestre and whether the two boathouses would be appropriate comparisons. Mr. Perkins asked the Chairman if the gist of the conversation is we are trying to understand the governance between the running of the boathouse and its involvement with the park and trying to find some document that will support that arrangement. Chairman Simmons said yes this is correct. Mr. Perkins suggested contacting USRowing as they already have some of this governance crafted. He also suggested contacting Hartford and Glastonbury asking them to share their documents to see if it is something that would fit our needs and if it is, then pay a visit to the facilities. Chairman Simmons said he will solicit governance documents from Hartford and Glastonbury and, in accordance with the committee's guidance, will not act on the site visits to these other boathouses until a later time when the committee is better prepared.

A motion was made by Scott Bates and seconded by Breck Perkins to table the discussion of having an on-the-road meeting to visit the boat houses in Old Lyme and Guilford.

Discussion: Nick Kepple said there are two issues that are related on this topic of the boathouses and their management, one is what it is going to look like and the second is how it will function. There are two types of boathouses, one that is a shed and the elaborate ones on the other end of the spectrum and this will one will be somewhere on the continuum. Mr. Kepple stated, the key thing the Boathouse Committee needs to do is report and fully explain the sizing of what is being proposed and how the conclusion was reached and ideally have the Park Committee embrace that rationale. Mike Crowley stated I agree with that. I think that is what we should be doing. Mr. Crowley said the important key point of the boathouse is to get the size of building to do what you want and need with the funding you have. Mr. Kepple opined the management side is going to be more challenging, we shouldn't be reinventing the wheel, there are lots of communities who have done this before and I suggest we table it but anticipate having a sub-committee of this group work on the issue of managing the structure using George Sylvestre as an advisor and mentor.

The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

A motion was made by Chairman Simmons and seconded by Mike O'Neill to have the committee nominate Nick Kepple to head up a sub-committee to formulate and create a management proposal for the boathouse on the park.

Chairman Simmons, as First Selectman, offered Mr. Kepple any resources needed from the town hall staff and would ask Mr. Frost to offer any assistance as well.

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**Discussion:** Nick Kepple reminded the committee this is an important task that will take time and would anticipate not having a proposal before the committee before January. Mike Crowley spoke of the importance of keeping Chad Frost in the involvement of the development of the document. Mr. Bates said Mr. Frost will be working on the development of the park and the subcommittee will be responsible for developing how the boathouse and park will be managed. Jason Vincent spoke of the two levels of expectations, there is the form level where Mr. Frost is the master planner of the park developing the elements of how it looks and feels, and the other is the expectations everyone is living by which need to be developed, what is the town responsible for and what are the Friends of Crew responsible for, there has to be something developed to ensure everyone there is governance in place.

The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

• Discussion -- Friends of Stonington Crew

Chairman Simmons said the next issue to be addressed is the Friends of Stonington Crew using the site. Everyone agrees it is a good thing they are using the site as it discourages any activity that would be unwarranted. Mike Crowley asked when the public could start using the site. Chairman Simmons said signage is posted saying to contact Barbara McKrell if someone wants to visit the property. Mike O'Neill said the Stonington High School Crew is a professional group and have been using the site for several years.

A motion was made by Scott Bates and seconded by Steve Planchon to accept the Friends of Stonington Crew to be on the site.

**Discussion:** Mr. O'Neill explained for the past seven years prior to the town buying the property, the Friends of Stonington leased the barn building to store the boats on the property. This summer, the beach was cleaned up to be used as a wet launch. All activity is supervised by coaches and adults.

The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

8) **Comments from the Public**

No public comments

9) **Comments from the Committee**


Mike O'Neill suggested the pursuit of putting a dock on the sight, and would like to start the permitting process with the idea of the sooner a dock is there, the sooner the crew would be able to use the facility providing there isn't a conflict of interest from the town or Mr. Frost. Mr. Frost said building a dock now would be premature as a plan for the property hasn't been developed yet. Mr. Frost also spoke of his concern of any environmental issues that might need to be addressed. Tom Switz asked what was the progress with environmental. Mr. Frost answered once his contract is signed, he would contact DEEP to start the environmental study. Mr. Frost said by the end of the year, we should have a good idea what we have environmentally and how to proceed. Tom Switz asked when the park will be opened to the public. Mr. Frost said it wouldn't be next year but maybe something could be worked out in the interim. Brent Perkins suggested Chad Frost provide the committee a revised calendar submitted once a month at the monthly meeting. Nick Kepple sincerely thanked Rob Simmons and his wife, Heidi, for the wonderful evening as a fundraiser for the boathouse.

10) **Adjourn**

A motion was made by Mike Crowley and seconded by Breck Perkins to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 p.m.

The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

Respectfully submitted



Sandra Tisiere  
Recording Secretary



Stacey Haskell  
Recording Secretary

ATTACHMENT #1

## Mystic River Boathouse Park

### Meeting Report 001

From: Tim Magee  
CC: Chad Frost Kent + Frost

Date: September 11, 2017



**Re: Public Outreach Meeting #1 - Public Concerns**

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Location: Latitude 41

Meeting Date: September 9, 2017

At the end of the public participation session, the following public comments were volced to the group.

1. Ensure there is fencing for child safety around waterways.
2. Look at the bigger picture and take into account the entire visual context of the Mystic River and the sustainability and preservation methods already in place along the river and ensure the design of the park is consistent with these ideals.
3. Focus on making this park a water use/access park and do not dilute it with other programmatic elements.
4. The park should provide opportunities for passive recreation with adequate but not excessive parking.
5. The park should provide high quality aesthetics (not high cost) and user experience which represents the best of Mystic.
6. Site needs to be fully accommodating for regattas and provide adequate space for teams, equipment and spectators during those times.
7. There is a concern about the draw this park will have with town and out of town users and the impacts it will have on management of the park which includes parking and traffic impacts on the immediate area.
8. The parking may become a potential issue, the lot should provide drop off/ loading space and park elsewhere to prevent overcrowding.
9. (Chad to the participants) Do you think people will come to the park by alternative means by biking or walking? (Respondant) Yes, it's the towns citizens that have to ensure it happens.
10. A management strategy for the park needs to be put in place at the start of the project.
11. (First Selectman) Management of the park has been an item of concern for the implementation committee and they have visited other sites within the state to investigate the management structure where they have utilized legal ramifications. They (reviewed the) MOU between the users and the town and looked at a range of issues at each location. Glastonbury boathouse is a 5M nightmare and we do not want to replicate it.
12. Add a pole question for citizens to respond about the parking quantity requirements.  
(Chad) With these meetings we are determining the uses to be implemented in the park and will make recommendations to the town based on those uses and allow for comment to increase or decrease spaces. We are concerned with the day to day use and ensure its not being overwhelmed.
13. A sign should be placed at the park to direct motorized boat users to the town dock for launching.

14. Ensure event parking doesn't encroach into surrounding neighborhoods.
15. A pavilion should serve double duty as an outdoor classroom. Where possible site elements should serve multiple purposes to reduce clutter.
16. Preserve natural beach and existing bulkhead and use them in the design.
17. Parking situation will not look much different than it does today during regatta's because of the use of Seaport parking facilities.
18. Public docks within the park should be low to the water for those citizens who have issues getting into or out of kayaks. It is much easier to enter and exit a kayak when the dock is 6" above the water.
19. There is no need for a boat ramp, there is a perfectly good ramp just south of the seaport boat yard with adequate parking.
20. The park should be kept pastoral and open, cluttering it with too many elements will detract from its beauty.
21. We need dingy docks where we can get to the water easily. There are plenty of areas along the Mystic River where visitors can view the water but access is limited.
22. Fencing to protect children from falling in the water will detract from the aesthetics and views from the park.

*Attachments:*

1. Email September 13, 2017 from Jan and Bill Michael.

**Mystic River Boathouse Park**  
 Wants and Needs Activity Summary  
 September 11, 2017

**Kent + Frost**  
 Landscape Architecture

**Activity Summary:**

Participants were asked to place a single red sticker in the appropriate box based on how strongly they feel an item should be included within the park. One vote equals one red sticker. The green boxes indicate the box which received the most votes for each item.

ITEM	DO NOT NEED	INDIFFERENT	WOULD LIKE	MUST HAVE	TOTAL VOTES
1 Pedestrian Connectivity	0	1	2	32	35
2 Bicycle Facilities	0	3	2	27	32
3 Public Boat Launch	0	0	8	28	36
4 Handicap Kayak Ramp	0	6	13	17	36
5 Public Water Access	0	0	0	37	37
6 Shoreline Restoration	0	1	5	30	36
7 Outdoor Classroom	7	8	7	2	34
8 Pavilion / Shade Structure	11	6	5	18	35
9 Public Restrooms	2	3	7	26	38
10 Exterior Public Shell / Kayak Storage	8	7	11	12	38
11 Boat Wash	7	1	1	5	35
12 Visual Gateway to Mystic	7	4	8	3	33
13 Memorable / Iconic Space	7	7	2	0	31
14 Sustainable Design / Native Plants	6	3	8	13	40
15 Public Art	10	10	5	2	35