

**Fort Hancock Working Group Meeting #3
October 27, 2021**

DISCUSSION SUMMARY

The Fort Hancock Advisory Committee Working Group, convened to discuss and consider issues related to the Stillman project proposal, met via webinar October 27, 2021. The agenda focused on climate change and how it is factored into historic preservation at Fort Hancock.

The meeting was attended by the following Working Group members: Dorothy Guzzo, NJ Historic Trust; Eileen Murphy, NJ Audobon; Bill Kastning, Monmouth Conservation Foundation; Tim Dillingham, American Littoral Society; Lauren Cosgrove, National Parks Conservation Association; Dr. Harold Zullo, NJ Sierra Club; and FACA members Kate Stevenson and Anthony Mercantante. Additionally, Committee co-chairs Shawn Welch and Gerald Glaser attended; Gateway Superintendent Jennifer Nersesian and Consensus Building Institute Senior Mediator Bennett Brooks facilitated discussions.

Discussion: Climate Change

The bulk of the meeting focused on climate change - one of several topics related to the Stillman proposal that Working Group members had identified at earlier meetings as warranting in-depth discussion.

Patti Rafferty, Chief of Resource Stewardship for Gateway, provided an initial background presentation. Her talk centered on summarizing the statutory and regulatory requirements and practices that shape NPS's consideration of climate change when reviewing potential projects at Fort Hancock. The presentation also discussed the strategies the NPS uses to balance flood adaptation needs with historic preservation goals and other factors. A few key points from her presentation included the following:

- Several federal regulations and guidance documents drive how the National Park Service considers climate change impacts and historic preservation. These include the Organic Act of 1916, NPS policies related to leasing, Fort Hancock's General Master Plan, the Department of Interior's Climate Change Action Plan and others.
- It is inherently challenging to balance flood risk adaptation with project feasibility, historic preservation, and community aspirations related to housing affordability.
- Primary strategies for addressing adaptation in historic preservation projects include utilities placement, site and landscape adaptation, and both temporary and permanent protective measures.

The presentation triggered a number of clarifying questions and discussion points, with Working Group members wanting to better understand and/or raise concerns related to the following:

- The potential for infrastructure investment to deepen the risk associated with climate change / sea level rise impacts (e.g., if investments are made, is there pressure to stay longer in an increasingly flooding vulnerable location?)
- Concerns about evacuation / emergency routes tied to storm surge given an increase in the number of people potentially living on Fort Hancock
- Requirements to disclose to flood plain /flooding risk to potential residents

- Concerns about site developers “benefitting” from site adaptation / mitigation undertaken by NPS
- The importance of sustaining ecological resources to preserve the cultural resources as much as possible until such time as sea level rise makes that infeasible.

Some specific questions raised and addressed include the following:

- Q: Is there an NPS-wide policy for investing/protecting properties under climate change conditions?
 - A: There are several pieces of agency guidance, but not an overarching policy. New policy is in the development stage. Even without this in place, climate change impacts are very much considered as part of the agency’s holistic look at these issues.
- Q: Has there been any long-term consideration for elevating buildings? If not, what are the options for dealing with first-floor inundation?
 - A: Any decision to elevate houses on Officer’s Row would need to be weighed against the impact to their historic character. This hasn’t yet been discussed.
- Q: Is the impact resistance of the structure being considered in light of the higher likelihood of storms?
 - A: Yes; the focus to-date has been on wind.
- Q: Is there an assessment of expenditures made by the Park Service that are climate change focused but have benefit to the developer (e.g., is there a way to capture those benefits back)?
 - A: The investments NPS makes in the historic district are being made to protect the historic resources, the cultural landscape, and the visitor opportunities. Capital costs do not typically get apportioned to the developer (with some exceptions).
- Q: Are renters going to be informed that these buildings have the potential to flood?
 - A: Yes. As part of the leasing program, NPS will have to do a statement of findings.

Discussion: Other

Below is a brief synthesis of non-climate change-related issues raised during the discussions:

- Interest in understanding when the economics of the Stillman project will be known (e.g, rental prices), as that is likely to drive the type and extent of residential units needed to make the project work financially. J. Nersesian explained that the current plan is for Stillman to pilot design work for two different types of buildings, with the goal of better understanding project needs, costs and economics.
- One Working Group member expressed interest in having the group take a closer look at the General Management Plan (GMP) and any other relevant documents (e.g., Record of Decision). The participant also asked if there were any minutes available for specific leasing-related discussions from 2011. J. Nersesian explained that the current dialogue is not focused on the GMP, but will fold in relevant sections as appropriate. She said she was not aware of existing minutes from the meetings referenced (noting that the discussions were held nearly 10 years prior), but that over the past nine years leasing-related discussions had been held through the Advisory Committee and notes are publicly available.

Next Steps

Below are specific next steps identified during the meeting:

- CBI is to draft and distribute a discussion summary (this document)
- Gateway is to share a copy of the climate change presentation and links to related resource documents
- Gateway is to identify other relevant documents to fold into future Working Group discussions