**FORT HANCOCK 21st CENTURY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**MEETING #38**

**January 6, 2022 (Draft)**

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| Agenda Items for Next Meeting: | * General Agreement Schedule and Process
* Working Group Updates
* Leasing Updates
* Discussion of Ombudsman/subcommittee/communication link
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| Action Items for Next Meeting: | * Recommendation for park to consider ombudsman role
* Recommendation for further discussion of the new general agreement with Stillman at the next meeting
* Recommendation to include more presentations from Gateway’s Chief of Resource Management
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Attendees:

NPS: Jennifer T. Nersesian, Gateway National Recreation Area Superintendent and Designated Federal Officer (DFO); Karen Edelman, Gateway Business Services; Daphne Yun, Gateway Public Affairs; Pete McCarthy, Sandy Hook Unit Manager; Patti Rafferty, Chief of Resource Management, Nadya Nenadich Historic Preservation Architect, Captain Tony Lordo, Chief Ranger, Sandy Hook, Amy Sebring Chief of Planning, Project & Asset Management

Facilitator: Bennett Brooks

FACA Committee Co-Chairs: Shawn Welch, Gerard Glaser

FACA Committee members: Gary Casazza, Linda Cohen, Chris Doxey, Mary Eileen Fouratt, Guy Hembling, Michael Holenstein, Jim Krauss, Tony Mercantante, Dr. Howard Parish, Gerry Scharfenberger, Kevin Settinbrino, Kate Stevenson, Michael Walsh

Simenesh Simene CBI- Tech Help

**Welcome, meeting overview, and committee context** – Bennett Brooks and Jen Nersesian

Pledge of Allegiance

Welcome from Jen, Shawn Welch, and Gerry Glaser

Overview of meeting agenda

* Park Updates
* Leasing Updates
* Working Group Update
* Public Comment
* Key Messages and Next Steps

Review of technical instructions for zoom call and how to participate/ask questions

**Park Updates (Jen Nersesian)**

Welcome to Committee members, representatives from elected officials and members of the media

National Park Service (NPS) has a new director- Chuck Sams. He has worked in state and tribal governments and the nonprofit natural resource conservation management fields for more than 25 years; he comes to us from outside the NPS.

**Introduction of two new Gateway staff**

* Captain Tony Lordo – Chief Ranger Sandy Hook
* Amy Sebring - Chief of Planning, Project & Asset Management

**Projects**

* Great American Outdoors Act- Sandy Hook Officers Row seawall has been funded as a FY 21 project. This has been paired with other NPS funding to get more work done so the chapel revetement will also be rehabilitated. Together these two items represent $20 million worth of work. Short-term stabilization work behind the chapel is moving forward. We have signed a formal agreement with the US Army Corps of Engineers. They are the official lead on the sea wall work.
* Rehabilitation of Sandy Hook water and wastewater systems are in the President’s proposed FY 22 budget. This project deals with the underground pipes, not the sewage treatment plant or water treatment plant. Getting this utility infrastructure in better condition will help support the leasing initiatives.
* Other Projects Include
* Officers Row Roof Project is moving forward. The project has been scoped out by a design team and short-term work should start in February. The total cost of this project is close to $3 million.
* Guardian Park Restroom work is being finalized and should be up and running for the next season.
* Nike Barrack Group Campground project is in partnership with the Sandy Hook Foundation. Physical work on the structures is expected to be complete in the coming month. This will be followed by site improvements and cleanup. This group camping site should be operational for the coming season.
* Water Treatment Plant work is continuing. This is a multi-million-dollar infrastructure project.
* Gunnison Beach Bathhouse Wall
* LE Building ductwork

There are also other miscellaneous projects. (Note – all of these projects are listed on the map which included in the Meeting Presentation). The park is making some smart investments and receiving support and funding for these projects. These investments not only are good for the visiting public, but they can also be used to help leverage the interest investment of private partners.

**Sandy Hook Visitor Center**

The Sandy Hook Visitor Center re-opened in December for the first time since the pandemic began. The Visitor Center is open weekends from 10 am to 4 pm. Outdoor ranger programs continue.

The idea of an ombudsman was discussed at the last advisory committee meeting. It won’t be addressed as an agenda topic today, but this item will be discussed at the next meeting. Options are still being explored which will help generate a robust and formed conversation.

**Leasing Update (Karen Edelman)**

* Leases
	+ Buildings 23 and 26 (MAST)
	+ Building 53 (McFlys)
	+ Building 21 (Sandy Hook Rentals)
	+ Building 104 (used as an office)
	+ Building 52 (residential and lodging)
	+ Building 36 (restaurant, bar, and event space). Outdoor seating planned and will be open year-round. The lessee is also proposing a shuttle service from different areas of the park. Should be up and running this summer.
* Letters of Intent
	+ Buildings 24 and 25- barracks. Plan for each to include 16 residential units.
	+ Building 40
	+ Building 114
* General Agreement with Stillman

Background- Stillman had submitted a proposal for the 21 remaining buildings at Fort Hancock. A general agreement was recently signed. This agreement allows the park and Stillman to develop prototypes for two buildings along officer row to determine if the larger project (for all 21 buildings) is feasible. (Note- the General Agreement is not a green light to move ahead for the whole project, but a way to see if the project is feasible. There will continue to be opportunities for public input on this project).

Gerry Scharfenberger asked how the liquor license for the mule barn would work. Is the liquor license from the former restaurant at Sandy Hook?

Karen Edelman answered that once the lease is in effect the park will reach out to the state on the lessee’s behalf and the state will issue a liquor license, based on the existing agreement. There’s an application fee to the state for the license, but it’s not the typical liquor license that goes through each municipality. This is more in line with other larger projects where the state issues a liquor license directly.

Gerry Glaser clarified that the purpose of the general agreement with Stillman is to allow continued pursuit of two buildings as a pilot project that would involve development of floor plans, etc. He asked Karen if that was correct?

Karen Edelman answered that the general agreement is a planning effort to determine whether the proposed use of the buildings is feasible in terms of size, scope, layout, and preservation of character-defining features. If the prototypes for the two buildings are workable, then the park and Stillman can move ahead to see if the prototypes can be applied as a whole to the remaining buildings.

Gerry Glaser said that the general agreement doesn’t really impact the remaining buildings at this point, but it’s to set forth possible designs that could work for the larger project.

Shawn Welch said that the work being done on building 36 is fantastic. Dan Ferrise is doing a lot of the work himself.

Mike Holenstein said he thought all of the remaining buildings being considered by Stillman were encumbered, even if they weren’t being worked on through the general agreement.

Jen Nersesian said that yes, the buildings are encumbered. The first phase is working out designs on two buildings to determine if there’s a project. What design works and what density works, and does this work with historic standards, capacity concerns, and all of that. If the answer is yes, here are some feasible designs, Stillman has first dibs on the rest of the buildings for one comprehensive project. That is the intent and that is what the agreement specifies.

Michael Holenstein asked if there was a timeline for the general agreement. Especially since the rest of the buildings are on hold while the two prototypes are evaluated.

Jen Nersesian answered that there is an aggressive timeline spelled out in the agreement. She continued that there are lots of moving parts, and a lot of consultation is required with the state. Jen continued that although she doesn’t know the exact milestones; she thinks that it is a year to a year and a half.

Roy Stillman greeted everyone and thanked them for inviting him to the meeting. He confirmed that there was a rigorous time frame that involves forming a professional design team of preservationists, structural engineers, architects, and other related disciplines to present design work to the relevant authorities and culminating in an approved project. This is a complex process involving many sources of government input. This is intended to serve as a template and test case of the preservation viability, commercial viability, and physical viability of the project. Roy continued that the Stillman Group has committed to expending substantial resources of monetary and human capital to fulfill these obligations. Roy thanked everyone who has been involved in helping get the agreement signed. He continued that the project is very exciting, and an unusual combination of civic, patriotic, and commercial elements, and he is thrilled to find the balance between them.

Jen Nersesian added that this is a very new agreement, but that questions about the proposed schedule can perhaps be discussed at the next meeting.

**Working Group Introduction**

Bennett began by discussing the issues and the type of information that the working group is discussing.

Jen reminded the committee that the working group came out of this committee. It was formed in the months after the Stillman proposal came in to address the concerns the proposal raised, especially from some of the environmental groups that are interested in Sandy Hook. As the leasing program moves forward, the park and committee want to do this a conscientious way, addressing all parts of the park service mission, and to take a deeper dive to make sure the concerns are understood. The park and committee can see if deeper discussions are needed on the specific topics that have been raised with this working group. The working group includes representatives from a variety of local environmental and historical organizations along with a handful of committee members. The work of the working group is meant to inform the committee so that the committee can be making recommendations to the park service as the park is embarking on the feasibility designs for the buildings included in the Stillman proposal. This helps the working group, the park service, and the advisory committee sort through what is the best pathway forward to accomplish these projects in the most sensitive way possible. We want to stay open to these conversations but also remain hopeful that there is a way to accomplish the historic preservation mission that remains sensitive to natural resources and all other parts of what the park is trying to accomplish at Sandy Hook

Gerry Glaser added that in addition to informing the committee, the working group’s role is very important in informing the broader public about what is being done at Sandy Hook, and the care and caution that is being taken as issues such as public use and density are being explored.

**Working Group Update- Patti Rafferty, Chief of Resource Management, and Gerry Glaser**

Patti Rafferty, chief of resource stewardship at Gateway, introduced herself. The natural resource professional staff, cultural resources professional staff, and compliance professional staff are all part of this division. As suggested at the last Committee meeting, Patti said she will share the presentation that she gave to the working group at the September meeting, which will give a brief overview of what is meant by the term compliance. Karen Edelman spoke earlier about compliance being underway on some of the letters of intent and leasing projects, and the word is used often, but it’s hard for most people to understand all that it encompasses. As a federal agency, the NPS is required to comply with a number of federal laws and some park service policies to make sure we are completing actions that protect our natural, cultural, and recreational resources.

Patti continued to identify some of the main points of the compliance process. (The power point referred to can be found [here](https://www.nps.gov/gate/learn/management/upload/FACA-Workgroup-Impact-analysis-09212021-2.pdf)). Patti listed the federal laws and executive orders that are typically part of the compliance process.

Under the National Environmental Policy Act, the park has to look at the impacts of the action, including the ecological impacts. The recreational opportunities and social issues and more all fall under the guise of the NEPA review. The National Historic Preservation Act requires that we also look at the impacts specifically to cultural resources and assess those impacts. A consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office is also required, and consultations with tribe and other interested parties may also be required. The Coastal Zone Consistency Act requires a review and determination that the federal action is as consistent as possible with the federal and state (for Sandy Hook it’s New Jersey) coastal zone policies for any project that occur within a coastal zone. In the state of New Jersey, the federal government has delegated authority to the State Department of Environmental Protection for implementation of coastal zone consistency. Gateway’s coastal zone management determinations in Sandy Hook are a consultation process with the State Department of Environmental Protection, the Endangered Species Act requires consultation with either the US Fish and Wildlife Service for species that are on land, or the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration for any species that are in the water. So for any species that is listed as federal or threatened under the Endangered Species Act, if there is a potential for a project or an at a federal action to impact those species, then we would have to do consultation with either US Fish and Wildlife or NOAA under Section seven of the Endangered Species Act, to ensure that we're not going to be impacting or that we're mitigating and avoiding any impacts for endangered species.

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act is typically not relevant for our leasing projects at Sandy Hook because those are all onshore structures. But anytime there is the potential for our project to impact intertidal or subtidal habit that would be designated as the central fish habitat (e.g., habitat that is important for fisheries), then consultation would be required, again with NOAA, to ensure that the project is carried out in such a way that is protective of that fisheries habitat and those fish species.

There are also executive orders that guide compliance. If an activity is in a flood plain, or if there’s a potential for an activity to impact wetlands, then Executive orders 11 998 and 11 990 will be applied. These executive orders are the way the National Park Service determines that we create floodplain statements of findings or wetlands statements of findings, as a way to make sure compliance with the executive orders is followed. Overnight occupancy could change the flow of waters in a floodplain, so a floodplain statement of finding may be required. If a project is potentially within 500 feet of wetlands, or directly impacting wetlands, then a wetland statement of findings may be involved in addition to what I've listed here for a specific project there could be other policies or regulations.

Permits may also be required for some projects. Under the Clean Water Act potentially a project could have permit requirements, with the state and or the US Army Corps of Engineers.

The first step in the compliance review is identifying issues that would need to be evaluated and assessed through the compliance process. After scoping and trying to identify the very widest net of what the issues may be, only those that are going to actually have impacts central to the proposal or of importance to the proposal will be retained. These issues typically undergo a detailed analysis through the NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act), where either the analysis to support the development of the categorical exclusion on environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement will be completed, depending upon the types of and potentials of impact. Issues that are points of contention are inspected through this impact analysis process. In this case, a “point of contention” does not necessarily mean that there are groups supporting or against, but in terms of the impact analysis, contention means that the information isn't clear. For example, for an ecological impact, there may be unclear science as to whether or not they would or would not be an impact or what the severity or extent the impact would be. Any issues where there isn’t good information, or it cannot be clearly identified, would be the issues that would be carried forward for analysis. The bottom line of doing this impact analysis is to determine if there's anything that would be a significant impact to the resources associated with the issue.

A big part of looking at those issues is also looking at how to develop a project in a way that avoids, minimizes, or mitigates impacts, so that we can prevent getting to where we would have impacts and particularly to avoid having significant impacts.

So how do we do an impact analysis? First and foremost, there's trying to describe the direct and indirect impacts. We also look at cumulative impact so each individual project may have a certain scope of impacts. But as Jen identified earlier in this slide, there's often numerous projects going on. And so, we want to make sure that collectively, the actions that we're doing aren't collectively contributing resources that are missed by looking at individual projects.

And then, as part of the impact analysis, there's a discussion of the importance of the impacts to help better understand what the direct and indirect impacts direct impacts are or what's going to happen on the ground as a result of implementing the project. We try to be very quantitative to the extent that we can, in terms of how much how many, what area is going to be impacted. We also try to detail the methods that are going to be used and how will those methods result impacts. Additionally, we also look for how the action will be implemented, including:

* Will it result in fewer individuals of a particular species, or will it change habitat availability, or particularly on cultural resources?
* Is there going to be a change in the view shed will there be visual intrusions?

And again, an overall goal of the compliance process is to reduce, or eliminate when possible, and mitigate for impacts.

A cumulative impact analysis looks at actions taken not only by the NPS, but also by other agencies, organizations, or if it applicable, private landowners. These all might be contributing impacts to the overall area of the project. And they include not only what we're doing, but what are projects that are likely that are happening or likely to happen, or have happened in the past, and how cumulatively those impacts may be affecting the project area.

In terms of the discussion of the importance of impacts, it looks merely at the context of the intensity and significance to determine what the importance is so it's looking at this, the setting and the situation and the circumstances of a particular resource, again, quantifying the severity or magnitude of the impact. And then the impacts of the proposed action with what might be alternatives to be able to, again, eliminate or reduce or mitigate those at those impacts.

Patti then gave examples to provide more in terms of some impact areas that are frequently considered, starting with night skies. Even though the park exists within an urban area, Gateway National Recreation Area has some of the darkest areas in the New York metropolitan area and certainly Sandy Hook has some great night skies. In looking at projects at Sandy Hook, it’s important to make sure they won’t impact the darkness. Night skies have natural, ecological, and cultural resource values. Best management practices for night skies should be implemented to eliminated and reduce the impacts of any new or changed lighting that may be introduced as part of the project, including using lighting only when and where needed. Dimmers and timers on exterior lightings are some examples of these practices, as well as shielding or focusing lighting to a specific area. So, for every project using lighting, the types of lighting proposed are looked at and then feedback is provided for how the lighting could become more night sky compliant. The Park would then ask the project manager or lessee to develop lighting plans that maximize, to the greatest extent possible, the implementation of best practices to reduce any new impacts from lighting.

Patti continued that environmental justice is an issue that also comes into play in terms of doing compliance review. And that's looking particularly at how more vulnerable populations may be impacted through a particular project. This looks at the interrelationship of cultural, social, occupational historic and economic factors that may occur as a result of the environmental effects of the proposed action. A big part of ensuring that environmental justice issues are addressed is having inclusive public participation and community representation strategies within project reviews, using the largest possible population to make sure that concerns are incorporated. These steps allow the park to be able to ensure that projects are developed in a way that provides consideration for and maximizes environmental justice. Transportation access is a specific issue that’s been identified as an important issue. This includes possible parking, vehicle traffic and pedestrian traffic impacts.

Patti finished her presentation by stating that an impact analysis is very much about quantifying and then analyzing potential impacts. Her brief overview of the compliance process was intended to help to foster a better understanding of what's meant when compliance is discussed and why the park comes back to lessees during the review process with a number of questions and with request for additional requirements. The park is looking at how of how to reduce those impacts, and to be able to complete the numerous compliance pieces that were identified at the beginning of the presentation.

Bennett Brooks thanked Patti for this briefing. He reminded the group that these are the types of presentations given at the working group meetings.

Shawn Welch thanked Patti, noting that the review gives a good top end view of what the Park Service is doing and why they're doing it. Having an understanding of this information has helped the Army Ground Forces Association with their restoration work at Battery Gunnison/New Battery Peck and other fortification structures at Fort Hancock.

Kate Stevenson mentioned that Patti didn’t have time to cover some of other kinds of regulations, such as the Transportation Act, that affect both the Park Service and park lands. She said it wouldn’t apply to this particular project, but it is something that affects some projects.

Patti Rafferty agreed and said that for any particular project there may be other considerations. Patti said she focused on the reviews that most typically come into play, that are sort of the top tier checkboxes for every project. There can be other things given the nature of any specific project. She wants to make sure that everyone realizes these are not the only considerations the park is looking at.

Mike Holenstein mentioned that when the discussion of impacts comes up, there's always a question of the baseline from which the impact is being evaluated. He asked if there is any way to provide some additional thoughts on the baseline for the various impacts or just give an example. When we're talking about baselines, he thinks one could always say we were using the existing conditions at the time of application as a baseline. And then there are other baselines (for instance if we're trying to preserve the historic character of Fort Hancock, we are looking at the glory days of Fort Hancock versus some other period in history for the Sandy Hook peninsula).

Patti Rafferty responded that there is no easy answer for that. There isn’t a single baseline. Depending upon what review process is being used, each process has a different baseline. Looking at floodplains, it would be looking at what the current occupancy is and what would be the new overnight occupancy. It wouldn't be going back and looking at what was the occupancy of Sandy Hook during the height of World War II military use of Sandy Hook.

Mike Holenstein answered that the interpretation of baseline is what causes the most problems or many, many of the great problems that we encounter with a project of this type of historic preservation and adaptive reuse. He thinks it's important for people to understand that their personal view may not be the appropriate view in the context of baseline, and that they need to be willing to understand that there are differing views and that those views may differ from the, from the agencies and authorities who have oversight.

Patti Rafferty thanked Mike for that point, noting that her office works on compliance with other entities within and outside of the park service. The park service works with agencies like the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the Federal Tax Credit Office for tax credits, National Historic Landmark program, and others to make decisions so that we're making sure that we're doing the best thing for the resource. There can be many perspectives that look at what a baseline is, and we use the policies, rules, and regulations to inform that, as well as bringing in additional expertise to help us to make the best decisions for the resource.

Mike Holenstein asked if it is fair to say that the evaluation and analysis is cumulative from the standpoint that when it's been decided that the Fort Hancock asset is being viewed in the context of some period of time that then applies to the property as a whole, and that that issue does not need to be vetted again.

Patti Rafferty answered that the period of significance at Sandy Hook is fairly broad, and there is also some latitude within the Secretary of Interior standards. Something more prescriptive that is put out that would identify specifics for the lessees or Letter of Intent holders to help them in their development of their projects would take away important tools for the adaptive reuse of these historic buildings for their historic preservation. It’s important to maintain the level of flexibility provided by the Secretary Interior standards.

Tony Mercantante added this did come up at one of the first working group meetings. The idea that in looking at this project (an existing developed site), the project is not starting with a blank slate here. That’s the baseline, and that’s a point we need to all keep in mind as we move forward.

Bennett Brooks thanked Patti for providing this important context, and asked Gerry to continue with a summary of working group conversations to-date about climate change and parking. He noted that once Gerry is finished with his presentation the members of the working group will be invited to weigh in with their perspectives.

Gerry Glaser first thanked Patti. He then reminded Committee members of the impetus for creating this working group. Many committee members thought that we needed to do a better job of organizing some of the major issues associated with the adaptive reuse of historic properties at Fort Hancock and to do a better job of communicating the committee’s work. The objective of creating the working group was to clarify the big issues (or hurdles), bring that to the committee, and then present it to the stakeholders. This working group is different from past working groups created by the committee, as they tended to focus on one specific topic. Gerry continued that he brings this up because the concept of creating different working groups to address specific issues is an important tool that we've used all along. The working group is working to not only identify the big issues, but to seek input from the community at-large. The working group includes representatives from significant organizations that can impact our work. These include the NJ Historic Trust, NJ Sierra Club, National Parks Conservation Association, NJ Audubon, and the American Littoral Society. These organizations and their leaders are extraordinarily valuable to the advisory committee, both in informing what we do, but also helping us inform their membership about what we're doing and how to go about moving forward. Each working group meeting focuses on a specific topic. The topics addressed are historic preservation considerations and requirements, which primarily what Patty just described for us.

Gerry continued that he was amazed at the level of compliance and the level of diligence that’s required in addressing any of the adaptive reuse projects and commends those lessees who have already jumped through a lot of the hurdles that Patti described. Ecological impacts of adaptive reuse and climate change will both be looked at more deeply by the group. Parking and transportation issues have been discussed.

Gerry shared the kind of details the group has discussed. Parking, for example, is not just about where the cars go. Other considerations include:

* Road salt, run off, and other associated things that can impact a sensitive environmental area have to be considered.
* What will it look like in terms of where we put cars, where they go with their traffic patterns, and what impacts will parking issues have on accessibility.
* Noise related to cars and traffic, issues around electric cars and charging stations and ensuring there’s electrical capacity through the existing grid to support charging stations.
* Transportation and parking are not entirely different, we heard earlier about one of the lessees who's trying to figure out ways to get people from other places in the park to his building. The park continues to explore ways to get visitors around the park. There are school buses that bring visitors from the ferry dock to the beaches, and as the use of these buildings is expanded, it will be important to find ways to easily, seamlessly, and in an environmentally sensitive way to get people around the park. That will require a lot more attention to this topic than it’s been given so far.

As far as parking spaces, one of the first thoughts that we were concerned about was where are all these new people that are going to be living in officers row houses going to park. That leads to other questions such as how many cars are expected and what will the capacity be for each house. Mr. Stillman will need to design these buildings in a way that makes the project economically viable yet also able to accommodate other ancillary issues such as parking.

Gerry wrapped up by talking about climate change. Many have asked why the park is even pursuing these adaptive reuse projects in the light of climate change. Did Hurricane Sandy affect these buildings, and how will continued sea level rise be accommodated? The superintendent (Jen) described the efforts that are underway to protect some of those bayside shorelines and the seawall that's around the chapel. Gerry continued by saying we are not naive in thinking that those kinds of protections will protect the park forever, but there is a balance that has to be drawn between the parks interest and responsibility in preserving and maintaining those structures and recognizing what the impacts of climate change might be. There are no easy answers to address these concerns, but it is important to realize that they exist. The park has worked to address things related to climate change, and two reports have been produced: one in 2010 and the other in 2016. A lot of time, energy, and effort has been spent looking at these substantive issues like parking and climate as well as the cultural responsibilities and cultural resource responsibilities. It’s the job of the working group to help continue working with the park and committee, and to ensure that issues are fully vetted in a way that helps the committee and interested members of the public understand issues of concern.

Bennet Brooks thanked Gerry for the helpful overview. He added that this as an iterative conversation, with the initial steps focused on giving the working group background on the kinds of issues Patti shared earlier. We are now hearing the kinds of ideas and concerns and considerations that members of the working group are bringing forward, and we will be taking a deeper dive back into many of these, both within the working group and with the committee. Bennett continued that it’s important to realize that this is a conversation that is not going to be linear. Topics will be touched and then revisited, they’re all interrelated, so lots more conversations to come. Bennett invited working group members who are on the committee as well as those attending as members of the public today to share additional perspectives or pose any questions for Gerry.

Jen Nersesian added that she’d like the committee to think about how we use this information, how it should move from the working group to the committee to the Park Service, how we engage in this together, and what level of information the committee wants to see. Patti shared the presentation from the first working group meeting, and has also shared other presentations that were in-depth, relevant, valuable, and full of information. She asked if the committee would like to see all of the presentations, or would they prefer the highlights, and how these get used and help inform recommendations on the leasing budget.

Mike Holenstein said that Gerry and Jen both mentioned that this federal advisory committee has been operating for a long time, since 2013. He continued that using the phrases

“we're beginning to think about things” and “beginning to do things” is overused. He thinks instead the committee should talk about the continuation of the efforts, not beginning, because we began a long time ago. This is especially important for those who are just joining to that there is considerable history and how much time and effort has already gone into the effort.

Chris Doxey gave kudos to Patti and the working group. She thought Patti’s presentation was very thorough and mind expanding. She said that the presentation exposed the depths of the variants that are considered for this project. She’d like to see more of these types of reports and noted that this presentation reminds us of the breadth of the projects and how important it is to preserve and think of all the variants implied in this project.

Kate Stevenson said she realizes that we have not ever had a presentation to the working group on the Secretary’s standards, and not just the standards themselves but how they have been interpreted recently. She said such a presentation would be useful not only for the working group, but perhaps for the full committee. These laws are quite complex but are useful because they allow professional judgment to be entered, which is an important facet of both Historic Preservation as well as science and other fields.

Chris Doxey asked if the original Stillman proposal was only for one building (Building 10)?

Karen Edelman responded that it was for most of the remaining buildings that were available in the leasing portfolio for Fort Hancock. The prototype is for two buildings. Two different building types were chosen. Other buildings on officers’ row have similar layout and size so the designs on the first two will give a good sense for the whole row of buildings that were actually included in the leasing proposal and whether or not there is a feasible project.

Eileen Murphy, Vice President Government Relations at NJ Audubon and a member of the Working Group, thanked everyone for being invited to the working group. She has learned so much by participating in this working group and appreciates that her concerns have been listened to. Environmental concerns have been discussed at great lengths, which are taken very seriously.

Bennett asked if anyone else wanted to add to the conversation. He also reiterated that we’re shifting the conversation that Jen teed up to how does the committee want this information.

Gary Cassazza thanked the working group for the time that they’re putting in. He feels the summaries from the working group are critical to the success of the program. Good communication is what is needed.

Harold Zullow (NJ Sierra Club) offered a dissenting voice. He has been researching the history of Gateway’s formation; going back to the 1960s, the enabling legislation and the Congressional Record. The intent was for Gateway to be a great urban park that would be accessible to all. In the late 1970s $300 million was authorized toward a 20-year general management plan for the park for the 1980s and 90s. This did not include privatization but included public access and environmental protection. Gateway was intended to be a gateway to the entire national park experience for people who, due to their socioeconomic status and resources, might not even get a chance to go to another National Park. The discourse changed in 1981, when then-Secretary of Interior James Watt announced he wanted to decommission many parks and turn them back to the states. There was a chorus of opposition to that. Although the park was not decommissioned, soon after that point, the efforts and talk about privatization began and it’s continued since. It’s been a recurring theme of recurring entertaining of proposals for “luxury privatization” throughout this process. We have not witnessed any options being considered other than this leasing proposal. The $300 million that was authorized back then, is equal to $1.5 billion dollars and current terms and never appropriated.

Zullow and the Sierra Club would like to voice their concern that all of the steps that the park is taking to reduce the costs to any private developer will add to the value that the private developer is realizing by using public funding.

Zullow also noted there is not yet a mechanism to register our concerns or a vehicle for sharing information with all of you, and to maintain a shared body of information that you can all be privy to the information that we've been accumulating and reviewing, including on the seawall impacts to biodiversity loss and loss of organisms in the vicinity of the sea wall. He said that proceeding with construction and rehabilitation of a seawall that will have severe potential environmental impacts and will be beneficial to this lessee development is a strong concern of ours. Harold ended by saying he would like to register that dissenting voice, and again to urge everyone to have a vehicle through which we can share information and that you can all be privy to a history that well predates by decades, the history of this advisory group and working group.

Bennett thanked Harold for sharing these perspectives. He asked Jen if she would like to weigh in since there has been some discussion on how to bring some of those issues that Harold raised to the committee in a structured way. The working group was set up to understand what the concerns are, and then bring the issues, insights, and perspectives to the whole committee. The committee’s job/role is in the next conversation. What’s the bridge, the process, for a member of the working group to share a perspective, information with the whole committee. Bennett then asked if anyone else had other thoughts or perspectives. He continued by asking if there was a need for foundational briefings around the history of how the park was established.

Tony Mercantante commented that the 300 million dollars spent back then, obviously, it wasn't done in a way that created a massive urban park, and also asked about what’s been funded since then. How much money from the current infrastructure and other bills that are for Congress now that are talking about hundreds of billions of dollars being allocated will actually come to Gateway? He asked if Jen knows of specific allocations coming to Gateway from this most recent round of discussions.

Jen addressed the $300 million figure that Dr. Zullow mentioned. Dr Zullow said it was authorized but not appropriated. That’s a process that happens with certain types of funding as they go through Congress. There may be separate authorizations from the actual appropriation but if both don’t happen the funding does not materialize. Jen asked Dr. Zullow if that’s what happened.

Harold Zullow answered that he has the information relating to the park service’s announcements about the $300 million of funding. It was intended to foster the goals that were set in establishing the park, and to bring them to fruition during the 80s and the 90s. As far as Dr. Zullow can tell, very little of that funding was actually utilized. A little bit of the money was utilized to do some repair on buildings at Fort Hancock, but that the overwhelming bulk of that funding was never appropriated. The discourse around Gateway changed and there are the beginnings of proposals for privatization, including the creation of an event space in the 1980s. Dr. Zullow has a record of all the media coverage at that point, but doesn’t have some of the park service documentation, including the plan that had been formulated and the GMP associated with the $300 million authorization. Zullow thinks that the reports, and documents should be unearthed, as well as the Congressional Record with what was intended for the park. He plans to share these documents, including the media coverage, with everyone. He is also interested in a competition that was held in 2007-2008.

Dr. Zullow also described a “secret meeting” that was held in January of 2011.

Jen Nersesian spoke about the $300 million and other monies coming to the Park Service. Gateway has only received minor increases in its annual operating budget, and sometimes the budget has decreased. These minor increases have rarely kept up with escalations in costs, salaries, and utilities. In effect the budget has decreased over the past 20 years. This is not unique to Gateway; it is true with all parks across the park service and true of the park service budget as a whole. In terms of other monies coming to Gateway, the FY 21 and FY 22 Great American Outdoors Acts projects are funded. The FY23, FY24, and FY25 projects have not been announced. We're hopeful that we could see some money at Gateway as a whole and at Sandy Hook in particular. There are other bills and considerations, including the infrastructure bill. We continue to look for funding sources where we can find them. The approach at Sandy Hook is to also look at public private partnerships and try to attract private investors to accomplish historic preservation goals in the absence of sufficient funding for the park to do that on its own. In the case of leasing, even if all of these buildings were fixed up. we’d still be looking at ways to keep them actively used, since that is the best way of keeping them maintained and preserved in the long term. We want to serve the public, we want to stay accessible, but we think that leasing some buildings for private use is compatible with that goal.

Dr. Zullow expressed the view that the formation of Gateway, the enabling legislation for funding, had the idea these historic buildings would be serving a public mission and public mission, public access, and interest, and that you would have educational research, research civic society organizations all involved. Rutgers had expressed an interest in using facilities there going all the way back to the late 1960s, even when it was still a state park.

Bennett Brooks summarized a few points from the discussion, noting that several commenters discussed the working group’s value, as well as committee members appreciation for its work. There’s also interest in having more reports like Patti shared today, as well as an appetite for leaning in and having more in-depth discussions and maybe a presentation on Secretary standards. He also noted Dr. Zullow’s dissenting view and request for the group to think about the enabling legislation and an understanding of why Gateway looks the way it does, in the context of when it was established, and then having an opportunity and a mechanism for sharing some of these documents and perspectives

**Public Comment**

Bennett then begins public comment. Two people have registered, and then there may be time for additional public comment. Bennett reads Sandra Van Sant comments which were sent to Daphne Yun.

Thank you for allowing me to send in comments and questions prior to the Thursday meeting, as I will only be able to attend a portion of it and am very concerned with the possibility of private development on Sandy Hook. I live locally in Monmouth Beach NJ and visit the Gateway National Recreation Area in Sandy Hook, NJ quite often. I am writing to express my serious concerns regarding the possible private development of housing there as a lifelong environmentalist, registered nurse and retired public health official. I am not against private-public partnerships in totality, but do not believe this is a wise option.

Rep. Pallone has been concerned that the mission of the National Park Service could be compromised by this desire to privately develop Fort Hancock as has been outlined so far, and I agree.

* Is this going to be a high-end private enclave of homes?
* Will they end up as a gated community?
* Will the end of Sandy Hook still be available to the public?
* How many buildings should be saved?
* What is the elevation there and what is the risk of storm damage and flooding in the next hurricane or nor’easter.
* Can the sewage treatment plant erected there for a small population handle the anticipated development?
* How will the new demand for drinking water from the aquifer underlying this site impact the plant life on Sandy Hook, or the degree of salt-water intrusion into the aquifer?
* How will this affect local traffic issues throughout the year?
* Also, are the buildings worth saving at this point, given the lack of protection from the weather and decay they have experienced from neglect over the past twenty years and more? I worry that we risk properties being sold off for a short-term gain to the highest bidder.

By 2030, NOAA believes Sandy Hook will experience between 25 to 45 nuisance flood days a year, on average. I would like to hear about any evaluations that have been made looking at the effects of climate change and natural erosion there.

Public support of national parks continues to be very strong. In fact, eight in 10 voters would be prepared to pay more in taxes to preserve national parks. I hate to see a rush to give up public lands for short-term gain.

Thank you again for accepting my letter. Sandra Van Sant.

Bennett then invited Susan Gardiner to speak. Susan had submitted a couple of slides ahead of time to accompany her.

Susan Gardiner introduced herself. She is the author of Sandy Hook’s Last Highland Beach Resort, published by Arcadian History Press in October 2020. She thanked the committee members for working towards saving the cultural resources on the Sandy Hook peninsula.

We all want to save as many houses as possible in the landmark. This also includes a stage 600 as a landmark building in the National Historic Landmarks (NHL) verified on this first slide.

The house is currently on the NHL list of contributing structures documented in the National Archives application on page 134.

At this time, stage 600 still appears and the 1987 amendment was added to the NHL application at the same time, the several other buildings, evaluated by New Jersey historians who signed off on this amendment, where it has remained as staid 600 historical importance and Sandy Hook is presently being exhibited in the museum at the New Jersey State Parks Nevasink light station historic landmark in 2010, the application to receive individual historic status was a suggestion by NPS chief of cultural resources Kathy Foppes to give additional protection to the house in the future, and was not intended as a reason to qualify it for our leasing agreement.

At the time, she also stated that SH 600 is on the NHL application as a contributing structure, which gives a group historical significance for leasing.

During the build-up to the Highlands bridge project, SH 600 was also documented by cultural resource historians that researched its historical merit. The NJ Department of Transportation began their investigation in 2003 and completed it in 2010. This Illustrated History was completed by RBA Engineers, Architects & Planners documenting the historical value of the Highland Beach Resort and SH 600 in the State of New Jersey. As a result of the building’s rich transportation history in New Jersey, the Department of Transportation chose to build around the house and save it. Ownership of these three lots is still retained by the State of NJ according to the Sandy Hook Deeds. Both N.J. State Sen. Gopal and U.S. Rep. Pallone are on record to support preservation of the house as an Airbnb living history experience at Sandy Hook.

Since the houses on Officers Row qualify with group status to enter the leasing program, so should SH 600 which holds the same group status in the National Archives as a contributing structure. It was removed from Sandy Hook’s List of Contributing Structures after the last Park Ranger and his family moved out in June 2012 when NPS chose not to bring it up to rental code status. Remaining on the Sandy Hook peninsula is vital to this home’s historical significance. A current lessee at Sandy Hook has expressed an interest in leasing & renovating SH 600. This structure is in imminent danger of a roof collapse in the coming year without the intervention of the interested entrepreneur to begin an evaluation, roof repair and renovation in 2022. Susan continued that we respectfully ask NPS representatives to:

1. ACCEPT the NJ Department of Transportation’s research validating SH 600’s historical importance in the State of New Jersey.

2. RECOGNIZE the SH 600’s status shown on the contributing structures list in the National Archives as part of the NHL group designation. And,

3. ADD SH 600 to the RFP list and remove it from the Ruins Band to allow the interested entrepreneur to evaluate and renovate the building in 2022.

Susan ended by thanking everyone for listening.

Bennett thanked Susan for her comments and asked if other members of the public would like to speak.

Louise Usechak asked a question she asked last spring, but never got an answer to. She remembers that in the 1980s there was a breakthrough across the neck of Sandy Hook that created a connection between basically the ocean, and the river. A great deal of effort went into repairing that, putting in bridges, and building up dunes after that event. Has the committee considered what the actual elevation of Hartshorne Drive is at the narrowest points and also the lowest points? Louise thinks it’s not too much above sea level, and her concern is for the future of the infrastructure and whether having a permanent, private presence out at Fort Hancock is going to result in the publics being taxed to maintain this. If this was a public space and not private it would not matter as much if it were cut off from the mainland temporarily or otherwise. She is just concerned about the fixed infrastructure and wonder if that has been considered.

Bennett thanked Louise for her question and asks if anyone from the park service wants to jump in. He noted that, Gerry mentioned a while ago the working group did have sort of a first touch at climate change related issues and obviously that's what you're touching on with this question. The working group should have further conversations about this topic since they only briefly discussed it.

Jen Nersesian agreed that there will be a deeper dive on climate change considerations with the working group in this forum and taking a hard look at them in conjunction with everything we're doing. Climate change considerations were a big part of the 2014 General Management Plan, and they are looked at during project development. Jen doesn’t know the elevation of Hartshorne Drive off the top of her head, especially at the narrowest part, the entrance. Infrastructure has been put there over the years to help protect the section, but she agrees that this can be looked at more closely in the future. Jen pointed out that this access is important not only to anyone who leases a building at the main post, but also to the two million-plus visitors a year that come to the beaches, as well as the Coast Guard facility at the end of Sandy Hook. All of those things become considerations, and whether and how we invest in infrastructure that is subject to climate change impacts. Jen further noted that the Park Service will take a closer look at some of these climate change related questions in the future with this group. Jen then addresses both Sandy and Susan’s comments. She thanked Susan for her passion for Historic Preservation for building 600 and for bringing forth this information. The park is still evaluating the information she sent previously and that you brought up at the last meeting. The park is not sitting on this but researching it and there should be a reply soon. Jen said that there was a lot packed into Sandy Van Sant’s letter. The committee will spend some time after this meeting unpacking that and looking at how to address the items in there. There were strong concerns about privatization in there, and Jen wants to assure everybody that even if we're leasing out buildings, all of the grounds and Sandy Hook and the main post area of Fort Hancock remain publicly accessible. The park is trying to avoid having the buildings fall down but making sure there’s public access to at least some of the building’s interiors so people can see what they were like, experience the history of those. The history house, the post museum, the lighthouse-keepers’ quarters are all examples of this. Many fortifications are publicly accessible, and we absolutely want to maintain that experience. A number of the issues stated in these comments were issues that have been raised in the working group discussions. The working group has discussed wanting to see these buildings used for public purposes for research or education, and the committee has tried for years to help bring these types of institutions to the fore, but the economics are really tough for these kinds of institutions. They typically don’t have the investment needed in the historic rehabilitation. Moreover, the Park Service is legally obligated to charge market rate rents and that, along with the regular maintenance of those buildings, pose financial challenges to some of those organizations. There are research and educational partners that are out there and we’d love to have groups like that in the mix. Rutgers does have a small office and NOAA has a Marine Lab out there. The committee has not been successful in getting other institutions and organizations out to Sandy Hook at this point, but we are happy to keep at it.

Brian Samuelson, leaseholder at Sandy Hook, invited working group members to visit his building and see firsthand what they’ve done to recycle these buildings and help the environment. He continued that this is not a luxury privatization; this leasing program enables the public more access. Rather than seeing a chain link fence they get right up to the building and in these buildings. Brian agrees that building 600 (the first house you see on your left in Sandy Hook) needs to be saved. It has the same historic significance as anything on officers’ row, we may have the ability to save the house or find someone to save that the property (perhaps as an Airbnb and a living history example) which would, again, enhance visitors’ ability to enjoy the Park . He ended his comments by inviting the working group, the Sierra Club (with a specific invitation to Dr. Zullow) or anyone one who has interest in touring his building to reach out to him at [www.SandyHookRentals.com](http://www.SandyHookRentals.com). We all want public access and to do the best job, let’s save them all.

Tony Mercantante said he doesn’t want to beat a dead horse but the federal government has had 50 years to address this issue. They barely put a dime towards preserving or restoring Fort Hancock. To expect that it’s going to change in the next five or 10 years is really just unrealistic. We need to remember that these buildings are falling apart, they're falling down and falling apart. And if the goal is to let them do that and just say that, and then, you know, it'll revert back to a natural environment, but I believe letting the buildings deteriorate and fall apart violates the mandate to save as and preserve the park facilities. So, we have a responsibility to not let that happen. If we expect the government to bail this out and to make it happen, that’s just foolish. It's not going to happen, there has to be a partnership. There has to be some private investment to make it happen. And anything short of that is just not going to work. No one's ever talked about making you know, an exclusive private enclave, which is going to be a gated community or anything like that. Those are just things that people say to scare people; that's never been a discussion. That will never happen because it's a park and everyone understands that it's a park. This won't be the first park with private usage, as a component. We are obligated to get this facility preserved, that’s our goal, and this is the best way to get that done. This is the direction that we're headed in, and not trying to come up with some fantasy idea that the government's going to suddenly come and sweep in and, and, and bail us out and build or restore all these buildings. And as Jen said, even if we're restored all the buildings, there's not enough users for all the buildings, you'd have to have some privatization of in terms of tenants, because you've got more buildings than the NPS can use. If Rutgers or Brookdale or Monmouth University want to do anything at the park, they can submit a proposal as Monmouth County did. And that's worked out very successfully, and they're moving forward with the expansion of the MAST facility. So, if any other institutions want to do something like that, they're free to do so.

Mike Holenstein agreed with Tony. The committee has continuously made the offerings with the RFP available to any group: public, private, quasi-public, institutional, and entertain any inquiries that have been made. As Jen said, most of the inquiries that we've had along those veins have failed, or not been processed on the basis of the institution or the entities and ability to proceed with the project financially. To Tony's point the idea that the federal government is going to come in and fund this is a fundamentally different than the foundation and the charter of this committee which the secretary appointed to factor for the purpose of reuse and preservation. You can look at the charter. Mike paraphrased that the purpose of the committee was to facilitate the preservation and rehabilitation of structures within the Fort Hancock jurisdiction and the Sandy Hook peninsula. And so, we as members of the Advisory committee in conjunction with our duty to report to the, to the National Park Service by recommending courses of action have undertaken to do that. Mike also admired Susan Gardiner’s building 600. While the park is still out on their decisions how to proceed with that, it is not enough for anyone in particular to say that we're doing it wrong. You shouldn’t say that one way or another, the aspects of the park in the parks mission and the natural resources are not being addressed, without offering a reasonable solution, and a way that it that it's a practical solution.

He pointed to Susan Gardiner’s approach to building 600. She's asking that the property be included in the RFP. She's coming in and saying: Let's include it in the RFP, and we think we've got somebody that will do the work on it. So she's not just asking for an extension of the scope of the RFP; she's asking for an extension of the scope of the RFP and offering a solution. And I think that's a commendable approach, and it is far better for someone to come with recommendations, and even, even a suggestion of a solution or course of action, then it is to simply say that what we're doing is not adequate or somehow incorrect.

Gerry Scharfenberger wanted to piggyback briefly on what Tony had said. Everybody should keep in mind that these buildings were previously occupied. So, in many ways, we're just going back to what the historic uses were. As far as universities go, the trend has been, you know, universities have been struggling recently, but especially with enrollment and retention rates. A lot of them are not in a position to add more facilities to their overall structure. We can't really count on universities coming out I think at this point in time. Jen pointed out that they've reached out to many universities and, you know, they haven't had too many bites on it. This is just going to fit in with the scheme of what’s always been in use at Sandy Hook, of Fort Hancock.

As to what information would be useful to the Committee as it goes forward, Bennett said he’s heard members would like more briefings and a specific suggestion was made for a briefing around Secretary standards. He also noted the need to balance and weigh different interests to find the path forward that honors the many different perspectives.

Michael Walsh agrees with both Mike and Tony. Especially Mike’s comment that

we are very much interested in everybody's ideas, but solutions are what we're hoping to gather from the input that we're getting from everybody. And so, you know, I don't think anybody involved in any of this is not interested in history, we are all. That’s why we were very interested in the preservation of facilities for Hancock so that should just be, you know, accepted that we are all interested in the history but we also don't want to run down rabbit holes with the history. It’s interesting that $300 million was allocated 40 years ago, but that money is no longer available, so it’s not a solution. Mike continued that it is an interesting tidbit, and he’s glad there was bipartisan support before the Reagan era, but we are not living in that era right now. And, you know, what we need is practical solutions to move this forward, the committee has been in place for nine years. We’re slowly chipping away and making progress on buildings being renovated and he hopes that will accelerate. But going forward what he thinks is most helpful to this committee is getting real world solutions.

Gary Cassazza also agreed with Tony. He continued that as an advisory member we all have an obligation to go back to our people that we represent, whether it's the township or

real estate, no matter what it is and communicate what this group is doing and how much work has been done, and that we all come up with solutions. If someone has another solution, contact Jen.

Gerry Glaser was reminded that in a previous era there were multiple educational institutions at Sandy Hook. Brookdale Community College and Rutgers both had active programs. Gerry continued that he brought out a past president of Monmouth University to Sandy Hook. And in all of these cases the costs of the rehabilitation are almost prohibitive. There are grant programs that we may be able to tap into if we can come up with ideas that any of those kinds of education institutions might support. Gerry continued that he spent a lot of time with a major US science agency, and he thinks those types of institutions, would be interested in continuing to pursue those kinds of opportunities. He also believes the arts community is underrepresented at Fort Hancock Sandy Hook. Some buildings, event some that are not included in the current leasing program, might well be suited for some in the arts community. Over the years we have also talked about encouraging some communities with needs to develop affordable housing to come up with facilities out there. He thinks that remains a viable option. Gerry wanted to put those out on the table as things to think about. Gerry then asked if committee members had specific topics that the working group should put on the list for upcoming meetings. One issue that was raised today is how underserved populations can have access to the Sandy Hook facilities. He believes that is a topic that should be discussed by the working group. If people don’t have a chance to add their ideas today, he’d like them to contact him after the meeting.

Shawn Welch commended Susan for doing some interesting research and thanked her for bringing some options to the table. The Army's audited Real Property plat for the transfer from Secretary of the Army to Secretary of Interior does show an easement, and that is what appears to have been revoked upon transfer the real property. Same thing with a number of easements with the state of New Jersey and those were all revoked as the transfer occurred, so that you may want to put that as part of your research. Shawn believes the early formation of the park, including the Congressional Record and enabling legislation, should be juxtaposed with the whole process of the 1964 National Historic Preservation Act, and the creation of the National Historic Landmarks program. There should be a deeper dive to understand why there is a historic leasing statute. There's some interesting language there, and it parallels both time and intent. Other countries do have some of the same idea of using private money specifically to preserve historic property. They are leveraging everything available. An example is Mont Saint-Michel, France. The French government works with multiple private organizations, families, churches, and other groups engaging in the preservation. Shawn said that he thinks that was the point of the historic leasing act for the National Park Service and Department of Interior, because Park Service doesn't just have the preservation capability (financially or operationally). It’s nice to see Susan come in and offer some options because, as everyone else before me is said, there is a mandate to preserve, which began with the Antiquities Act of 1906 and works its way forward through legislation, all the way to the present day. And as Gary and Mike and Tony mentioned, we can't just push that aside and say we don't have that mandate, because that mandate is in front of our faces.

Bennett noted that there are some public attendees who have raised their hand. Hearing from everyone is an important part of why we’re all together.

Eileen Murphy, New Jersey Audubon. It was mentioned that if we want more federal money, we

should advocate for that. Eileen wanted folks to know that her organization advocated heavily for funding to come to Gateway when the Great American Outdoors Act was being discussed back in 2020; she and a representative of the American Littoral Society wrote op-eds. The fact of the matter is that the amount of funding necessary is just insurmountable. It’s not coming from the federal government and we have asked and we have advocated very strongly to get federal dollars to Gateway. There are a lot of education programs in the plan from the 80s and we would have loved to have seen that. The approach of NJ Audubon is to ensure that any development going on is just that.

Carole Balmer, Middletown, NJ apologized for joining so late, she had a conflict. Her concern, which she hopes is addressed, is that there is a situation with water rising. She feels we are

throwing good money after bad to protect and preserve areas that are going to be underwater in 2030. Maybe 40 years. Her concern here is that we're basically throwing our tax dollars, public tax dollars, into properties that are going to be gone in a matter of time. She hopes that the park and committee will address this concern.

Bennett thanked Carole. He noted that issue was brought up earlier in today’s meeting and that the working group has discussed it. He expects that the working group will address the topic in more depth at a future meeting.

**Key Messages and Next Steps**

Mike Holenstein said that in the past there was always a little time at the end of each meeting for the committee members to say a word or two. He’d like to see that added back into the agenda. Also, if the current plan for the officers’ row houses is going to be a topic of presentation in the near future, he’d like the plan be brought to the fact, not just in the physical sense with regard to the planned renovations but also as to something about their economic model so we can maybe get a grasp on how the Stillman group plans to fund it. It will be helpful to know what type of price points and occupancy levels they will need.

Jen Neresesian said that it is important for the committee to work through all of those points with the Stillman agreement. Their pilot phase is not just about the architectural design; this is an iterative process with the economic model as well to see, what's the density of number of units that each one of these houses can hold. What will that mean for the economics and how the economics will work out in the end? Can the park handle it capacity-wise? We need to make sure the level of capacity doesn’t impact the historic standards but also brings in enough revenue to justify the level of investment that is being made. The park wants the committee to have full visibility as this is worked through. Stillman has expressed an openness to looking at very different economic models - one is straight market model, and another is looking at some kind of affordable housing or veterans housing model that would rely upon some kind of subsidy or other partnership to make it economically feasible but those are all options on the table right now. Yes, we want the committee to be very much part of those discussions.

Bennett asked if there is a way to have a conversation with the committee about what options would they want to be looking at to the extent that that Stillman has some options. Getting some feedback from the Committee on what would be useful to them, seems like a good conversation to have sooner than later. He also thanked Mike for the reminder on carving out time at the end of meeting really and that will be included in future meetings. Bennett thanked everyone for a good conversation, and Patti for the presentation, and to the working group members who made time to be here as well. It’s all appreciated, valued, and necessary.

At the next meeting Jen talked about revisiting the ombudsman role, so that will be on the agenda for the next meeting. There was also interest in talking about the Stillman's agreement schedule and process and getting a better understanding of that and to continue briefings like the one Patti gave today on the various issues that are being discussed by the working group. Bennett continued that a number of issues that have come up today that will require more conversation. Climate change issues and understanding history and context are both important. These conversations need to be relevant to what the park and committee. There was also the ask from the committee to have an opportunity to look at the Stillman pilot and weigh in on the plans and economics of the work that is being done on the prototypes. Gerry also asked for the committee to share topics they thought were important for the working group to discuss so that the committee could benefit from their insights and conversation and perspectives. Please let Gerry or Bennett know so that the working group can make sure we're having those conversations.

Shawn asked for other members to suggest future topics such as the economic model, climate change concerns, since the committee should give the park a recommendation that these are things the committee wants to tee up for future meetings. He noted that he’s had some conversations with Gerry about the affordable housing idea. There are some groups in the area that might be interested in doing some sort of affordable housing component. But there also are some issues with Fort Hancock such as its remoteness and distance from jobs. Shawn doesn’t believe that the area is a good location for affordable housing due to those issues, but that there are alternatives, such as special needs housing. The location may be a better fit for certain special needs populations. Shawn would pursue that further with Jerry and anyone else who wants to participate. They’ll reach out to advocates and developers out there who specialize in that sort of thing. He also thought there could be a connection between Tony and ideas that Middletown is pursing and what Stillman is trying to accomplish.

Mary Eileen added that affordable housing or studios for artists should be considered. She’d love to see art entities out there but most arts groups don’t have those types of resources.

Shawn agreed that he was thinking of spaces for artists when he spoke about alternative types of affordable housing.

Bennett ended the meeting by thanking everyone for a good conversation.