

**Thames River Heritage Park**

**Transition Team Meeting - Minutes**

**Wednesday, September 23, 2015, 0800**

**Fort Trumbull State Park**

**90 Walbach Street**

**New London, Connecticut**

**Attendance: Attendance:**

Committee Members: Pamela Aey Adams, Chris Cox, Ellen Cummings, Deborah Donovan, Brent Eugenides, Capt. Carl Lahti, Penny Newbury, Penny Parsekian, Joe Selinger

Other: Suzanne Simpson

I. Call to Order: Chairman, C. Cox @ 0803

II. THRP Chairman’s Report/Announcements

C. Cox handed out flyers from the New London Historical Society regarding their upcoming 6th Annual Thames River Cruise on October 17 with Boarding at 12:30PM. Dr. Jason Mancini will speak about Indian Mariners. Chris suggested that all TRHP Transition Team Members go on the cruise as a show of solidarity in support of the lower Thames River area and the organizations involved in bringing attention to the river.

III. Approval of Minutes August 26, 2015 – P. Adams

MM: J. Selinger Approve as presented

MS: B Eugenides

Vote: All in favor, no opposition, no abstention

IV. Fiduciary Report – J. Butler

J. Butler - Not present – no report.

V. Committee Reports

A. Organization Committee – Chair: Juliet Hodge

J. Hodge not present. C. Cox will meet with her in the next month to ensure that the Organizational Committee in on board with the direction the TRHP is taking.

B. Governance Committee – Chair: Joe Selinger

Committee has reviewed a number of models and recommended a model similar to the Freedom Trail (FT)in Boston, MA

-FT initially began as a grant-funded organization but now has transitioned to a Fee- based model.

-FT does not do a lot of fundraising but will give selective grants to support sites

-FT does not compete with historic sites but rather, complements them.

-FT operates similar to a corporation.

-TRHP will operate with a self-perpetuating Board of Directors and, will be very transparent.

-P. Parsekian suggested to J. Selinger that the Governance Committee look into the Rhode Island Foundation as another good model.

-The Governance Committee suggested, *“The Thames River Heritage Park Foundation”* as an organizational name. The Organizational Committee also has suggested names. Organizational Naming will be discussed at the October 28, 2015 Meeting and a name will be determined.

-The Governance Committee drafted the following mission statement”

**Mission Statement (DRAFT)**

The Thames River Heritage Park Foundation is a nonprofit organization whose purpose is to develop, promote, coordinate, and help preserve a State of Connecticut park known as the Thames River Heritage Park, which will include sites of national and historical significance along the Thames River in and around the cities of Groton and New London, located across from each other near the mouth of the river. The Foundation carries out its purpose in collaboration with the State of Connecticut, the United States Coast Guard, the United States Navy, local municipalities and regional authorities, and the numerous heritage sites within its area. A primary role of the Foundation is the oversight and operation of a water shuttle system designed to transport visitors to and from sites of significance on both sides of the Thames River.

-The draft Mission Statement will be discussed at the October 28, 2015 Meeting and the final wording of the Mission Statement be determined.

- The Mission Statement needs to cover the overall park but also focus on the Water Taxi.

C. Finance Committee – Chair: Chris Cox

-Once the organization has a name and a mission, By-Laws can be drafted and, a Certificate of Incorporation as a Non-Profit form of organization can be filed. The filing should be able to be accomplished within a couple of weeks following agreement on the name and mission.

-Funding has not been transferred from the State yet. There is some concern regarding the recent 5% State Budget rescission ordered by Governor Malloy. It is not clear if the reduction will impact funding for the TRHP. The Legislature approved two payments of $100,000 each ($200,000 total) to fund the start-up TRHP. It is hoped that the first payment will be sent soon so that the money is ready to begin work on the Water Taxis

-Kathy Steamer has been selected as the Accountant for the TRHP Transition Team – once the Private, Not-for-profit organization has been established. In the meantime, COG will be the financial entity for the TRHP.

C. Cox and P. Parsekian met with Sen. Formica and Rep Bumgardner to discuss the $755,000 Urban Act Grant (Wayfinding Materials) and how the TRHP Transition Team will utilize the funding.

State Bond Commission will meet September 29, 2015 but, there are no Urban Act Grants listed on the Agenda.

The TRHP Transition Team needs to keep in continuous contact with the CT Dept. of Economic and Community Development n(DECD) to insure that DECD continues to move forward with the Urban Act Grant for the TRHP.

-C. Cox pointed out that the Transition Team would like to be ready by January 2016 to accept the grant and begin work on the initial phases of the TRHP Wayfinding program and boat outfitting.

D. Communications & Programming Committee – Chair: Penny Parsekian

-The Committee sent a monthly report which was forwarded to all Transition Team members.

-Additional information obtained since report was written:

-Rita Rivera, from the Eastern CT Regional Tourism District will register the TRHP with the District and include it in its listings once the park is ready to open to the public.

- D. Donovan suggested advertising as a partner organization in *“Connecticut Explored”* Magazine. The magazine is a publication of The Assoc. for the Study of American History. D. Donovan suggested that perhaps a story relating to the TRHP could be included in an upcoming issue. Deb suggested that representatives from the TRHP attend the November 7, 2015 conference of the Association for the Study of Connecticut History which will be held at Central Ct State University all day on Nov. 7. The topic for the Conference is “World War I – Connecticut Goes to War.” Editorial Staff of “CT Explored” will be at the conference.

C. Cox suggested setting up a meeting with the Connecticut Explored Editorial Board.

-Two stories about the TRHP have appeared in The Day newspaper, one on August 27 and the other on September 11.

-P. Parsekian suggests that an overall budget needs to be developed soon. The

C & P Committee will need to know what it has budgeted to secure advertising spots in magazines.

E. Water Taxi Planning and Operations – Chair: Marian Galbraith

-The Committee sent a monthly report which was forwarded to all Transition Team members.

-Additional information obtained since report was written:

-Four free Navy surplus vessels are available for bid and, Groton is actively pursuing acquisition of two of those for use as Water Taxis.

-Early estimates to operate the water taxis are as follows:

-$908/day/boat (round up to even $1,000). (This figure includes fuel, general maintenance, insurance and salary.) ($2,000/day/2-boats)

Water Taxi Operation is proposed for 48 days. ($96,000/season for two Water Taxis)

-Additional Expense: $44,000/2 (Round up to $50,000) boats to refurbish and bring up to code to carry passengers.

-Transition Team is anticipating ridership of 100,000-200,000 based upon visitation at Nautilus/Submarine Force Museum.

-A $5/person fee for an all-day pass is being suggested by TT members.

-How to handle Admission fees to sites will need to be discussed.

- C. Lahti reports that the Navy is open to the construction of a Water Taxi Dock at the Nautilus. State Dept. of Construction Services (formerly Dept. of Public Works) will need to secure funds and handle all of the contracting.

-Groton will need to sign agreement to maintain dock.

-DEEP will have to review Environmental Impact Statement to see if it need to be updated. New permits will need to be secured. (7 Pilings will need to be driven to secure dock.

-Current cost estimate to construct dock is approx. $750,000 - $1,000,000.

-The current assumption by the Transition Team is that the Nautilus Water Taxi Dock will not be in place by summer 2016.

C. Cox is tasked with creating a budget by October 28, 2015 Meeting

VI. Good of the Order

A. Transition Team Executive Committee – C. Cox is proposing the formation of a TT Executive Committee composed of all Sub-Committee Chairs to be able to act on urgent items.

B. C. Cox is very pleased with how the TRHP future organization is proceeding.

C. The TT needs to develop an Editorial position and message which is important for consistency.

D. C. Cox and P. Parsekian plan to meet with the Community Foundation to educate them about the Transition Team plans and to keep them apprised of the TRHP status.

E. Need to discuss with DEEP as to what their vision is for the TRHP and, how it can benefit the State Parks.

VII. Next Meeting Location: Nautilus (US Submarine Force Museum)

1 Crystal Lake Road

Groton, CT

Meeting Time: 0830 (New Time)

VIII. Adjourn @ 0905

MM: J. Selinger

MS: E. Cummings

Vote: All in favor

Next Meeting Date: October 28, 2015 Time: 0830

Submarine Force Museum - Groton