

**SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING - SATURDAY MORNING
JANUARY 19, 2013**

PRESENT: Parella, Calouro, Stuart, and Sweeney

ABSENT: Herreshoff

ALSO PRESENT: Antonio A. Teixeira, Town Administrator

The Council met in special session on Saturday morning, January 19, 2013 at the Newport Maritime Center and Seamen's Church Institute, beginning at 9:30 o'clock AM, Council Chairman Parella presiding:

Director of Community Development Williamson agreed to serve in the capacity of Clerk Pro-tempore for the purposes of recording these minutes.

Council Chairman Parella thanked everyone for coming on this site visit and fact finding tour to learn about the Newport Maritime Center as an example of something that could be done in Bristol.

Tim Mills, Newport Harbormaster, led the Town Council on a tour of the facility. Hank Kniskern, Chairman of the Newport Waterfront Commission and Professor from Roger Williams University working on the business plan for the Bristol Armory, also joined in on the presentation and discussion. Mr. Kniskern gave the Town Council background on the revenue generated by the docks in Newport and the goal to have the Harbor Department "cost neutral."

Jane Howington, Newport Town Administrator, explained to the Town Council the operation of the Maritime Center. She indicated that the Center is closed in the off-season but during the season the facility also has rentable space for small events and receptions and that Save the Bay was using space for classrooms since their beach facility was damaged as a result of Hurricane Sandy.

Mr. Kniskern stated that funding for the facility was by a grant received from the Boating Infrastructure Grant ("BIG") grant program as a tier 2 grant. He felt that it would be a great opportunity for Bristol to apply for this grant tying in the linkage with the Newport Facility. The grant for the renovations to the Maritime Center was \$750,000 and there was a \$250,000 local match which included funding from private partnerships. The Energy Grant was used to repair the windows and the boiler.

**SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING - SATURDAY MORNING
JANUARY 19, 2013**

Mr. Mills showed the Council a map on the wall that was done in conjunction with the Art Museum of Newport. The map shows all the art galleries and their walking distance from the Maritime Center. In further partnership with the artist community, the art on the walls was by Ornie Vanderhoff, a Newport photographer of sailboats.

Mr. Mills talked about the visitor's center kiosk that draws people to lower Thames Street. This area of Thames Street had a turnover of stores and they were trying different things to stimulate the businesses in this area such as coupons and hosting a business open house.

Mr. Kniskern told the Town Council about the Steering Committee for the project and the representation from the different organizations including the business community. He also stated that the architect was a local architect which really helped with the public relations since the local architect could talk about the project with the community.

In response to a question, Mr. Mills stated that there are 1-2 people on staff; one person in the a.m. and one in the p.m. with an over-lap. The wages start at \$10/hour. The Maritime Center is open from 8:00 o'clock AM to 8:00 o'clock PM from Memorial Day to Columbus Day. The staff needs both boating and local area knowledge.

There are between 30,000 and 35,000 people who use the facility. The facility is open to the public.

In response to Recreation Director Burke's questions, Mr. Mills indicated that there needs to be a marketing budget. In the beginning, they used all free sources of advertising. They also had a 3-fold brochure that was printed and made available in the Center but the best source of advertising was word of mouth within the boating community.

The Harbormaster had a packet that included the brochure and was given out to people coming to the Center. The website is essential also and is maintained in-house by the Harbormaster's office. Ms. Howington added that they are also looking into the social media and the Police Department has a Facebook page with other Town staff being trained on the use of social media.

**SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING - SATURDAY MORNING
JANUARY 19, 2013**

During the tour, Mr. Mills pointed out the shower rooms, washing machines and dryers, and the book rack for the box exchange which the library maintains. The room with the washing machines has the capacity for 6 washing machines and 10 dryers but they currently have 2 of each hooked up to start.

There was bid for a consultant to oversee the washers and dryers but they only received one bid so they started out slowly with the 2 washers and dryers and a vending machine for soap. Lockers are also available for \$3/day. A professional cleaning contractor cleans the building. Recycling and trash carts are also on the site.

Mr. Kniskern also explained that all of the revenue generated from the facility stays with the facility since Newport has an Enterprise Fund for the Harbor. The revenue includes moorings, cruise ship revenues, transient docks, and the Maritime Center. The funds in this account are used as matching funds for grants and to keep the infrastructure going. Since the summer of 2012 was the first season, they don't have a good track record yet on the revenue from the Maritime Center.

Mr. Mills explained that the City of Newport has 925 moorings and a ten-year waiting list. They offer transient, by the day, dockage. The overnight moorings are \$1/foot with a \$40 minimum. There are also 9 large moorings from the 1976 Tall Ship Festival that the City has and they can accommodate a 250' long boat.

There are 30 transient moorings and they can re-rent residential moorings overnight if people are away for the weekend. They have a Federal anchorage too which was decommissioned and is now the City's to use which is free. There is also a free dinghy dock available. A launch by Old Port will serve any mooring and is only \$3 each way so a lot of people use this.

Ms. Howington talked about the planning that went into the project. She said that during the planning a lot of people thought the City shouldn't keep the building but the City wanted to keep it because it is the toe hold on waterfront. The second floor in the armory is the antiques center and the City is still wrestling with what to do with the upstairs so they are keeping the antique center for now.

**SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING - SATURDAY MORNING
JANUARY 19, 2013**

The third floor also has the office of the Rose Island Lighthouse Foundation.

This Foundation had also been helping to run the antiques center but it was not within their capacity to do so, so the City hired a management company. The City is going to be holding planning charettes to decide what other uses should go into the building but since that process could take up to 2 years, the decision was made to keep the antiques center and just hire a management company to undertake management of it.

Mr. Kniskern passed out excerpts from the 2005 planning study that was done by the Cecil Group. He reminded everyone that it is important to look at the whole building when developing the plan to go forward.

In response to a question from Council Chairman Parella, Mr. Mills explained that the City is hoping to have other recreational uses happening but wanted to focus on the Maritime Center first and grow into more uses.

Mr. Kniskern explained that the early planning process on the armory uses in Newport was "noisy" and there were a lot of community workshops and input. The process took about 6 years to develop the concept and then another 4-6 years to do the project. It was difficult at times, but the City Council had built up enough momentum to keep the project going.

Mr. Kniskern also felt that the project was a success because there was a team approach, with an advisory group to pull everything together.

Ms. Howington explained the Enterprise Fund which was set up in the 1990's to run part of the City like a small business. All revenues go in but also all expenses come out including costs for the Town Solicitor and the other Town Departments that work with the Department as an administrative cost along with rent to the City.

The operating fund for the Enterprise Fund is just under \$1 million and there is a \$1.2 million fund balance. The City also gets revenues from the cruise ships.

Councilman Calouro asked what the City did to make up the loss of revenue to the City when the Enterprise Fund was

**SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING - SATURDAY MORNING
JANUARY 19, 2013**

created. Ms. Howington did not know since she did not work for the City at that time. She did recommend that Bristol look at treating the revenues and expenses as a separate accounting just to see how it goes on paper and to start the conversation. She also recommended a separate revenue account first to map it out and see if it will work.

There were several other Enterprise Funds in the City that were not successful and she felt that if they had started with this demonstration project first they may have known which departments would benefit from an Enterprise Fund and which would not. Council Chairman Parella stated that Bristol already knows the budget by the breakdown of revenues and expenses.

Mr. Kniskern explained the first phase of the business case study that he did with the Roger Williams University Community Partnerships Center. He said that you have to look at what it costs to run the department realistically.

Mr. Kniskern passed out the Proposed Business Case for Bristol Armory/Maritime Center Project for the Town Council to review. It is expected that the students will present to the Town Council at the February 13, 2013 Town Council meeting and Mr. Kniskern asked that the Council read the document and provide questions and feedback at that time. The Town will be applying to continue with the next phase of study which will be undertaken with the Community Partnerships Center for the next semester. The next semester's work will include public meetings and charettes with the students.

He said that the biggest question is measuring the need for the facility. Mr. Kniskern felt that it would take a 3-year time frame before Newport will know if their facility is a success.

Council Chairman Parella stated that she hoped the Town could get further grants for renovations to the Armory.

Mr. Kniskern stated that the plan for improvements has to be a phased plan for improvements with a master planning effort on the entire building and then all the pieces can be pulled together. Develop a plan and get everyone behind it.

**SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING - SATURDAY MORNING
JANUARY 19, 2013**

At this point in the meeting, the Town Council walked upstairs to tour the antiques center and to see the third floor.

After the tour of the Maritime Center, the Town Council walked down to the Seaman's Church Institute. They met Deedra Durocher who provided a tour and information on this facility which included a visit to each of the rooms followed by lunch.

The public is allowed to go into this facility which is open 365 days per year. They have recently renovated their upstairs to make overnight accommodations that could be rented out. They also have rented out areas for conferences. The building includes bathrooms, showers, a café that is open to the public, and a chapel.

At the conclusion of the tour, there being no further business, upon a motion by Councilman Stuart, seconded by Councilman Sweeney and voted unanimously, the Chairman declared this meeting to be adjourned at 12:45 o'clock PM.

Diane M. Williamson
Clerk Pro-tempore