

# **PENFIELD REEF LIGHTHOUSE PRESERVATION COMMITTEE**

**Thursday, June 23, 2011**

**4:00 pm**

**Second Floor Conference Room**

**Independence Hall**

**725 Old Post Road**

**Fairfield, CT 06824**

## **FINAL MINUTES**

Members Present: Jennifer Carpenter, Pat Conley, Steve Elworthy, Paige Herman  
Members Absent: David Agonis, Dr. Henry Backe, Don D'Andrea, Bob Hatch, Mike Jehle  
Others Present: Sherri Steeneck, Paige Herman, Steve Elworthy, Jim Fox, Mary Jo Cornell, Sandye Mann, Linda Crowley, Bill Sapone, Marcia Miner, Pat Conley, Ray Weber, Nancy Weber, Dave Peck, Eileen Kennelly (arrived 5:05 pm)

### **I. Call to Order**

Chairman Jennifer Carpenter called the meeting to order at 4:06 pm.

### **II. Update on Call with General Services Administration**

Ms. Carpenter said that she and Assistant Town Attorney Eileen Kennelly had a conference call on June 21, 2011 with Kevin Legare who works for the General Services Administration (GSA). Ms. Kennelly asked Mr. Legare if anyone, including a private individual or organization, can buy the lighthouse. Mr. Legare said that is correct. He said he will let the Town know when the bid process will start. Ms. Carpenter asked why having an auction is the next step as opposed to having another application process or giving the lighthouse to the Town which was the only other entity besides Beacon Preservation, Inc. to apply. Mr. Legare said there has to be an auction because it is part of the NHLP Act, but he'll confirm this with GSA's lawyer. Ms. Kennelly told Mr. Legare that if the Town or a non-profit owns the lighthouse, the State would lease the bottom land for around \$1 per year. Ms. Kennelly is hoping to lease the bottom land for 20 years or longer instead of just five years. Ms. Kennelly asked Mr. Legare when the auction is and is the naming of the owner based on price or use. Mr. Legare said Beacon's suit was dismissed with prejudice (they cannot continue their suit). GSA will advertise starting around July 4. Advertising will take place over about 45 days. The person or group bidding the highest figure becomes the owner. No application is needed for this bidding process, only paperwork on the bidder registration form is needed. GSA will draft an invitation to bid for the public. Mr. Legare said the bidding timeframe may be August 15, 2011-September 30, 2011 (it's about 35-40 days). GSA may reduce the deposit amount from \$5000 to \$1000. Ms. Kennelly suggested using some of the private donations toward the deposit. Ms. Carpenter asked what would happen if no one bid. Mr. Legare said the auction would end and GSA would assess why no one bid or why an entity that bid did not become the owner and GSA would restructures the process.

A question was asked at the meeting as to whether or not the bids are open or sealed. Sherri Steeneck said that Ms. Kennelly may know. The Committee also wishes to know the latest date for submitting a bid.

### III. Update on Fairfield History and Museum Center's Role

Ms. Carpenter said that she and Selectman Sheri Steeneck met with History Center Executive Director Mike Jehle to discuss getting support from the History Center. Mr. Jehle said he'd ask the Board of Directors if they would like to manage the structure as they do under their management agreement with the Town on other historic structures. He said the Center couldn't help financially but in addition to managing the lighthouse, the Center can display exhibits on the lighthouse for the public.

Ms. Carpenter said that after the Board of Directors met on June 16, 2011, Mr. Jehle later reported back to her that the Board is very enthusiastic about supporting the lighthouse. They agreed to maintain it just as they do with current historic landmarks in town and will give guidance on maintaining and preserving the historic structure. They are open to add the lighthouse to the management agreement they have with the town. Mr. Jehle said one member expressed concern on liability. Ms. Carpenter read an excerpt from a letter from the Town's insurance carrier, Beardsley, Brown & Bassett (BB&B), that was included in the 2008 application and stated at a previous RTM in response to one member expressing concern about liability. The letter said and was told that "The Town's ownership of the lighthouse will have no material effect on the insurance program. Should (the town) decide to open the lighthouse to the public, we would need to discuss the possible ramifications for the liability insurance."

Ms. Carpenter said it may be prudent for the Committee to get other supporters such as the Coast Guard Auxiliary, FBRA, etc. Ms. Steeneck mentioned teaming up with the Maritime Center or the Aquaculture School in Bridgeport. Sandye Mann cautioned on partnering with others and would rather get a list of supporters. Paige Herman said the FBRA is happy to financially support this project. The Committee asked that the Town's Risk Manager attend the next meeting. Ms. Mann said it would be a good idea to get support from town bodies before the bid and get private groups and individuals to start donating. Pat Conley mentioned publicizing the Committee's efforts to do this.

### IV. Committee Goals

Steve Elworthy suggested that Sandye Mann and Bill Sapone become temporary co-chairs of the meeting and Ms. Mann suggested Nancy Weber act as temporary secretary. Ms. Mann said it's important to have a consensus among the Committee and if members want to explore ideas they should first run it by the Committee. Linda Crowley suggested holding fundraisers at the beach. Ms. Steeneck said she will continue looking into whether a cell tower can be placed on the lighthouse to earn revenue for the Town. She also suggested having a web site set up so people can make donations. Ms. Steeneck said that if the Town does not get the lighthouse, there should be a disclaimer saying that private donations will be returned and anonymous donations will go to charity. She will ask Ms. Kennelly if a 501c3 for donations from private sector can be set up. Ms. Crowley noted that the History Center has a separate account with such funds in the amount of \$350. Ms. Crowley volunteered to help with the website. Ms. Mann will ask Chief Kugel of the Coast Guard, which will continue to maintain the light, about the cost of running the lighthouse. She will contact a Coast Guard representative to attend the next meeting. Several questions were brought up to ask Ms. Kennelly or the GSA.

They include the latest the Town can bid; is the auction live; method of GSA's marketing; and can the Town put a cell tower on the lighthouse and how much did other lighthouses cost that were up for sale. Ms. Steeneck also wants to know what would happen if a bid is higher than the Town's but the Town's goals are better. Ms. Steeneck suggested the group think about fundraising opportunities. She also suggested the cost be broken out into phases. She said that she and Ms. Carpenter had met with representatives from GE whose members may match funds for the project but overall, GE does not fund these types of projects. Ms. Steeneck suggested getting support from groups like the Fayerweather Yacht Club. Mr. Peck added that the Fairfield Boat Association may want to be involved in helping.

#### V. Preparation of July 6, 2011 BOS Meeting

Ms. Carpenter said she'd like to have an item on the next BOS agenda for the BOS to restructure the Committee and to approve a charge which Mr. Sapone offered to draft. The Charge will state that the Committee will investigate and report back to the BOS on whether or not the Town should purchase the lighthouse. If approved, the Committee would then seek funding from town bodies. Mr. Sapone said it will be important to provide the town bodies with a good plan on maintaining the lighthouse. Ms. Mann suggested having letters from community members like Senator McKinney showing the town bodies they support this project. Ms. Steeneck added any donation amount is fine because it shows the level of community support. She added that town bodies need to know the maintenance and finance plan and why it's so important the Town own the lighthouse. Committee members said that the value is the lighthouse serving as an active navigational light. Ms. Herman stated that town bodies should know what would happen if no one owns the lighthouse and how it could be torn down. Marcia Miner said that she will suggest to LAC that it pass a motion to support the Town pursuing the ownership of the lighthouse. She will encourage LAC members to attend the next BOS meeting.

Ms. Carpenter asked for a list of who would like to be on the Lighthouse Committee that the BOS will vote to restructure. The following people will serve: David Agonis, Pat Conley, Mary Jo Cornell, Linda Crowley, Don D'Andrea, Steve Elworthy, Paige Herman, Deanna Hoffman, Mike Jehle, Sandye Mann, Dave Peck, Bill Sapone, Dr. Evan Tilley, Nancy Weber and Ray Weber. Due to the large size of the prospective Committee, Ms. Carpenter offered to serve as the Town's liaison and Ms. Steeneck offered to serve at the BOS liaison.

There was a discussion on the tight timeframe of bringing this item before town bodies such as the BOS, BOF and RTM which may not meet in August. Ms. Kennelly, who joined the Committee at 5:05 pm, suggested introducing the item to the RTM as a report at one meeting then asking for a vote on funding at another meeting. She also said she will speak again to David Blatt about the lease since Mr. Blatt works for the State.

#### VI. Next Meeting Date

The next meeting will take place on Thursday, June 30, 2011 at 4 pm in the second floor conference room in Independence Hall.

#### VII. New Business-None

#### VIII. Public Comment -None

IX. Adjourn

Ms. Carpenter made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:31 pm. Ms. Herman seconded the motion which carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Weber  
Temporary Recording Secretary

Linda Cote Crowley  
Recording Secretary