

CAMDEN RIVERWALK and PUBLIC LANDING DESIGN WORKING GROUP
Minutes of Meeting
May 28, 2013

1. Welcome and Introductions of those Present:

Project Team:

Brian Hodges, Camden Development Director
Darin Bryant, TYLin International, Consultants' Project Manager
Sarah Witte, Landscape Architect Terrence J. Dewan & Associates
Dan Brannon, Baker Design Consultants
Katherine Kern, TYLin
Mike Thompson, Environmental Consultant, Penobscot Environmental

Camden Working Group:

Ray Andreason: Parks and Recreation Committee
Anita Brosius Scott: Camden/Rockport Pathways Committee
Staci Coomer: Penobscot Bay Regional Chamber of Commerce
Ken Gross: Camden Library complex
Doug Johnson: Conservation Commission
Gene McKeever: Harbor Committee
Pat Finnigan: Camden Town Manager
Rick Seibel: Camden Public Works Director
Stuart Smith, Business/Property Owner (Public Landing)
Beth Ward, Acting Director, Parks and Recreation Department
Steve Wilson: Camden CEO and Planner

Alternates:

Robert Davis: Pathways Committee
Ed Libby: Parks and Recreation Committee and Dam Committee
Roger Rittmaster, Conservation Commission

ABSENT: Members: Barrie Pribyl, Meg Quijano, Martin Cates, Steve Pixley and Cassie Snyder;

Alternates: Flint Decker, Kathleen Bachus, Ben Ellison, Nikki Maounis and Ray Williamson

2. Initial Observations/Themes from Community and Stakeholder Meetings:

Work Group Members:

Ray Andreason: He believes that with regard to the Riverwalk project, everyone attending was pretty much on the same path; but, based on comments heard at the Public Landing presentation, he believes that there is a wide range of issues and opinions ranging from "do nothing" to the landing to "change everything" about it. After hearing all the comments from the public, Mr. Andreason wants to know if there is anything TYLin still needs to know from citizens.

Stuart Smith:

Riverwalk Meeting: The lasting impression was that so many people turned out, and, they were all excited about the project even though it was a new concept to many who attended. The remaining concern with this project seems to be property rights, but it now seems that not too many people would be impacted and he expects that concern will lessen as people learn even more.

Public Landing Meeting: Although he did not attend this workshop, from what he hears in talking with people and reading the minutes is: “Here we go again!” and “It’s fine just the way it is.” Every five years or so a proposal for the landing comes up for discussion; people talk about it; and ... nothing ever happens.

Mike Thompson: He gets a sense that even though people said things are fine the way they are at the Landing, they do talk positively about small changes – especially business owners – like more inviting lighting. Mr. Smith agreed that adding lighting is a good change; there is already a lot of foot traffic at night, but the lack of lighting may be keeping some people away.

Mr. Thompson asked if traffic flow bothered people – does it keep them away from the area. Mr. Smith does not believe it does to a great extent: Visitors don’t see the slow traffic as a huge problem – it is minor compared to many places; locals know that this is the way traffic is every summer - the bad traffic doesn’t last long, and then it goes away for another year.

Doug Johnson: The Bridge is a recurring subject that goes nowhere. He believes that it will rob energy from the other projects and distract people from the real issues of the Riverwalk and Public Landing proposals. In addition, people will take sides and not work together on ideas they may otherwise have in common – it will become the primary focus of the discussions.

Steve Wilson: There has got to be a better way to make use of the Public Landing, but he believes that it should not be too broad a proposal. If the project proceeds based on fixing current needs – a new Harbor Master’s building, improved public restrooms, showers and laundry facilities for boaters – that the Town may gain some fixes for problems like these in a new space with better traffic flow.

Brian Hodges: Noted that at the Public Landing meeting there was a lot of support for reallocating reserved parking spaces. Gene McKeever added that spaces are now included in the lease day sailers and schooners have with the Town; that doesn’t mean that provision cannot be changed in future leases.

Mike Thompson asked if businesses are losing customers when visitors cannot find parking on the Public Landing. Anita Brosius-Scott believes that is the perception and it has been discussed in the past that parking meters on the Landing would help deter employees from parking there all day. Mr. Smith added that he had served on the Parking Committee for many years and “Pay for Parking” was a constant in their discussions of how to keep parking spaces open; the idea had been thoroughly rejected every time the Committee raised the idea. The Committee also recommended that the Town did *not* have parking spaces on the Landing

included with leases, but that idea, too, was always rejected. The boat owners had argued that they need their cars nearby in case of an emergency; the Committee rejected that argument noting that other business owners coped without reserved parking so close by. He warned that the Designers should be careful of taking any parking spaces away at this point in time – reallocating reserved spaces is different, and might not raise the same objections. The current traffic flow design and space layout is very inefficient. He believes that in rearranging the parking and re-designing the traffic flow, the Team will find that they can create some green space and still have the same number of spaces available.

Rick Seibel: He thinks one reason there was not the same overall level of support for the 2nd proposal (Public Landing) is that there is not a clear vision of what the project here entails like there was for the Riverwalk.

Brian Hodges: He wondered if signage at the Public Landing directing those to other parking areas might help keep people in Town instead of heading back out to Route 1 and leaving. Members don't want to see more signage, and Staci Coomer of the Chamber suggested drivers already come to the Chamber for help with parking, and that seems to work fine – better since the directional signage went up last summer. She noted that an added benefit of parking further away is that they must walk through more of the downtown.

Ray Andreason: He mentioned nearly all the break-out groups at the Landing meeting recommended moving the Harbor Master's office, and wondered if anyone had spoken to Steve Pixley about this. He wonders what reasons Pixley had for wanting the building so close to the water. Steve Wilson replied that he had spoken to Pixley about his wishes in this regard: He prefers to be right on the water where he is or at least in a location where he can keep an eye on the Town's floats; if he had to, he believes he could work out of the Chamber building location.

Anita Brosius-Scott believes the Harbor Master *must* be right on the water in order to do his job. She would like to see a new building that follows the same design as the Camden Yacht Club – something more attractive.

Gene McKeever noted that Camden's Harbor Master is a marina operator as well since the Town rents a lot of space that he is responsible for managing. The income from the harbor is significant, and the Harbor Master is the first introduction to Camden for many visitors arriving by water. In speaking with Mr. Wilson about the possible re-location of his office, Mr. Pixley indicated that he would prefer to be along the harbor between the Town's two ramps; this opens up the view corridor down Commercial Street, and lets him be close to the harbor as well.

TYLin Design Team:

Sarah Witte:

Forum #1: The points they heard most often:

1. Use the Tannery site as a hub/crossroads and important neighborhood open space.
2. Adapt trail details e.g. surface materials to specific locations.

3. Use Tannery site as trailhead for walking both north and south.
4. Use the Tannery site as a parking lot to serve long-term or employee parking. Provide shuttle?
5. The school and water treatment parcels should continue to be used for educational access to the river.
6. End the trail at the Harbor Park & Amphitheatre, not the Landing.
7. It's OK to use sidewalks and street ROWs where necessary to protect and respect residential privacy.
8. Use icons or trail branding to raise visibility of trails and river access points and yet remain mindful of signage clutter.
9. Select durable materials (benches, bollard, and railings) for the long haul.
10. Connect Riverwalk to area sights and regional trails with signs.

Sarah wants to know from the Group where people walk now – where is the existing pathway – so where there are connections available they can be shown.

Forum #2: The points they heard most often:

1. Upgrade restroom/add showers/add laundry.
2. Move Harbor Master building/Move Chamber of Commerce out of current building.
3. Reduce number of dedicated parking spaces for charters.
4. Upgrade sidewalk to Commercial Street.
5. Like the working harbor, the natural views, the ability to drive to the water.
6. Widen/extend the boardwalk.
7. Add lighting.
8. Add more “green”.
9. Add a hoist.

Since the meeting the Team has learned that the Septic Pump Station building needs to remain where it is.

The Team asked to hear more specifics from the Town Group on the Forums:

Forum #1:

Ray Andreason: He has heard several comments from people who are concerned that the trail from the Tannery to Shirrtail Park be naturalized. He passed along their request that the entire trail not be “over-done” – it should fit into the neighborhood wherever it travels.

Anita Brosius-Scott, a representative of the Pathways Committee, suggested that crushed stone surfaces are not over-developed trails. She is dedicated to making sure that the trail is accessible to the mobility-challenged along its entire length. Sarah Witte suggested that there are surfaces - like a new mix of wood fiber and gravel - that have a “woodsier” look and are ADA accessible. There may be spurs off the main trail that will not be made accessible because of the terrain, the lack of space, or the cost. However, ADA requires them to make the entire length of the main trail accessible.

Forum #2:

BRIDGE:

Anita Brosius-Scott: She really likes bridges, and has even submitted a suggestion for a set of twin granite bridges to the Team.

Stuart Smith: He believes if the bridge stays in the mix for the Landing proposal, they will lose the entire project, and wonders why it was included in the first place.

Brian Hodges replied that it was seen as an opportunity to connect the entire downtown. Rick Seibel believes it would be easier just to focus on getting people to walk down the alleyway from Main Street to the Landing. Mike Thompson noted that one concept had been offered that would create decks and boardwalks along the water-side façade of the Main Street buildings. Mr. Wilson suggested that it would be very difficult to meet ADA access standards in creating this kind of structure. Stuart Smith suggested that there are really only four buildings involved that come to grade at the Landing; he thinks the owners would be better off if they developed that basement space for retail with an entrance at the Landing. The whole area could be made more attractive and a lot of new space would be created. He noted that *Once A Tree* still has a gristmill in their basement – they are interesting old buildings. He suggested that if the Town developed a park area on Town property at the back of these buildings that would attract visitors and encourage owners to spend the money to develop those basement spaces.

THE LANDING – PARKING and TRAFFIC:

All agreed that Commercial Street needs to be made safer, but the question of how to do this remains. It needs to be made obvious where pedestrians should walk – perhaps with a change in pavement surfaces; Ms. Brosius-Scott noted that many of the mobility challenged cannot walk that grade in any case. Mike Thompson wondered if it was more dangerous to re-direct traffic and make Commercial Street one way and the street to Bayview Landing another. Members of the Town Group informed the Team that this would be very difficult, if not impossible to do because of the physical constraints – it is just too narrow. In addition, it would be dangerous to have cars coming around the blind corner at the pizza restaurant because pedestrians walk the middle of that street as well. Mr. Thompson, who lives locally, stated that he personally knows of locals who stay away from this area in the summer because of the traffic and parking; he wonders how much business is being lost. Mr. Smith believes these traffic problems are insignificant compared to many other places, and he is confident that he has all the business he can handle in July and August. Even if it were easier to move around and to park, businesses may not be able to handle the extra business. Mr. Thompson asked if it was fair to say that the Team should not think about ways to increase parking and traffic capacity in the summer; Mr. Smith believes that is so.

Mr. Andreason asked if it would make sense to make one of the public access ways – the alley – accessible by installing a moving stairway to move the elderly and others who have trouble with the grade from Main Street to the Landing.

SAFETY AT THE WATER'S EDGE:

Ray Andreason: Don't spoil the view with railings! Mike Thompson stated that he has witnessed several near misses of people almost falling into the water. Gene McKeever says he doesn't see why this is a problem – he knows of maybe one or two incidents over the years when someone fell off the Boardwalk, and that is it. Sarah Witte believes that if the Boardwalk is made wide enough and spacious enough it will feel safer. Ed Libby believes that if there is a railing and someone is injured there is now a liability issue; Mr. McKeever agrees that the Boardwalk could be considered an “attractive nuisance”, and recommends no railings that might give visitors a sense of false security. Pat Finnigan noted that the Town had recently been audited by their insurance company, and she has been informed that agent must “write them up” because they have no railings. The results of this could well be an increase in rates and/or a “demand” that railings be installed for coverage to continue. Mike Thompson noted that ports like Camden are technically “working harbors” and OSHA regulations kick in; OSHA says railings are not needed in working harbors. Gene McKeever believes a big toe rail is a fine solution because they are a warning to people they are near the edge.

Stuart Smith wants the Team to make sure the outcome of the project is, at a minimum, that the condition of the Boardwalk is improved – it needs to be put into good repair, and made safer by making it wider where possible.

LIGHTING:

Anita Brosius-Scott: Please don't make the lighting look like Main Street; use down-lighting where needed. Stuart Smith suggested that Ms. Brosius-Scott come look at the lighting he has installed on his properties at Bayview Landing if she wants to see what can be done with minimal lighting for pedestrian safety.

SHADE:

Ray Andreason: The Landing needs some shade trees or umbrellas for those who want to sit and look at the harbor – perhaps small trees in moveable planters.

FOUR SEASON LANDING:

Ray Andreason: Expressed the hope that the Landing will no longer serve as a storage area for Town floats and ramps – everything that can be stored on the John Street lot should be taken there.

The Team asked about snow removal and snow “storage” – how much room is needed by the Town. Rick Seibel, Public Works Director, responded that there is a limited access to the harbor to dump snow; that is controlled by the location of the Harbor Master's shack and the schooner's winter moorings. The Town has 72 hours after a storm to dump all the stock-piled snow. The State permit to dump in the harbor covers the entire downtown business district, and

the area needed for stockpiles depends on the storm. The Team will work with Rick on this facet of the redesign.

FISHERMEN:

Gene McKeever reported that the fishermen are coming to the next Harbor Committee meeting to demand to keep the area of the landing they are now assigned. They have been told that nothing has been decided, but rumor has it that they are going to be displaced. Brian Hodges responded that they were identified as stakeholders and invited to come speak to members of the Team – they are not being told they are going to be moved, they are being asked for their input. Mr. McKeever replied that this is the message they have been relaying, but it is not being heard.

3. Location of the Next Community Meeting:

The Group believes the Middle School offered a better situation for viewing slide presentations, and it offers more flexibility for seating if a larger-than-expected crowd attends. The June 24 meeting will be at the Camden Rockport Middle School on Knowlton Street at 6:30 pm.

4. Survey

a. Concepts to Include:

Mr. Hodges informed the Group that he and the Team will be conducting a survey very similar to the one done for the Downtown Plan. In addition to announcing the survey on the Town website and in the Downtown Newsletter, they will be looking to members to help get the word out. He provided a list of possible survey topics to start the discussion regarding the concepts that should be included:

- Who are you
- Attendance at community meetings
 - Which have you attended
 - Will you attend future
- Use of website
 - Do you use it
- Riverwalk
 - Path substance/material
 - Who should use it
- Public Landing
 - Attributes to keep
 - Attributes that could change
 - Bridge
 - Reason for using it

- If full (parking), what do you do

Ray Andreason suggested there be a question on how people use the Public Landing. Also, would they use it year round?

Anita Brosius-Scott suggested that they find volunteers to ask visitors to participate by going to places that tours and tourists frequent – like the tour bus drop-off site. Perhaps there could be a separate visitors' version with unique questions.

Staci Coomer from the Chamber, offered help in conducting the survey. The volunteers that come to the Chamber could easily be trained; having trained people conducting the survey will lead to better consistency in results. People come to the Chamber building in any case, so it would be a good spot to ask some questions.

Ray Andreason: He suggests divorcing the bridge from the Public Landing project. Mike Thompson says the Team keeps hearing the importance of bringing economic activity to the area and wonders if a bridge is part of this picture. Stuart Smith suggests they will be risking it all if they continue to include the bridge as part of this concept.

Doug Johnson: He believes the citizens should be asked whether or not the Tannery should be reserved for public use by placing a moratorium on the sale of the property until the findings of the Riverwalk project are complete. The property has recently been listed for sale, and if the people may want to keep they should act soon to stop any sales; if not, the property may no longer be available.

Anita Brosius-Scott: The survey should be broad enough to reflect the concerns expressed at the meetings.

Sarah Witte would like to ask specifically about safety at the Landing; do people want lighting or railings.

Stuart Smith is concerned that people who haven't been to the meetings or who know nothing about the projects will be offering uninformed answers, and he questions the validity or usefulness of these answers. Brian Hodges noted there will be questions that allow them to weigh the answers -- like asking if the person attended any of the meetings, or how did they learn of the project. He believes the surveys are valuable because they will hear from people who otherwise wouldn't comment.

b. Timing:

Brian Hodges: He is sensitive to the timing of the survey and wants it conducted in the summer so they are reach out to a broader pool of participants. He hopes to have the questions ready in two weeks or so.

Ed Libby believes that Team is over-processing the input, and that it is time to develop a proposal for people to react to.

5. Approach for June 24 Community Meeting

a. Preliminary Mapping of Riverwalk

Sarah Witte had prepared a mock up to illustrate how she will be presenting the information on the 24th, including the very detailed kinds of information she will provide for each point of interest along the trail. One big change to the layout is that the trail now ends at Harbor Park and not at the Public Landing – that was a suggestion heard at the first Community Meeting and they took that idea to heart.

The trail will be divided into segments and each segment will be numbered and described according to distance, accessibility issues, historic context and points of interest, neighborhood context, surface materials, and more including specific environmental values – like the bird species that can be seen, wetland plants, etc.. Mike Thompson suggests that these informational lists can become economic drivers – birders can be big business and this will show the opportunities to capitalize on the specific assets.

Sarah will lead viewers down the segments, but won't show a specific trail because necessary easements are not in place. She will also show where alternative routes or loops might someday be available – the proposed parts of the trail, and show what can be used now – the existing portions. At each point she will include “gliffs” – the universal symbols for birds, boating, historical importance, etc.

Stuart Smith asked if where the Town owns the land there will already be a base for a trail – like along the sewer plant. Sarah Witte replied that it is not a given that Town-owned land will be accessible. There may not be access over all of the land at the sewer plant - they are in discussion with the folks at the sewer plant now. Mr. Smith was puzzled how a town employee could make such a decision on his own about Town property.

Anita Brosius-Scott believes they should also discuss the options that might be there for financing and long-range incentives that may be there like possible property tax benefits to participating.

Ray Andreason noted that for many attending this next meeting it could be the first time they are introduced to the proposal and the process. He believes they should show the same summary of how the design process has come to this point that they showed at the first Riverwalk meeting. He believes they need to lay out the benefits other communities have realized from similar trails, and to concentrate on the benefits to local families – like getting outside with the kids in a safe place – stress the benefits!

Stuart Smith suggests that people can already walk the general path of the Riverwalk; they are familiar with the concept and will be able to visualize the formal trail.

b. Preliminary reconfiguration of the Public Landing

Everyone thought the proposal needed to be more concrete. The Team has prepared multiple versions of possible reconfigurations showing changes to traffic flow and parking layout, building locations, and a hoist area. The Group thought it would be fine to show relocating buildings, but Stuart Smith cautioned that they should not mention moving something like designated parking spaces unless they knew *exactly* where the new location would be. It was suggested that parking should not be shown to the level of detail of designated spaces; those details are not known at this time and it will only create confusion to show these kinds of options. The Team will show layouts that include reduced parking, increased parking and the same level of parking with spaces rearranged for greater efficiency. They will also show proposed improvements to the boardwalk; Stuart Smith suggested extending the boardwalk on around the harbor to Bell Park.

Feedback will be solicited following each separate presentation, and Sarah Witte asked how the Team should get this feedback – there will be no breakout groups this time. She suggested that each person get five stickers for each proposal and they can stick them on the proposals next to the item they want to comment on.

6. Closing Thoughts:

Gene McKeever: Wants the Team to make sure that any changes to the Public Landing are in compliance with the Harbor Ordinance and Title 38 of the State code.

Stuart Smith: The biggest problem on the Landing is the congestion on the boardwalk – it needs to be widened. Mike Thompson started a discussion on moving the day sailers’ tables, and said the Team had looked at recommending a kiosk. That idea was quickly set aside when the Team learned it had been proposed and soundly rejected previously. They did arrive at consensus that a separate U-shaped section off the boardwalk itself where ticket sellers could be grouped together would be an improvement. That leaves the boardwalk for walkers and sitters and makes it safer because people aren’t dodging around the tables and umbrellas that currently line the walk. It also opens up creating an area for shade – for the ticket sellers, their customers and others who want to sit out of the sun.

Staci Coomer responded to a question about moving the Chamber off the Landing. She said a move has been under discussion because the Chamber offices need to become more efficient. Since merging they have been paying for duplicate offices and staff; they have discussed moving to Main Street (or elsewhere) to a location large enough to house the entire staff.

Ray Andreason passed along concerns from the shop owners at the top of Main Street who have spent lots of money improving their views of the harbor – please don’t spoil their views with whatever plans you develop.

Anita Brosius-Scott: She reiterated Doug Johnson’s concern that the Tannery site needs to be reserved for the public if that is what they want to do. They should get a read on this at the June meeting, and then take the steps necessary to secure the property for the future. It may be that the

best use will be a mix of uses; as long as public use isn't precluded by actions taken in the meantime.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 5:15 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Jeanne Hollingsworth
Recording Secretary