

Fort Hancock 21st Century Federal Advisory Committee
Meeting Summary #17
Thompson Park Visitor Center, Beech Room
June 26, 2015

Jennifer T. Nersesian, Superintendent of Gateway National Recreation Area (GATE) and the Committee's Designated Federal Official, called the meeting to order at 9:15 A.M. Gerard Glaser, Co-Chair of the Committee, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Joshua Laird, Commissioner for the National Parks of New York Harbor, was also in attendance. He had just returned from a conference where he gave a presentation that, in part, called attention to the work of this committee as an example of how to move NPS work forward with cooperation from local experts and elected officials.

John Warren, External Affairs Officer at Gateway's Sandy Hook Unit, presented a summary of the last meeting, including the partial roof collapse of Building 23 at Fort Hancock and the receiving of multiple responses for the Requests for Proposal (RFPs) concerning residences, but none for bed-and-breakfasts or not-for-profits. Minutes were edited and approved by email. Glaser thanked Warren for all his work.

Sandy Hook Unit Coordinator Pete McCarthy announced that he has found a Historic Structures Report from the late 1980s pertaining to Officers Row. The Report provides information that may be helpful to the rehabilitation efforts at Fort Hancock.

Park update

Nersesian passed on several items about park operations.

- Since the last meeting, an NPS panel has selected two applicants from the responses to the Requests for Proposal (RFPs), which closed in April. NPS will move forward with negotiations with the selected applicants for the residential RFP. NPS cannot discuss the negotiations or the identities of the parties until leases are executed, but we are moving along.
- We have no updates about new members to the Committee. The applications are still with the White House Liaison office. We expect to know before the next Committee meeting in September. We want to talk about onboarding of new members and perhaps we can set up an interim call to set up new members with mentors prior to the next meeting so we can be ready to go at the next meeting.
- Sandy Hook's observation platform involved some historic preservation issues we did not anticipate, especially regarding the platform underneath. Discussing the challenges related to this project gives us a charge to look at the process, see what we need to adjust, and to make sure we are planning for all steps that need to happen about the process. We will be meeting with the New Jersey State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO, of which Dan Saunders is the deputy and senior staff member) to ensure we have made all efforts at streamlining restoration issues for Fort Hancock buildings. We did just receive SHPO approval to move ahead with the platform project and can move ahead with the building of the platform.

- We still await recommendations of a structural assessment for Building 23 to determine whether we are able to salvage the structure, must demolish it, or have other options.
- Paving of MUP new phase will be done by July 4.
- Building 7: NPS is committed to investing in the rehabilitation.
 - NPS will be working on the windows and making temporary fixes to the roof.
 - We are just finishing historic and structural evaluation of windows.
 - We are contracting to bring in a firm that will scope out the rest of the work required, some of which we will do ourselves, some of which will be done by others.
 - We have also brought on an intern focusing on climate change and will determine how to integrate green and sustainable features in Building 7, which are light on the environment and energy saving, so we can marry historic preservation with latest technologies. This information will be used to create a set of guidelines that we can apply to any of the Officers Row buildings.

Glaser asked: A while ago the National Science Foundation (NSF) funded a study that would articulate climate impacts on the Sandy Hook area. Building 7 is the answer to that recommendation. There will be a lot of lessons learned around this project. How do you take what you learned from that model activity and apply it on a broader scale?

Nersesian replied: This is a great accomplishment. It is more than Building 7 itself. It is a way to let the public know what we can learn from this process and that is what the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) and NSF expected out of the study when they funded it.

Nersesian's update continued.

- Maintenance Facility relocation: We received a lot of feedback from the public and have reevaluated originally proposed locations. One of the things we learned from public comment was that we should be adaptively reusing more buildings. We developed some new options and are re-scoping with the public. We are working into integrating those options into an Environmental Assessment, which should be out in the fall. We really benefited from everyone's input and will have a much better process as a result.
- Regarding Building 26, we are moving ahead with HOPE (Hands on Preservation Experience), a national youth initiative working with NJ Youth Corps, to undertake work with Guy Hembling and others. That work will be starting up in the coming month.
- Sandy recovery at History House is underway. We are going out with the design and build phase for contracting heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) and some exterior repairs, which involve contracting work. Meanwhile, History House will be open this summer, albeit with limited electricity and other capabilities.
- Plans for the repair of Spermaceti Cove Visitors Center are also moving forward. The contract for the design/build phase is expected to go out in fall 2015.
- The telecommunications system improvements and wastewater treatment plant improvements and construction are moving along/ahead. Those improvements will replace antiquated and non-resilient systems.
- NPS is also scoping out work necessary to repair the Theater (Building #67) as a result of Sandy.

- Sandy Hook visitation is up in spite of questionable weather or forecasts of the past few weekends. We had an amazing opening weekend Memorial Day and we anticipate the trend to continue. We are also getting good buzz on the food trucks. We started the mobile food service last year and it is starting to gel. It is not the ultimate solution but it is successful.
- We are also having a banner year for piping plover protection. Sandy Hook is an ideal spot for protection of the species and we have the largest numbers of plover pairs we have seen.
- We are past the engineering phase and are getting ready to move the Beach Area facilities into contracting (for repair). There are some fire code issues we are working on.

Linda Cohen asked if Building 7 will be a prototype. Nersesian replied that the park is hoping to learn as much as we can from that project. Cohen: who is the contractor? Nersesian: At this time, it's the NPS. The park will be making repairs until we have a larger scope of repair and will contract out larger scope. Cohen asked, where is the observation deck platform? Nersesian: At the north end of Sandy Hook, by U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) housing and a pond.

Cohen asked, who is this intern and where does she live? Nersesian: Hailey Ramos is our intern working at Sandy Hook. She is from California but living at Miller Field on Staten Island and working at both park headquarters on Staten Island and at Sandy Hook.

Welch asks about the gym at Sandy Hook. Any movement on that? Nersesian: That is funding-dependent and we need to see how that shakes out with regard to Hurricane Sandy repair funds.

Michael Holenstein noted that the issue of approvals is something that has been discussed before this Committee a number of times. The report and advice about the observation deck is important in determining how to streamline the project. It is in the Committee's Charter to make recommendations to the park. One of Committee's efforts is to make streamlined results. What is NPS doing about it?

Nersesian: NPS is identifying what kinds of projects require what level of review. We are developing a clearer template. For example, we need to refine how we address windows. The more work we can address up front in creating a road map, addressing expectations, and knowing what to plan for, the smoother the process will go. We are looking at what has worked in the past.

Margot Walsh asked about the property formerly known as the Seagull's Nest. Nersesian: We are fixing Sandy damage, making the structure more resilient. The first floor will be flow-through. We are leaving it flexible so that whoever wants to use it can make adequate use of it. It will be like a house on stilts – in the event of a storm the doors can be opened and the water can flow through. The park will provide enough infrastructures so that any tenant can come in and utilize the facilities.

Walsh: So the liquor license is still there and the Lessee could turn it into a restaurant? Nersesian: The liquor license is from the state and specific to the tenant. Could this be a new restaurant? Potentially, yes.

Discussion of streamlining restoration decisions and efforts

Welch: Can we add timelines for different levels and types of approvals and which offices are involved in processing and reviewing the approvals required? Nersesian: That will help us too if we have it all laid out and if we can also determine how to further streamline.

Glaser: It will give us an opportunity to move past the normal bureaucratic obstacles and see how we can overcome them/throw them out. Laird is so supportive of what we are doing. If there is a way to move aside some of the barriers, we would support it. Also, the Committee will weigh in on those barriers and be vocal about their removal.

Welch: A quick review of the guidance from the NPS Director regarding cultural resource management and climate change recommends reviewing existing requirements to determine those that may need statutory and regulatory relief to implement streamlined efforts and support climate change initiatives. Commissioner Joshua Laird: When we have a group like this weighing in, we have the cover to move ahead.

Holenstein: So this topic is now an agenda item for our next meeting (streamlining review)? Nersesian said yes. Holenstein noted that, if you go before a municipality for approvals, you have a checklist that you must comply with before you can approach the municipality. We should have something similar. Welch: Can we agree that there will be a preliminary checklist? Nersesian: Yes.

Cohen: This process will help the Lessee and will also get the building back on the market if there is not adequate progress.

Pam McLay, GATE Chief of Business Services: Perhaps this is a project for a work group. We have Denver Service Center packages for project approvals that we can look at as well as other guiding documents that we can share for the work group to review.

Holenstein: If you know what you are doing and where all those materials are, do you need to have people who are not experts weighing in on that process? Do you need to be burdened with a work group? Nersesian: We at NPS can take a first look and involve a work group. Welch: Holenstein, Saunders, Welch, and Guy Hembling are already on a work group and can move forward.

McLay: We have some experts from private industry whose input we need. It is really important to us. We will provide the templates and make it a package that can be used and can also be used for Tax Credits program. Perhaps we can reach out to Washington and see if we can blend improvements/approvals required with Tax Credit applications that can be used by any Lessee.

Nersesian: If this can make the process easier, so much the better.

Glaser: We should consider pros and cons. If we move forward with a new working group, it should be described specifically for this purpose. Welch concurs.

The Committee established the working group, with Welch, Saunders, Holenstein and Hembling as members. McLay will be the park liaison with this group for information pertaining to same. The group will identify the internal process required to get a permit (to build). We understand there are big issues we must deal with in an agile way that reflects our interest in being speedier about this process. McLay will update the group on the status of potential lessees.

Glaser: Should we vote to establish a working group? The members responded yes.

Welch: We have to make it a user-friendly process. McLay: Ideally, it should be forms that can be filled out and submitted.

Nersesian: As we move forward with the new leases, we need some sort of inventory as to what approved actions have been determined. For example, a decision about an aspect of removal of a fireplace is determined can then be applied to all subsequent rehabs. Holenstein: This is similar to the process of a zoning board application. All you are saying is that we keep a chronology of asked questions and results. Let's not delay. Saunders: What we want is to help people get approvals and we cannot approve what we do not receive.

After additional discussion the group reaches Consensus: The group/sub-committee will be called the *Approvals Process Working Group*.

Status of Leasing

McLay revealed the newly revised Use Map, comparing it to the former Use Map. The orange area is the newly designated area, where any use compatible with residences will be allowed. The residential facilities are those that will be considered under *Requests for Bid (RFBs)*. Glaser asked McLay to review the difference between an RFP and an RFB.

McLay complied. A Request for Proposals (RFP) requires us to ask a series of seven questions, which are prescribed in legislation. Under an RFB, the federal government describes what a Lessee is required to do: make investment consistent with historic preservation requirements, based on what we have learned from first two leases. With an RFB, the high bid wins, with the caveat that they have met minimum investment requirements. This opens the door for those who did not feel comfortable writing a proposal. There is still an evaluation on our part to determine whether a potential applicant has the financial capability and ability to make improvements required under the lease. The park will need a credit check, documentation stating the applicant has the money necessary to make minimum investment, and back up documentation showing experience or that the applicant has retained experts available to undertake historic rehabilitation. An evaluation panel of NPS employees will still be required at the regional level. The panel's experts review financial proposals. The park is neutral in the selection process. There is still a negotiation of lease terms (an opportunity to tweak the lease language).

Glaser asked if the RFB review process would be more streamlined than the RFP. McLay noted that there was not very much delay on the RFP process. We have support and resources from the NPNH Commissioner and the region to move quickly on either an RFP or an RFB.

Cohen is impressed with what has been accomplished since last meeting, but she notes that the Request For Expressions of Interest (RFEI) received far more responses than the RFP. What happened to the number and diversity of RFEI responses? Perhaps the RFP was too difficult for RFEI participants. Perhaps RFB may be easier for those RFEI interested folks to respond to.

McLay: Warren has a terrific list gathered from RFEI applicants. It is hard to know what the hurdles were between then and now. We do not have terrific feedback on what the gap between the RFEI and RFP was. We can reach out to those folks and invite them back to the table.

Holenstein: What about the conclusion of our last meeting that NPS go back to those RFEI folks and find out what that delay or issue was in responding to the RFP? McLay: We are doing that. Nersesian: The Committee can help us figure out how to incentivize potential leaseholders. Wray: We did that with the surveys the Committee released after the RFPs closed. Maybe we need to revise those questions and find out what the disconnect was. McLay: We are trying to streamline solicitation.

Walsh: What about infrastructure? Has that come up as an issue with the two lessees that were selected? Will the improvements be in place when the leases are negotiated? Nersesian: We are in the process of improving the infrastructure now. Not all of the upgrades in infrastructure are in place. Lessees are made aware of this but there is currently infrastructure in place.

McLay clarified that the orange buildings on the revised Use Map will be RFBs and the yellow and purple will be RFPs.

Welch said that the former Officers Club is a high priority building critical to the history of the Landmark District.

Lillian Burry: In her recent discussions with the Marine Academy for Science and Technology (MAST, located at Sandy Hook) for a new gym, school officials were unenthusiastic about requirements for interior rehabilitation of the historic gym in Fort Hancock's former YMCA. MAST feels the requirements are rigid and they were concerned they will have to keep coming back to Monmouth County for additional funds in order to complete rehabilitation of the gym. Burry asked Unit Coordinator Pete McCarthy about the issue. He replied that the gym is a utilitarian building, far less complex than a residence. The issue that seemed to cause MAST heartburn was the hazardous materials in the building.

Nersesian said she was approached by MAST approximately one year ago. They have some preconception of what historic preservation entails, which the park should correct. Burry said that the right people must talk to MAST so they understand what is required. Burry will set that up.

Welch: Are historic preservation costs an issue with MAST? The primary ones he saw were the catwalk and some of the interior pictures that are useable--all of which should be easy to retain and support modern needs. Nersesian: Resiliency is the main issue. Building 40 was hard hit by Hurricane Sandy; we will have to address whether that floor will be raised or the building will be made flow-through.

McLay had more news to share.

- The NPS has hired a national chief of leasing. Gordy Kitto will be visiting Sandy Hook on July 13 between 2 and 5 P.M. Committee members are welcome to meet him and ask questions. The new chief is asking how he can help us. We would like to share our draft RFB with him. Welch, Linda Cohen, Wray, Glaser would like to come. The chief will be an important advocate for our process and programs.
- The panel did a fantastic job turning around their recommendations on the proposed lessees for FACA. We have drafted proposed leases and released them to proposed Lessees. Once leases are signed, we can share them with the Committee. We are learning a lot together. This is a pilot and it is an opportunity for all of us to learn.

Holenstein: When the lease is executed, that will mean the criteria for the RFP was laid out properly and process was correctly defined and requirements were met? If the applications were somewhat different from the original process, does the Committee know about those deviations? Example: If the minimum credit score is 750 and the selected applicant has a credit score of 700, is that information released?

McLay: The criteria are identified in the regulations. Having people put in proposals is one way we can determine certain things, such as whether flood insurance is available, or such as a “bottom” for investment/capital improvements.

Glaser: Once the lease is signed, are the Lessees expected to start physically working on the building within a specified period of time? McLay: Prior to signing, we need a project schedule that gets approved by NPS. Glaser asked, will work on the buildings begin right away? The NPS cannot answer that. There will be a definite timeline based on a construction timeline provided by a Lessee.

Glaser: We have seen those projects linger under a Letter of Intent (LOI). McLay distinguished between Leases and LOIs and explains that LOIs are often subject to availability of funding. In this case (with two selected applicants for residences), the funding has been identified. The construction plans of leaseholders and their contactors will determine how soon construction starts after the lease is executed.

Walsh: We may have a PR problem. We do not know how many proposals were received and we do not know whether there is any “bad publicity” that will hold this process up.

Warren replied that the park has notified everyone who applied and we have spoken with them. There is overwhelming support and positivity from all applicants, selected and otherwise. Everyone has an opportunity to submit for the next solicitation. This will make the process more competitive and, hopefully, more streamlined.

Welch: We will likely see only a little bit of work on a few buildings before the construction season ends between now and the onset of winter. Has NPS given any thought to what to do for a modicum of protection for the buildings to weather the upcoming winter? For example, on Building 114 (the former Officers Club), how can we make sure all windows are closed by fall to prevent moisture damage?

Glaser: Let’s talk about this after McLay has finished her presentation. Welch deferred.

McLay continued. A recent mark up to a House Bill will require all parks to address what it will take to implement a successful and robust leasing program. All parks will be required to identify the facilities that they wish to utilize for historic leasing programs and address whatever impediments currently prevent parks from implementing successful leasing programs. As the Committee knows, GATE has been working on these issues for more than one year and a half. The fact that Congress is looking at this may be related to the work we have done as a Committee. McLay thanked the Committee for helping this matter come to the forefront and get the level of review it needs in order to be successful,

Nersesian said that McLay was being overly modest. McLay's expertise in this area is being recognized by Washington. The efforts we are making here are being supported from the top down. Washington is taking an interest in what we are doing. Thanks to all of the Committee members for working on this over the past year. It is part of the momentum building on a national level.

Glaser addressed the importance of the reports the Committee has generated and thanked McLay and anyone in Congress who helped bring this to the forefront.

Walsh mentioned that she met with Congressman Frelinghuysen (R-NJ) in Washington recently and bent his ear about the Committee's doings. The Congressman is a big supporter of Parks and of this project. He has his fingers on the dollars and would be a wonderful advocate in support of our efforts. Thanks from the Committee to the congressional representatives in attendance. (Pallone's office has sent a staffer in attendance.)

McLay closed the presentation and reminded all about the initiatives related to the Centennial. She looked forward to Leasing Chief Kitto's visit to GATE.

Welch spoke about the historic posts and significance (there were ten, seven of which were meant to be temporary) and is grateful the Use Maps and other documents have been changed from "Fort Hancock" to "Fort Hancock Historic Post." He thanked McLay for providing this context, which helps implement the Committee recommendation to nest the post area of Fort Hancock into the Fort Hancock and Sandy Hook Proving Ground Historic Landmark District, which includes all of the Sandy Hook peninsula, including what is run by the U.S. Coast Guard.

At this point, the Committee took a ten minute break.

National Parks and Conservation Association (NPCA) offer of intern for the summer

The National Parks and Conservation Association (NPCA) has volunteered to help the Committee and the park reach out directly to non-profit organizations. Oliver Spellman of the NPCA has come with new intern, Camille Laurente. Glaser wanted members to consider how NPCA can help the Fort Hancock Committee. NPCA has more than 1 million members nationwide. They raise quite a bit of money for the NPS.

Spellman spoke to the Committee. NPCA has been around 90 years, helping parks through fundraising, sharing of expertise and advocating for NPS parks and programs. Spellman works for NPCA's Northeast Region, which runs from New Jersey to Maine. They have been following this Committee for over one

year and support the most recently considered legislation on historic leasing. If Fort Hancock leasing continues to be successful, this can be a model for parks throughout the region and the country. The former co-chair, Deb Shanley, who is on a Floyd Bennett Field (within GATE's Jamaica Bay Unit) task force, approached the NPS with the promise of an intern available to the Committee as a resource.

Laurente has a law degree and a degree in political science. She is working on a Masters at Columbia University. The intern is available for this project with no strings attached to the NPS and no ethical conflicts. NPCA is doing work at Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, which includes 100 buildings (as does the entire Fort Hancock). NPCA is also working with Women's Rights National Historical Park in Seneca Falls, New York. Why not bring these resources together? If partnerships are required, NPCA can make that happen. Their offices are in Greenwich Village, where they are currently meeting with leaders of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender community (LGBT) to see if there are opportunities for the first LGBT historic site at the Stonewall Inn, where a riot against police harassment by bar patrons hastened the LGBT rights movement in the US and throughout the world.

Laurente introduced herself. She is taking courses in urban development and international communication. She was an attorney in the Philippines and has worked with leasing issues in the past. She would like to help us streamline and improve the system and wants to encourage more investors to be involved in this project.

Glaser: If we are able to approach non-profits and let them know what is going on out here, we can become a "broker" by working with NPCA. Glaser asked the Committee for ideas as to how to engage Laurente with respect to RFEI applicants and good candidates moving forward. How can NPCA bring folks together to begin conversations and negotiations? Laurente's expertise and NPCA's backing bring credibility, experience, and provide a bridge. What can we do to help ourselves?

Hill: We need to get the streamlined process in place so that when Laurente is making phone calls, she can speak to the issues and be effective on our behalf.

Glaser: Unlike what we have seen with the RFP process and the need for applicants to provide a proposal, the park has the authority to go directly to non-profits and begin negotiations. There is no need for intense evaluation process of proposals. It starts with the non-profit and the park sitting down together. Glaser is confident that we have enough information to begin.

Nersesian: We can move ahead with non-profits and we need the resources to find a wider circle of interested participants. Though we have discussed this, we have not made a focused concerted effort and this gives us the opportunity.

Wray: We revised the map at the last meeting because we were more successful at attracting residential applicants. It is easy to attract residential users for the front buildings. It is important to see energy devoted to the entire project, and having someone assist us with back buildings is critical.

Cohen said she would be happy to take prospective non-profits through the New Jersey Sea Grant Consortium (Building 22) and explain how it is utilized and the substantial rehabilitation that has taken place since Sea Grant has been at the site.

McLay: We have an opportunity to let Congress know what types of challenges we have been subject to as a result of the regulations currently in place. If we could capture the roadblocks faced by potential lessees and share with Congress what is really standing in the way, that would be helpful. It would also be in keeping with what they are asking in accordance with the mark-up.

Parish: There is not enough money in Sea Grant's budget to make additional improvements to the facility. The next issue Sea Grant would like to address is compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA wheelchair access). These are critical issues we need to address.

Warren: We do not know enough inside the NPS to advise nonprofits about ways that they can raise the funds to take on a project like restoring one of our buildings. There are pots of money available elsewhere, such as large charitable endowments. If that information was gathered for us, the park could pass it on to non-profits and make restoration of our buildings less daunting.

Glaser: Laurente could help us determine why RFEIs or other nonprofits did not submit proposals in response to the RFP and what the impediments are to doing so. She can develop the questions necessary to determine why certain groups did not apply/submit and what they need to make the opportunity attractive enough so that they do apply.

Holenstein said he could not envision the Committee in a position of oversight to provide real structure that can be used. NPS should provide structural format and continuity. He was unsure how the Committee could provide proper oversight and response to what is required. McLay said that the Committee could seek a report back at the end of the process. Glaser offered that it might not be necessary to have a formal NPS internship for this task.

Holenstein: I hear grad student opportunity for research structure/project. What is being called for here is some kind of structured response to an offer which the Committee cannot supply. We can put a person with expertise on a committee or a work group who could make a recommendation. Nersesian: It sounds like Laurente would be doing an NPCA internship and the issue on the table is how do we think we could work together and whether we feel comfortable tasking her to work on our behalf. She could speak on behalf of NPCA or NPS.

The Committee discussed how to approach this offer from NPCA. Is it an offer to set up a structured process? Spellman clarified that NPCA wanted to implement something that is helpful to NPS in the context of this committee. The research results are what is important to NPCA.

Walsh said her office uses interns from colleges all the time. You just need to outline what your objective is and what their objective is so at the end everyone knows what task was required and whether it was completed satisfactorily. What are the four or five points that would be a benefit to us?

Welch: So we need to develop a list that Laurente can work on.

Laurente said she had no template or checklist to provide on her end from Columbia. She is free to identify issues and address process and make recommendations for the Committee's review and consideration.

Holenstein agreed that the NPS could use the help. Perhaps NPCA and Laurente can work with NPS. The Committee needs to provide the structure for her work and analysis. Hill: Maybe we can ask her to be on the Approvals Committee.

Glaser volunteered to liaise with Laurente as an official part of any working group. Does this sound like something of interest and value to her? She replied yes.

Warren clarified that committee meetings are open to public but work groups need not be open to public and have a different status under the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

Glaser concluded by saying that the Committee needed to find a way to give Laurente an envelope within which she can work.

Public comment period

As required by law and specified in the Federal Register announcement of this meeting, a period for public comment Period began at 11:30 A.M. Five names were on the list of attendees, none of whom wish to comment. Other members of the public did get up to speak.

Jim Krauss, Atlantic Highlands: One of the major concerns he has is that it does not sound like there is anyone working on lead generation for non-profits. That is necessary and required and maybe Laurente should be working on that.

Gerard Scharfenberger, New Jersey Planning Commission and former mayor of Middletown: Now that April 17 deadline for RFPs has passed, what happens if we know of a party interested in buildings at Sandy Hook? There is a developer who has just finished redeveloping a circa 1820s buildings and he is interested in doing more. Funding does not seem to be an issue based on that developer's track record. He would like to send him out there but not if there is no opportunity. Nersesian explained that no one can submit proposals until the next RFB or RFP is open. McLay pointed out that we would like to know from a private industry perspective what obstacles are at play. Warren: Anyone who wishes to be kept up to date about Fort Hancock leasing or the Committee can be included by emailing john_warren@nps.gov.

Jeff Tyler: Laurente sounds like she can look at economics. Seems to him that looking at the lease and the amount of investment required, a non-profit or anyone interested must look at the economics. We have feedback now on what it costs, perhaps that is something Laurente can do. Everyone loves Fort Hancock and agrees it is a beautiful place but the economics are important for people to know. Maybe she could give actionable feedback to non-profits that were interested based on economics or identifying shortfalls that result in lack of demand. It is a project she can start and end with practical result. Rose agreed that this is a great idea but the feedback she gets is that it is very expensive. If there were more defined costs, it would be helpful.

No other members of the public wish to speak. The public comment period closed at 11:45 A.M.

How to attract non-profits (continuing of earlier discussion)

Saunders said he hears feedback from organizations that restoring a Fort Hancock building is more project than they can take on. However, there are lots of non-profits that can commit to the process and we need to get in touch with those non-profits.

Nersesian: We should talk about Letters of Intent (LOIs) which allow non-profits to fundraise in order to make the improvements necessary at Fort Hancock.

Glaser: One of the things that would be very helpful would be to make the economics known to interested parties. Outsiders may not know how to utilize tax credits. If we can collect and share information pertaining to economic realities, that would be helpful to the non-profits and to other interested parties.

Welch: Laurente can go through the IRS website and check financials of local non-profit orgs and contact those that might be a good match.

Parish: One of the things Laurente can do is identify foundations that can fund brick and mortar projects and put them together with non-profits in need of a facility.

Walsh said that the Committee needs a non-profit consultant. We lack that expertise. Rose observed that Brookdale Community College has a nonprofit oversight committee. Glaser and others voiced support for Laurente to get in touch with them.

Cohen recalled that the Visiting Nurse Association (VNA) put in a wonderful RFEI. She volunteered to talk to Laurente about reaching out to VNA and find out why they did not submit an RFP and see if there is a way to target them and talk further.

Holenstein: So what is the “structure” of the relationship? He understood that Spellman and NPCA can provide structure for research and oversight.

Glaser said he was willing to provide oversight for NPCA and GATE BMD. Does the Committee want to create a work group and have members and NPCA be a part of that, or does the Committee want to do that informally with NPCA as the researcher? Everyone agrees it is a good idea. I thought we disbanded most of our working groups because they finished most of the projects on which they were working. If we need to establish a new work group, so be it.

Nersesian asked, would the work group interface with Laurente or focus on non-profit outreach?

Holenstein: There has to be a “structure” to implement offers. Let’s take advantage of the opportunity we have to take action in accordance with our Charter. Glaser: So will we call it Working Group on Engagement with Non-Profit Organizations? Non-Profit Engagement?

A motion is made to create a Non-Profit Engagement Committee and is seconded.

Parish, Cohen, Rose, Walsh and Hill volunteered to be on the work group. Warren and Spellman will also be included on a call with Laurente the following week. NPS will send out an invitation for all the volunteers and Spellman.

Glaser listed issues remaining open that he and others wished to discuss:

- Leasing, where we stand, what it takes to move ahead.
- General sentiments he has heard: Everyone is interested in moving on to the next step ASAP. We are all sensitive to buildings that are in jeopardy and we all want to move ahead. There is that urgency and a conversation about what the committee can go on record saying as to what they would like to see in terms of next steps.
- Also, there is relatively little we can be told about the procurement process but there is a lot of anxiety about moving from a stage of deep involvement with the RFEI to a less involved position.

Glaser continued: This is a conversation we should have and we can begin that discussion now. Let's do it in a way that is helpful to the park and let us sort out what is most helpful to the park. Does anyone want to take this to another level or offer deeper comments?

Holenstein proposes immediate, off-agenda election for co-chair

Holenstein expressed several concerns about the role of Committee in relation to its Charter and its relationship with park management. These culminated in a proposal to have an immediate election for the vacant position of co-chair.

He began by saying it is hard to sit through today's meeting and not feel as though a lot has been accomplished. There is, however, a recurring issue outside of these meetings and that is whether the Committee is making recommendations or whether the Committee is approving park process decisions. The stated function of the Committee is to make recommendations, rather than to endorse decisions offered by park staff—a situation Holenstein said was "inappropriate."

While previous Committee meetings postponed the election of a new co-chair to the meeting after newly-nominated members are selected by the Secretary of the Interior, which has still not occurred, the delay in this process concerned Holenstein. He noted that attendance to this meeting of current members was adequate (only two current active members were absent) and proposed that the Committee not wait to address housekeeping matters for issues such as new co-chair and the role of the Committee regarding recommendations.

Holenstein called for an election at this meeting for a new co-chair and the setting of terms for co-chairs so that they would not expire at the same time. Glaser's current term would be set to expire in December.

Parish suggested making a list of possible candidates. Welch stated that operating procedures are on the website; the Committee selects two co-chairs to help committee operations. Welch also noted that procedures do not define how possible candidates are proposed or selected. Glaser expressed concern that an election would take place before new members are on board.

Holenstein said, "All I am asking for is action and that has been punted twice. I am asking for action on the issue of meeting our Charter."* Co-chairs like Glaser, he observed, are involved in day-to-day Committee business. The reason for two co-chairs is so that two people can speak on behalf of the Committee, form agendas, and facilitate meetings. If the Committee wanted to change the Charter to a single co-chair, Holenstein claimed that he had no objection, but that the Committee still needed to follow its Charter.

Glaser stated that he was uncomfortable leading this discussion. He turned facilitation of the meeting over to Nersesian, the Committee's Designated Federal Officer.

Cohen proposed that the Committee wait until the next meeting, since it had lost quite a few members since the group started. (Four members out of 20 had either officially stepped down or chose not to renominate themselves; two more have not attended a meeting since 2013.) Wray countered that there is too much knowledge among current members that is not yet available to new members. Therefore, Wray stated, we should elect a co-chair now. McLay asked, should we submit nominations now? Do you want everyone to submit a name today?

Nersesian disagreed with discounting the opinions of those waiting final confirmation as new members. What is the process? Is there a nominating committee? It is awkward to have an informal election that is not on the agenda.

Holenstein: If you are looking for process, we need to identify that Glaser's reign as co-chair may end at some time, and the new committee members can be elected co-chairs once they have experience. He recommended that the Committee amend its by-laws to allow for modification of terms and limits on co-chairs.

Holenstein also said that Glaser should be given the opportunity to step down as a co-chair, should he wish to do so.

Walsh suggested forming a committee dedicated to selecting co-chairs. Vote could be by email. The Committee could manage the structure so that it is in place by the September meeting and avoid concerns about how we are operating. Parish seconded the motion that we create a committee to elect co-chairs. Saunders stated that election of co-chairs should be placed on the next agenda. If there are recommendations of changes to the by-laws, we should talk about them at the next meeting.

Hill: Why are we making this so complicated? Glaser, Hill said, has done a great job since day one. But why have a nominating process? That was not required when the original co-chairs were nominated, including Glaser. Hill proposed an interim measure at least until September.

Welch stated that the Committee ought to hold a vote immediately.

Nersesian and Pete McCarthy reminded the Committee that selection is not by vote, but by consensus. Wray asked if the group should be polled as to who might be interested.

Holenstein called for Welch's immediate election as co-chair. Parish and Burry voiced their support for Welch.

Nersesian asked the Committee for a more orderly process. Would each member state whether or not he or she was interested in serving as co-chair?

- Parish, Burry and Holenstein expressed strong support for Welch as co-chair.
- Cohen, Hill, Wray and Saunders each stated that they would not consider being co-chair.
- Ekdahl and Rose indicated no opposition to Welch's nomination if that was what the rest of the Committee wanted. Each had no interest in serving as co-chair.
- Welch stated that he would serve as co-chair if the Committee chose him and that his schedule was open at this time to take on such a responsibility.
- Walsh had no opinion "at this time." She said she had not given it enough thought.

Committee OKs Welch as temporary co-chair through the rest of the year

Parish said that the consensus had chosen Welch as co-chair. Suzanne McCarthy and John Warren reminded Committee members that the question was not to approve Welch as co-chair, but whether individual members themselves would be willing to serve as co-chair. Wray observed that Welch was the only person who stepped up to volunteer as co-chair. Burry agreed.

Hill stated that this discussion should not be taken as a "vote of no confidence" in Glaser's leadership, to which several members agreed.

Nersesian observed that this was an "on-the-fly election." It was important to ensure that everyone was comfortable with the process.

Welch was asked to excuse himself from the room to facilitate the discussion. He did so.

Cohen remarked on the suddenness of taking such an important action. She noted that the last time co-chairs were chosen, it was practically effortless, with plenty of time to think, and that the election had been an item on the agenda for that meeting. This time the process was quite different and unplanned, but a point of no return had been reached because of the extensive discussion.

Parish reiterated his support of Welch as co-chair, stating that Welch was the most fastidious about the material and was ready to serve. Burry agreed: "There is no question that Welch is committed and willing." She again advocated Welch's assuming the position of co-chair.

Nersesian asked if the Committee agreed that incoming members should not be consulted on this issue. Cohen noted that some applicants have been to every meeting but are not yet on the committee.

Ehkdaal observed that a co-chair is not going to do anything between now and the next meeting. Therefore, he endorsed nominating a co-chair in a more private setting.

As an aside, Burry stated that September 11 was not a good date for the next meeting. The group agreed to change the date, since there is enough time for publication in the Federal Register. The meeting would have to be moved, however, since this room had already been booked for Fridays in September.

Walsh observed that the Committee was currently “in the middle of an almost embarrassing situation.” However, a candidate had already been named and seemed to have some form of consensus. Similarly, Saunders said that this process should be done diplomatically, but the Committee had in effect conducted the election already. He recommended choosing a co-chair for a short term and revisiting this with new committee members.

Walsh asked, what is the limit on the short term? Are we going to have another election? Rose: It seems to me this was an internal appointment with an election to follow. Hill asked, then when will we have the election? Will we wait for new members? Saunders answered that the Committee needed a formal process.

Holenstein withdrew his earlier proposal concerning selection of Welch and length of terms. He replaced it with a proposal naming Welch as co-chair through year’s end. He also stated that the Committee should modify the Charter so that co-chairs serve a maximum of one year.

Nersesian replied that, if the Committee wanted term limits, then terms ought to be two years in length instead of one. Park management conducts weekly calls with Committee co-chairs and has very frequent contact with them. Two years allows for the flow of information and decisions to continue. Wray: If we start a one-year term now, that would allow for staggering of the term. Saunders: Let’s consider Welch as a temporary co-chair with an election in the New Year. Let’s have this on the agenda for the next meeting.

Hill: I do not believe we have term limits or elections now, so the whole group must identify by consensus whether they want to require an election. We have done fine by consensus and must consider whether we want to move ahead by consensus or by nomination/election. That should be addressed as an agenda item for the next meeting. Also, no one asked Glaser if he wanted to continue as co-chair.

Saunders: Should we consider having terms for chairs? This should be an agenda item and we should address it independent of Welch’s selection as temporary co-chair.

Walsh: Are we agreed that there is consensus to have Welch as co-chair until the end of the year?

Parish: Interim is fine if there is no way to just appoint Welch as co-chair. Burry: We are making it too complicated. If we are going to do it on an interim basis, take it past the end of the year for about six months. Suzanne McCarthy: A lot of work is done behind the scenes.

Walsh: So where are we? Ekdahl said he was content with appointing Welch until the end of the calendar year. Hill, Walsh, Wray also agreed that a consensus has been reached that Welch is appointed as co-chair for the duration of the calendar year. The motion was passed and Cohen brought Welch back into the room.

The process and timing of choosing Committee co-chairs remains undefined. It will be taken up as an agenda item for the next meeting.

The next meeting date was changed to Friday, September 18 at a location to be determined, since the Thompson Park Beech Room is not available on that date. *(Since then, the location of the meeting has been set at the Monmouth County Eastern Branch Library, located at 1001 Route 35, Shrewsbury, New Jersey 07702. Directions are available on the library's web site at: <http://www.monmouthcountylib.org/index.php/about-us/branches#EB>. –ed. note)*

Last Comments

Welch noted that the Committee had tabled the discussion on mothballing buildings through the next summer. Can it be put that on the agenda for the next meeting? Nersesian said yes.

Meeting was adjourned at 12:34 P.M.

Editor's note: Several speakers referred to "the Charter," one of the founding documents of the Committee, during the latter half of the meeting. Information concerning co-chairs is actually found in a different founding document, the Operating Procedures. Section III, Part D states: "Co-Chairs.** The Committee will select two co-chairs. The responsibility of Co-Chairs will be to assist with agenda development, help the Committee keep on track with its work plan, help move discussions forward in meetings, and work with the facilitators to problem solve around impasses, tensions, and conflicts." No timetable, length of terms or method of selection is specified.*

Appendix A: Attendees

Committee: Gerard Glaser, FACA Co-Chair; Lillian Burry; Linda Cohen; John Ekdahl; Tim Hill; Michael Holenstein; Dan Saunders, NJ SHPO; Dr. Howard Parish; Lynda Rose; Margot Walsh; Shawn Welch; Karolyn Wray.

National Park Service: Joshua Laird, Commissioner, National Parks of New York Harbor (NPNH); Jennifer T. Nersesian, Gateway NRA (GATE) Superintendent and Designated Federal Officer; Suzanne McCarthy, GATE Deputy Superintendent; Pete McCarthy, Sandy Hook Unit Coordinator; Pam McLay, GATE Chief of Business Services; Karen Edelman, GATE Business Services; John Warren, GATE External Affairs Officer.