

CAMDEN RIVERWALK and PUBLIC LANDING PROJECT
PUBLIC FORUM #2
Minutes of Meeting
April 22, 2013

The Public Forum was convened at 6:30 at the Celebration of Life Church in the Knox Mill Complex by Brian Hodges, Director of Development, with an estimated 95 members of the public attending. Pastor Ray welcomed everyone and noted how happy he was to offer the meeting room to the Town, and to play a role in facilitating these community discussions.

1. History, Introductions & Overview: Brian Hodges

History and Background:

The Town is working on a combined Riverwalk and Public Landing Project. The ideas are not new – many discussions have taken place over the years, and in 2012 the Town took many of these ideas and worked on a Downtown Master Plan. Two recommendations in the Plan were related to the current projects: 1) Looking at designing a Riverwalk for connectivity to build upon natural assets; and 2) To look at the Public Landing with regard to current uses and possible best uses.

The Downtown Master Plan included four conceptual designs for the Public Landing that were intended only to be ideas that would start conversations about the best use for that property – that is why everyone is here this evening. The Town successfully applied for two grants – one to design a Riverwalk, and one for the possible re-design of the Public Landing. Even though they are two separate grants the projects are intertwined, and consolidating resources to avoid duplicating design team solicitations and public meetings seemed logical. So, even though the two facets of the project will be considered separately, they will be presented concurrently because of the degree of overlap.

Work Group and Design Team:

- The Town went out with requests for proposals and received eleven from around the country. They selected a team led by TYLin International from Falmouth, who will lead the effort to the completion date in October. TYLin's Team consists of representatives from Terrance J. DeWan and Associates, Baker Design Consultants, Penobscot Environmental, Northeast Civil Solutions and Planning Decisions
- The Town also formed a Work Group to help guide Town staff and the Design Team through-out the effort. That Group includes representation from: Camden's Economic Development and Advisory Committee (CEDAC); the Downtown Business Group; the Conservation Commission; Parks and Recreation Committee; Harbor Committee; Camden-Rockport Pathways Committee; Penobscot Bay Regional Chamber of Commerce, and Knox Mill residents – a very representative group

Stakeholder Outreach:

The 1st Community Meeting was held on April 1 with a huge turn-out, and this evening's turn-out shows that the Town's effort to continue to get the word out is working. That effort includes: The Camden Newsletter; local media; and direct mailings to citizens with a direct connection to these projects. For the Riverwalk meeting direct mailings were sent to property owners abutting the river. For this evening's meeting, direct mailings were sent to property owners and business owners who are adjacent to, or nearby, the Public Landing. It is important to the success of the project to keep getting information from the public, and the effort to do so will continue

2. Overview of Project and Process: Darin Bryant

- **Inventory existing conditions and uses, gather data, base mapping:** This is an on-going process to gather as much information as possible that will be used to create the designs
- **Community input and participation:** This is the second of four public meetings – the next are in June and September. In addition to the public meetings, members of the Team are meeting with various stakeholders – property owners and business groups included. Information here will also be used in the conceptualizing process
- **Develop Schematic Plans and Assess Economic Impacts – both positive and negative:** Once the plan is developed the Team will look at the economic benefits and economic costs for both projects and weigh them
- **Provide Preliminary Cost Estimates:** They will provide the Town with the information needed for planning funding and with suggestions for finding funding sources
- **Develop a Phased Implementation Plan:** This will help the Town answer questions such as: What can be built now? What can wait until later? What are the priorities going forward? What easements might be required? What permits will be needed?

Public Forum #2 Goals:

- **Acknowledge work done to date:** The Team has reviewed the proposals done in the past with regard to improvement of the Public Landing and possible connections from the Landing to the Park – they will provide an overview
- **Find the collective wisdom of the Camden Community:** They are here to listen and lend technical support, but this is Camden's project and they need to hear what the Town wants, what they need and don't need, what they like and don't like – the Town is the source of this information and the Team is here to gather that information
- **Provide Opportunities for Comment and Involvement:** Mr. Bryant described the process for gathering information this evening: 1) Attendees will be given the chance to make comments in the public setting; 2) They will then break out into small groups; and 3) That information will be reported back to the whole group. This provides everyone the

opportunity to let the Team know what they think, but also the opportunity to listen to what their neighbors think

3. Design Approach:

Sarah Witte, Landscape Architect

Ms. Witte gave a brief over-view of Camden's legacy of protecting open spaces, and discussed the first forum on the Riverwalk Project. It had been stressed that this should be considered a phased project, and that there will be no taking of land for public use *unless* the owners want that to happen. They were excited to discuss all the possibilities for that project, and are happy now to be here to discuss the Public Landing – the place where the Riverwalk will end. They want to find out what is best for the Community and for their visitors -- all changes made will be so that residents can enjoy the Landing as well.

The team understands the pressure on parking that towns that are beautiful suffer when people come to visit. The Team understands that over the past year or so, with better signage and some new parking made available, pressure on the Public Landing for parking has gotten a little better. She has prepared a slide showing 5 and 10 minute walking-circles from downtown that includes all the parking resources. With additional specific signage even more confusion and frustration can be avoided as people new to Town look for parking. All the work done in preparing the Master Plan regarding parking and signage will be considered in their plan for the Landing.

Dan Bannon, Baker Design Consultants:

In starting the project one of the first steps is to learn about, and catalog, existing conditions, and to learn about how the facility is used so that can inform the design going forward.

- **Conduct an assessment of both the Marine and the Landside functions of the Public Landing:** In doing this they will consider the function of the Landing as a waterfront facility with distinct user groups and distinct needs, and although there is some overlap, both functions need to be considered
- **Collectively determine current and best uses:**

Current Uses:

This is a waterfront access facility with several docks accessing the harbor and the bay; there are docks and finger slips for boaters to access boats and dinghies; there are several vessels for hire; there is transient docking space; and there are day sailers working from the boardwalk. Sufficient dinghy storage is an issue that other harbors face, and it will be considered here.

The primary purpose of the Public Landing itself is for parking, but there are also public restrooms, a sewer pumping station, a seasonal food vendor and the Chamber of Commerce building. In addition, the Landing supports several seasonal events including the Camden Windjammer Festival. During these times the Landing is virtually closed to parking, and the facility is turned over to tents and vendors and filled with people all week-end long – this is an important event to the Town.

This is a working waterfront: There is a dedicated area for commercial fishermen to use the facility: spaces to park, and areas to access their boats and to off-load their traps. There is docking and parking for the Windjammers and other boats for hire; space to on-load and off-load their passengers and gear; and room for sales tables on the boardwalk.

When dredging and other construction projects occurs there needs to be room for barges on the water side, and room to stage the operation on the land side.

There are about 85 parking spaces – some dedicated for specific uses. Parking needs range from short-term 2 hour parking to all day parking, to people driving in to sit in their cars and look at the harbor. The Team is closely assessing these parking functions and needs. (Someone from the audience interrupted at this point to offer specific figures on how different parking is allocated, but her comments were inaudible to the Recorder, and those figures are not provided here.)

The Landing serves an important function in welcoming visitors to the area – both from water and from the land. And, it serves an important function in supporting adjacent businesses – parking among them. All these functions will be considered by the Design Team.

Sarah Witte: Examples From Away:

Ms. Witte showed examples of other harbor towns and how they address using similar spaces, saying that perhaps they are not the right solution for Camden, but they do open up new possibilities for design solutions.

The following are specific components of any harbor design:

- On the Landside: Traffic access, parking and circulation
- On the Waterside: Minimizing conflicts between users (recreational and commercial)
- Land and water user interface: In Camden there is pressure because of transitions in use – things are not the same as they were. Collectively the group will determine the best current use; what is the best future scenario for the Landing; and, how does the Town make that transition. Often this means the development of multi-purpose/multi-function spaces to handle this interface. In a small space like the Public Landing it is hard to find enough space for everyone to have their own space set aside. Instead, it is better to look at pooled common resources

The Team's goals for the design are:

- **Safety for users:** Railings along the Boardwalk are an example of a safety feature where there are many options for design; they can also be removable. Curbing or transitional changes in paving surfaces can be used to help with pedestrian safety. Planters also provide visual cues and separation between uses
- **Accessibility for all users:** There are many design issues here to ensure accessibility by everyone. Given Camden's tide drop, an 80' gangway would be required
- **Maintainability by Town:** Consideration is given to all materials used to make maintaining these facilities less expensive to towns (things like granite benches that never need replacing)
- **Connectivity between adjacent businesses, downtown, and public land:** There is already discussion of the Riverwalk, but it may be that the design will make provisions for locating a water taxi or a shuttle. The discussion this evening will explore the potential of a bridge over the falls to connect the Landing with Harbor Park. If done well, and with great thought, bridges can be economic engines that create business – they are special places that people love to visit
- **Amenities oriented for pedestrian and boaters:** These are things that are added to make the visit more enjoyable and safe: benches and other seating and tables – a place for people to meet; restrooms; night-time lighting; interpretive and way-finding signage – perhaps history can be told with signs along the Boardwalk; shelter for those visiting the harbor in bad weather – a portion of the Boardwalk covered for example
- **Visual/aesthetics: Respecting and maintaining Camden's historic village and unique setting:** It will be important that the views of the Landing as seen through the buildings along Main Street are inviting
- **Phasing the implementation of improvements to correspond with transitions in usage:** The Team wants to hear from users of the facilities about what the needs are now, how much parking is needed, and are there other uses that should be incorporated at the Landing. They will develop the Master Plan and make recommendations for phasing the work

Ms. Witte's Power Point presentation showing picture examples of these solutions will be available on the Town's website at: <http://www.camdenmaine.gov> . Follow the Riverwalk and Public Landing link from the Banner; on the project home page find the link to Second Community Meeting

Whole Group Comment:

Owner of Lily, Lupine and Fern on Main Street: He asked the Town to think about economic development and improving the business climate in Town in the winter instead of focusing on these projects. Business owners he has spoken to are worried about anything that will divert foot traffic away from the downtown. It is obvious that what Camden already has works because summer business is great. He worries about making changes that will change the Town and make it like every place else.

Steven Gold: Mr. Gold listed all of the waterside users of the harbor by number including moorings – outer and inner harbor, slips, windjammers, day sailers, lobstermen, elver fishermen and dinghy rentals. The focus of the harbor is boat-related, and the Design Team should keep the needs of all these users, including their need to load and unload their gear, foremost in their minds.

However, this is also functioning town landing, and any reduction in parking will hurt businesses. He wondered if anyone has considered making parking on the Landing for residents only.

Nancy Caudle-Johnson: She wondered if anyone has done research into whether Frederick Law Olmstead ever considered a bridge when designing Harbor Park, or if Mary Curtis Bok ever mentioned a bridge when she bought the land and gave it to the Town. Now that the Park is a National Historic Landmark, a designation that offers great protection, the Team must consider the impact of a bridge on the historic nature. In addition, a bridge would directly connect the Park to the commercial part of downtown. Right now it is somewhat removed from the commercial part of downtown, and as a result – especially with the renewal of Olmstead’s design, the Park has a quiet historic nature. She believes the Town will lose something precious if that nature is changed.

She added that she is one of many that like to be able to drive right down to the water to sit in the car and look out at the harbor at any time of year. This is an important feature of the Landing and should be retained.

Ray Andreason: He has a question about how many parking spaces are needed legally for fishermen and handicap.

Pat Klunder: She is concerned that if the bridge creates new public access to the Park, that the Park may have to come into compliance with the ADA in ways that would drastically change the design.

A boat owner: She believes it is already difficult enough to get to her dinghy and then to her boat. If that access is reduced and made even more difficult, she will have lost value in her investment. As a business owner of a shop on Main Street, she is very concerned that visitors not be routed away from Main Street.

NOTE: Other citizens spoke from the floor offering comments, but they were not always audible and their comments cannot be heard on the recording.

6. Break-out groups: 30 minutes: Led by Facilitators:

7. Gather and report: Sarah Witte

- Group’s strongest thoughts and feelings?
- Concerns? Questions? Big ideas?

The feedback from those groups is contained in a separate document called *Forum #2 Comments*; it is attached here and can be found on the project website. The Team will take this information and look for trends to direct the conceptual design.

8. Wrap-up: Brian Hodges

After thanking everyone for giving their time to this project this evening, Mr. Hodges suggested that there were ways to follow this project and obtain information about future meetings: Sign up for the Downtown Newsletter from the website - go to the website and click on Riverwalk and Public Landing on the top banner. On the homepage of the project will be all the documents from all the meetings as well as agendas for upcoming meetings and other important announcements

He informed attendees of the June 24th meeting - location to be determined – at which the Team will receive comments on the conceptual design for the Riverwalk.

In the meantime, if anyone – or any committee - wishes a private meeting with the Team they should let him know.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:30 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Jeanne Hollingsworth,
Recording Secretary