

## **THAMES MARITIME HERITAGE PARK CHRONOLOGY**

**10/26/1990** – Bond Commission approves DEP request for a \$2,600,000 allocation for Thames Estuary Heritage Park. DEP Commissioner in accordance with the provisions of Sections 23-10h and 23-10i designated the Thames River Maritime Heritage Park.

Briefly, designation involved:

- 1.) Consultation with DECD Commissioner and State Historical Commission. The consultation resulted in a statewide Heritage Park Plan that called for a Thames Heritage Park.
- 2.) Prior to designation, establishment of an advisory board of at least 10 members from the municipalities involved. Municipalities provide the names.
- 3.) Public hearings held by the DEP Commissioner for the Thames Heritage Park in the communities involved. And
- 4.) Approval of the park by the municipalities within the boundaries of the planned Thames Heritage Park

**7/6/1990** – Designation of the Thames Maritime Heritage Park by DEP Commissioner Leslie Carothers

**3/19/1992** - DEP meeting with newly established advisory board.

**8/25/1994** – CRED ranks the New London, Norwich, and Groton Regional Heritage Park as Southeastern Connecticut's 1st priority economic development project for the newly available Regional Capital Development Program Funds (PA 93-382) and authorize submission of application to DECD.

**Undated** – CRED and Southeastern Connecticut COG application to DECD for Regional Economic Development Program funding. Application sought \$5,655,000 over three fiscal years (\$1,900,000 in 1st year [1993-94]) to be matched by \$2,600,000 in other State funding (DEP as noted above), \$100,000 in local funding and \$507,000 in Federal ISTEA funding. Purpose was to link the already funded Thames River Heritage Park in New London and Groton with the National Heritage Corridor in Norwich. Objective was to transform the SE CT Region into a year round tourist destination.

**10/21/1994** – Proposal offering \$1,900,000 in Regional Economic Development Program funding to City of New London signed by Commissioner McGee.

**10/27/1994** – City of New London application for \$1,900,000 in Regional Economic Development Program funding received.

**10/28/1994** – BC approves request for \$1,900,000 in Regional Economic Development Program funding for the City of New London. Request states that funds are to assist in the costs associated with completion of a visitor center and signage for the heritage Park. The stated thrust of the proposal is to transform SE CT into a year-round tourist

destination and thus diversify the region's economy. Approval includes requirement for \$300,000 in local funding.

**12/19/1994** – Assistance Agreement signed by Commissioner McGee and approved by the Attorney General on 1/10/1995. Project was included in a regional economic development plan and submitted by a regional "agency" (CRED and/or SCCOG) in accordance with requirements of PA 93-382 and therefore was eligible for funding. DECD consulted with the "agency" and agreed to fund project by providing a \$1,900,000 grant to the City of New London.

**1/7/1998** – First mention in project files of switch from a newly constructed visitor center located at south end of Water Street parking garage to the H. H. Richardson designed Union RR station. Station was to remain as target site for the visitor center until the summer of 2000.

**8/17/1999** - DECD authorizes City to use \$25,000 for study/analysis of Union RR Station for Visitor Center. Approval is contingent on City's submission of a revised project plan for both DEP and DECD funding and a revised FP&B.

**10/6/1999** - Budget revision/extension #1 approved. Extended contract end date to 12/31/2001 and reflects authorized use of \$25,000 for structural and code compliance study of Union RR Station. AMTRAK was to provide an additional \$25,000. Also reflects a change which addresses the 90%/10% matching funds requirement for the DECD grant pursuant to Section 32-328 CGS. Approval based on revised Budget Narrative/Project Plan for acquisition of RR Station by Port Authority in lieu of earlier location for Visitor Center a south end of Water Street parking garage.

**4/7/2000** – DEP advises that it will go along with RR station as site for visitor center but is concerned that DECD \$ will be spent on station structure. DEP wants DECD \$ earmarked for State of CT and visitor center exhibits.

**4/19/2000** – DECD letter to City indicating that before amending FP&B to allow possible purchase and renovation of RR station DECD wants proof that all parties involved with the project (i.e. Groton NL DEP etc) are in agreement with the proposed project changes. DECD letter was in response to City letter seeking to use DECD \$ for Dev. Costs for Downs on the RR station.

**6/6/2000** – Letter from DEP to Bruce Hyde confirming earlier telephone conversation during which Richard Clifford Bureau Chief advised Bruce that \$1,000,000 of DEP's Heritage Park funding was being assigned to costs associated with the development of Fort Trumbull State Park (located within New London and therefore within boundaries of the Heritage Park). Letter also states that as a result an alternate financing plan must be developed which does not use a capital subsidy toward rental payments from the state for space in the proposed RR station visitor center. Letter further reinforces earlier requirement that a shoreline facility in Groton must be a part of the project.

8/9/2000 – Letter from City of New London to Dick Clifford at DEP advising that City Council has authorized \$8,000,000 in bonds for purchase of RR station. Letter requests DEP's re-affirmation that it would lease space in the station for the visitor station.

8/21/2000 – Letter to City from DEP Deputy Commissioner Leff advising that DEP will not pursue leasing a portion of the RR station for the Thames Maritime Heritage visitors center.

1/24/2002 – Meeting to reactivate project, determine funding still available and focus on developing a successful linkage system of attractions in the three communities rather than focus on a visitor center with exhibits. Meeting provided basic framework for moving the project forward. Idea of gateways on either side of the river rather than a single visitor center discussed. Steps needed to bring project to reality outlined.

4/24/2002 – Meeting to continue process of addressing steps identified at January meeting. These include a clear project narrative, a realistic budget, a business plan, and a RFQ for consultant to do market analysis, develop the park product and a promotion plan. Also needed is plan to address logistics that are key to the successful operation of the park.