

FORT HANCOCK 21st CENTURY ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING #42
November 9, 2023
9 am – 1:15 pm
Virtual Meeting

Agenda Items for Next Meeting:	•
Agenda Items for This Meeting:	• Leasing Update • Stillman Project Update • General Park Update • Advisory Committee Leasing Program Updates • Social Equity Updates • Overview of November Meeting Minutes • Key Takeaways, Committee Recommendations, Next Steps
Recommendations from this Meeting:	The Advisory Committee recommends the formation of a working group/subcommittee to explore funding sources (such as state and local sources) to help fund the leasing project.

Attendees:

NPS: Jennifer T. Nersesian, Gateway National Recreation Area Superintendent and Designated Federal Officer (DFO); Karen Edelman, Gateway Business Services; Mimi Berfield, Gateway Business Services; Matt Hankins, Gateway Business Services; David Jordan, Gateway Business Services; Daphne Yun, Gateway Public Affairs; Pete McCarthy, Sandy Hook Unit Manager; Patti Rafferty, Chief of Resource Management, Caridad de la Vega, Gateway Cultural Resources Program Manager

Facilitator: Bennett Brooks

FACA Committee Co-Chairs: Shawn Welch, Gerard Glaser

FACA Committee members: Lillian Burry, Linda Cohen, Patrick Collum, Mary Eileen Fouratt, Dorothy Guzzo, Bill Kastning, Jim Krauss, Tony Mercantante, Howard Parish, Michael Walsh Monmouth County Vocational School District; Superintendent Dr. Charles Ford and Business Administrator Kelly Brazelton

Welcome, Meeting Overview and Committee Context
Jen Nersesian, Bennett Brooks, Shawn Welch

Meeting called to order by Gateway Superintendent Jen Nersesian.

Pledge of allegiance

Overview of meeting agenda and ground rules.

Introduction of committee members and Gateway staff, including the new cultural resource manager, Caridad de la Vega

Mast Building Update
Jen Nersesian, Dr. Charles Ford, Kelly Brazelton

Jen Nersesian introduced this topic by celebrating the rehabilitation of Building 56, which is now in use. She explained that several years ago, the park entered into an agreement with Monmouth County to take two of the buildings on Gateway's leasing portfolio to rehabilitate for use by the Marine Academy of Science and Technology (MAST), a high school located at Sandy Hook. Building 56 has moved forward and is being used by the school. It is another success of our leasing program, and we want to acknowledge the county for stepping up and taking this project on. This is a win for the park, a win for the school, and a win for the public at large, as we have another piece of our history preserved.

Jen continued that Building 23, the large barracks building, is also part of this project and is still moving ahead. She went on to welcome Dr. Ford and Kelly Brazelton from Monmouth County to say a few words about the partnership and the look ahead.

Dr. Charles Ford thanked everyone. He said that this has been a great partnership on the two buildings. Building 56 is fully operational, and a ribbon cutting ceremony was held a few months ago. Dr. Ford thanked the county commissioners for supporting this project. He said it's been a long journey. The county is continuing to move forward with Building 23. Dr. Ford introduced Ms. Brazelton, so that she could continue to describe the process of moving forward with Building 23.

Kelly Brazelton explained that the school district has developed specs for Building 23 and is now waiting for NJ Department of Education approval for the plans. Code changes and code compliance updates were also done. This has all taken some time. There were changes when it came to Building 56 regarding costs due to the change in pricing pre-COVID vs. post-COVID. Building 23 specs are with the architect now. They are both attorney- and insurance-reviewed, so we're just waiting for the architect's updates.

Dr. Charles Ford continued that once everything has been approved the school district will put this out to bid. This is a lengthy process, but “we must let the wheels turn.”

Shawn Welch asked if there was a sense of the timeline.

Dr. Ford answered that they don’t have a detailed timeline. The supply chain delays continue to be a problem. Dr. Ford said he had an HVAC project at another site that’s been delayed over a year. He stated the bid notice would go out in the next few months.

Tony Mercantante asked what the building would be used for once it is complete.

Dr. Ford answered that it will have classrooms and a drill hall. The students currently do not have an inside space for drill practice. Right now, everything takes place outside, which can sometimes be complicated due to the weather.

Dr. Ford added that any further questions should be directed to his office, and that they would keep Pete McCarthy informed of any further updates.

Leasing Update – Karen Edelman

Karen said that on the heels on the success of building 56, there is additional news. The Mule Barn (Building 36) is now open as a restaurant. This is one of the few spaces that has outdoor space associated with it for use by the public.

Karen gave a recap of the other buildings that are part of the Sandy Hook leasing program. There are currently seven building leased including the two by the Monmouth County Vocational School district. The other buildings are being used as a café, as short term-lodging, and the Mule Barn, as a restaurant. There are four buildings currently under a letter of intent. Leases may be finalized on some of these in the next few months. Renderings of Building 114 were shared in a recent meeting (Oct. 2022), and the park is excited about this process.

Karen then discussed how the park is managing the use of the buildings, considering the many comments and recommendations the park has received from the leasing subcommittee and advisory committee. Karen walked everyone through how concerns that were raised by the subcommittee and shared with and confirmed by the Advisory Committee are being addressed in the lease or the operating plan, which is now a required document from the lessee. The complete table is available [here](#) starting on page eleven:

<https://www.nps.gov/gate/learn/management/upload/FACA-November-9-2023-Slides-1.pdf>

Karen said that the parking issue had been discussed at a prior meeting. Gateway is undertaking a parking study, as this is a concern that needs to be addressed. On a practical level, most leases do not contain exclusive parking associated with the facility unless there is a driveway. For the Mule Barn, the lessee was required to construct handicapped accessible parking areas, even though parking is not included as part of the lease's land assignment.

Operating plans track hours of operation, visitation, and an alcohol management plan. The NPS also reserves the right to require the lessee to modify operations if they are not complaint with the park's mission, values, or the operations themselves. Operating plans are a living document, so there is always room to correct or modify as necessary. The lessees are required to protect the park area, the resources, and visitors, as well as comply with all applicable regulations and policies. Many of these laws, regulations, and policies are cited in the lease itself and addressed through the compliance review process that end with the final construction drawings. Some climate vulnerability prevention or mitigation considerations are also addressed on a basic level in the lease. Storm and disaster preparation plans are required from lessees; lessees are also required to follow Office of Emergency Management instructions. They also need to keep abreast of any park instruction regarding closures or other storm related activity.

Additionally, the park is working to make sure that facilities are ADA compliant. This has resulted in ramps being added to some of the buildings. Karen finished by saying that all of the points covered in her remarks will be made available after the meeting (meeting slides can be found here: [Slide 1 \(nps.gov\)](#))

Karen asked if there are any questions about management of the leases and practical uses of the building, especially considering the larger projects.

Jen Nersesian added that many of the issues Karen discussed are being addressed in the operating plan. Each lease will have its own operating plan - a fairly new step in the process and very useful tool. It's a direct result of the questions the park received from the subcommittee and the advisory committee about how different issues are addressed. This highlighted the need for getting all these things in one place and clarifying the expectations of the park. The operating plans address items that are not part of the lease. It is an adaptable document that can change with conditions.

Jen continued that the operating plans is another success of the joint effort at Sandy Hook. It shows how the park is improving management of the leasing program and making things easier for both the lessees and the park.

Gerry Glaser added a commendation for the Mule Barn. He was recently at Fort Hancock and had a special opportunity to look around the buildings. It is amazing what the lessees have been

able to accomplish in a way that is respectful of both the area and the buildings. He further noted that operating plans are thoughtful in terms of making sure it supports the people who use the facility as well as people who are visiting the park.

Shawn Welch also said the Mule Barn was great. He has dined at the Mule Barn Tavern at least eight times. The Army Ground Forces Association has had at least six meals at the Mule Barn Tavern during their workdays at Fort Hancock. The operating plan is a great way to maintain good communication between the lease holders and the Park as both move forward in their daily operations.

Linda Cohen asked why there wasn't more signage for the Mule Barn? Karen Edelman answered that signage must comply with the park signage plan and be consistent with the National Park Service. Gateway is currently working on finding a balance between the beautiful barn view signage that Dan wants to use with the sign protocols. The park is also working on consistent signage for all the lessees at Sandy Hook.

Jim Krauss asked if the building with only exterior walls is Building 23 that will be used by MAST. Karen Edelman confirmed that it was.

Michael Walsh said that signs had been discussed at previous meetings. He wondered if there were plans to add signs for the Mule Barn at the entrance to the park. He knows about the restaurant, since he's a local, but he wants to make sure other people know about it.

Jen Nersesian answered that there is a digital sign at the entrance to the park that has messaging. There have also been discussions about having a fixed sign at the entrance with plaques for the different entities at Sandy Hook. This is still a possibility. Jen continued that one of the outcomes of the Mule Barn is that it shows people will make the trip to the northern end of Sandy Hook. This part of the park had always been considered more remote and there was a fear that people wouldn't come out. The Mule Barn is consistently packed, which is a positive harbinger for the future.

Shawn Welch said an issue with the digital sign is that the more items are on the queue, the longer the cycle time is. Most people will drive by and miss a lot of the sign. While a long cycle time may be acceptable during the summer periods when the lines at the fee booths are long, the wintertime period presents very specific issues as one only sees the sign for a few seconds.

Pat Collum asked about the logistics of entering Sandy Hook in the summer if you were going to the Mule Barn vs. swimming. Do people going to the restaurant have to pay the fee? Jen Nersesian answered that the fee is only charged for visitors using the beach parking lots. Anyone

going to the historic post area does not have to pay the fee. The visitor just needs to let the staff at the ranger station know that is their destination and they are let in.

Pat Collum asked if it was the honor system. Jen Nersesian replied that it was. Jen continued that the park would see how that works in the future and to see if there is a need to adjust. (NOTE- Visitors who pay for beach parking receive a receipt to show in their dashboard to prove that they paid for the parking).

Stillman Project Update

Jen Nersesian

Jen Nersesian let everyone know that this will be an important conversation for us to head into together. She started with the history of the project. The park received the Stillman proposal three years ago, just as the pandemic hit. The proposal included 21 buildings, all the remaining buildings on the leasing portfolio that were unspoken for. At the time it looked like a viable proposal. Then objections and concerns were raised by Congressman Pallone, our local congressman, as well as several local and statewide environmental groups. The park stopped, listened, and looked at the possibilities for moving forward. The park also had questions about whether the project was feasible from different standpoints. A different structure – a general agreement – was set up for this project to move ahead instead of a letter of intent for the entire project where construction begins after the due diligence is complete. The general agreement with Roy Stillman and his group stipulated that the project would work in phases. The first phase was to take two buildings and do designs on them. Stillman's proposal was for the Officer Row Units as well as a couple of others, (Not all the buildings were focused on long-term residential use) and looking at putting 4-5 apartments into each building. NPS staff also didn't know if this could be achieved while meeting the Secretary's standards. This phased agreement provided the opportunity to create designs on two different building types to see if in a design perspective this project was possible and see if this could satisfy the park's mandate for historic preservation. This phased approach also was also intended to provide a chance to look at the business model, understand the condition of the buildings, and ground truth whether there is a viable opportunity here. It's also important to realize that any private investor would expect an opportunity for profit. They want a return on investment, or there will not be any interest in investment in these properties in the first place.

Stillman did a great job demonstrating how the buildings could be divided into multiple apartments in a very historically sensitive way, meeting the Secretary's standards for historic preservation.

In the past several months the Stillman group has also been looking at the business model and the condition of the buildings. The buildings have continued to deteriorate during the past three

years after the proposal initially was received. Costs have escalated. The Stillman group looked at the costs of rehabilitation versus the potential for return on investment in the marketplace. They've looked at various uses for the spaces including short-term lodging and long-term residential. From their perspective and analysis, the best potential use from a market standpoint was for long-term residential use.

Jen continued that they have concluded that the project financing is “upside down.” The original cost estimate for this project was \$30 million. Stillman’s current business estimate is that a \$50 million investment would mean they could break even. A \$40 million investment would net a profit.

The estimated cost of the project based on the current condition of the buildings is over \$100 million. This is for all the twenty-one buildings. Jen emphasized that this is an estimate, not based on thorough condition assessments of every single structure. This estimate is based on looking at the structures and extrapolating based on the thorough information gathered from the two pilot buildings. While this is not a hard and fast number, it gives a sense of the scale. There is at least a \$50 million gap that needs to be addressed to have a viable leasing project here from a private investment perspective. Jen continued that the committee has been together for ten years and while there have been some huge successes, this is a daunting gap. But Gateway is still committed to the preservation of these buildings. The next step is to decide what the next phase of the strategy will look like.

Jen said that there were a few ideas that had been proposed. She wanted to share these with the committee and get everyone’s feedback. One is government investment. \$50 million isn’t the kind of money the National Park Service has for projects, even under the Great American Outdoors Act, which has brought more money to deferred maintenance than has been seen before.

The Great American Outdoors Act was funded for five years. Those five years happened to fall at a time of great cost escalation with the pandemic, so the money has not gone as far as anyone was hoping. There is talk about the potential reauthorization of the Great American Outdoors Act for another five years. The National Park Service certainly needs that investment. There is a lot of support in the agency that the Fort Hancock Leasing Program project would be a great poster child for this reauthorization. At best the earliest this would hit is 2026.

Another piece is the Sandy Hook Foundation, Gateway’s philanthropic partner at Sandy Hook, which is indicating interest in playing a role in the solution. It remains to be seen how this evolves and what that means. The foundation has formed a committee to look at how they can be a partner in our leasing efforts here. Jen continued that she does not want to imply that they can or will raise \$50 million. But they can be part of the solution. This may need to be a three-legged stool with government investment, private investment, and philanthropic investment.

The reality is that there may not be \$50 million all at one time. But that also does not mean that the project is not achievable.

Jen asked the committee to think about what this project could look like? What type of phasing strategy would make the most sense? Are there different types of phasing where chunks of investment can be made at a time? This could be like the roof project where the park is replacing all the roofs on Officers' Row. Windows, porches, heating, electricity, other types of critical systems across the buildings. Phasing could include groups of buildings, a focus on Officers' Row, or break up Officers' Row in to two halves. There could also be other ways to look at phasing.

Jen said Roy Stillman still is interested and willing to be a partner in this as it moves forward. If this project doesn't make sense from an investment standpoint- neither he nor any other private investor would be able to participate. Roy Stillman continues to underscore his appreciation of the preservation and mission of these buildings and the NPS efforts.

Bennett Brooks said there were some specific questions for the committee to walk through and build off of.

1. What could this development look like? What makes sense?
2. What could different funding models look like?
3. Is there someone with banking or financial expertise that the committee could invite in to help think through these challenges and how they could be tackled?
4. Is there other information to help share our next steps.

Bennett asked if the group could think and talk about these questions sequentially, and he also asked if there are any questions for Jen about her presentation.

Mary Eileen Fouratt asked if there was any potential for American Rescue Plan (ARP) (funding for state and local governments to help with economic recovery from effects of COVID) funds from the county or town? There were certain funds that had to be spent by 2026 and maybe these would be available to help with a phased plan.

Tony Mercantante confirmed that all the towns had allocations. They typically had to be used for something directly related to a response to the pandemic. He said that the amount of money that towns and even the county received would not put a major dent into what is needed here. Tony continued that he recently met with the Affordable Housing Alliance and discussed affordable housing at Sandy Hook. Everyone agrees that traditional affordable housing doesn't make sense when you're putting people six or seven miles away from their jobs and basic services. Sandy Hook does not lend itself to that. It may lend itself to homes for special needs populations. There is a big need for that in Middletown. Middletown currently works with agencies and provides financial subsidies for them to buy homes for this type of use. Tony

thought that would be a possibility for one or two buildings here at Sandy Hook.

Tony continued that the fundamental issue is still the idea that this project is privatizing public buildings within the park. He thought the park and committee should reengage with Congressman Pallone's office. Unless a substantial amount of money can be raised by the government to restore and rehabilitate these buildings, there is no other option than private investment. Funding opportunities and financing should be addressed after the issue of private investment is decided.

Mary Eileen Fouratt said that some of the ARP money is for COVID recovery, but there is also money for economic recovery and tourism; things that bring people back to places. She thought it would be worth exploring to see if any of those funds could be accessed.

Dorothy Guzzo said she thought there was NJ state money that had not been allocated and had been earmarked for historic preservation projects. She said that NJ Historic Trust money is not at the level needed for Sandy Hook, and that Trust money must be matched. But there is the potential for non-profit applicants. She said she could try to help to figure out who to contact at the state level and agreed that this is worth exploring. She understood that there were some broad uses for the money since the purpose was to make the state whole again.

Jen Nersesian said it sounds like there's the potential for both state and county level funding. Since National Park Service staff are not familiar with the specific kinds of funds, this is an area where the advisory committee could help explore these possibilities. A subcommittee or working group could be established to help us explore with members who would know who to talk to and know what funding is out there at the state, county, and local level.

Dorothy Guzzo said she'd be happy to follow up with a smaller group to brainstorm. She also thought the Congressman might be helpful in this type of conversation. There might even be the potential of the NJ Historic Trust having funding for some stabilization. She said maybe looking at windows across all the buildings.

Bennett Brooks asked if there was anyone else who wanted to be part of this group. Mary Eileen volunteered.

Lillian Burry asked if the state was at all involved in the Fort Hancock leasing program. Jen Nersesian answered that they were not. Lillian Burry continued that she received \$15 million from the state for a project she had for homeless veterans. She will try to connect the park service with her contact.

Jen Nersesian thanked Lillian. Jen continued that since the park service is part of the federal government we cannot advocate for funding, but the committee could be helpful in making

connections. She continued that we would work through the facts, such as how much funding is needed (and what it will go towards) in the committee. The committee could also help with breaking down the projects into smaller discrete portions. Jen thought that Lillian could present these smaller projects for funding. Lillian Burry agreed that this is what she had been thinking of.

Bennett asked about state funding. Would state funding have a certain direction of use?

Dorothy Guzzo responded that there are different pots of money, and each might have different guidelines. Working with a non-profit might be necessary to access most state funding. She continued that if there is another meeting to talk specifically about funding she thought someone from Stillman should be there.

Tony Mercantante added that one thing to think about is duplication of funds. Would a federal agency supported by federal funds be able to use these COVID funds? This is a threshold question that needs to be resolved. He will investigate to see if it's a deal killer.

Gerry Glaser said that an important piece to add to the conversation about external funding is the private sector.

Bennett Brooks summarized that the committee thinks there should be a working group/subcommittee to figure out different funding opportunities. It would make sense if Roy Stillman was somehow part of this. This group should throw their arms wide, but in a tactical and strategic way. We don't know what capacity looks like so it's important to explore several paths.

Tony Mercantante asked if we knew specifically what is stopping the developer from making this profitable. Is it the required materials? He wondered if the specs could be changed- if that would make a difference.

Jen Nersesian answered that the interior historic standards is important in the NPS mission of preservation so that the public can experience what the site looked like during the historic heyday. But there may be room for flexibility if the only other option is to let the buildings fall down. She agreed that it's something to explore. Maybe there's room in the interior for this type of exploration. These types of changes may yield some savings- but not in a way that makes the \$50 million gap more manageable. Again, construction out of new materials is cheaper than a historic preservation project. But that doesn't accomplish the NPS goals of historic preservation, and the larger gap will remain.

Michael Walsh likes the idea of a small group exploring funding and the possibility of breaking up the work. He advocates focusing on the exteriors of the Officers Row buildings. He suggests

the next step should focus on the roofs and windows. This will help improve the public's experience of what these buildings looked like.

Patrick Collum said that we should contact Monmouth County's vocational program. Pat continued that he doesn't think they have a carpentry program any longer, but they might have something else specialized like that. Maybe they could convert one of the buildings to a shop that does preservation carpentry. The results could be used in the buildings, and he thought Chuck Ford (who presented earlier in the meeting) would be a good contact.

Dorothy Guzzo asked about the huge funding gap. She wondered if this had more to do with the lower density use of the residential use on the buildings when Stillman came in with the cost estimate. Jen Nersesian said the Stillman group thought that residential use had the potential for the greatest return on investment. The break-even point of \$50 million means that if they invest \$50 million, they will make no money, based on market rate rentals. If they invest \$30 million there is a marginal profit. All of this is based specifically on long-term residential use. The cost of rehabilitation at \$100 plus involves the interior fit-out for apartments. Jen continued that she didn't think any other use would really change the scale of cost too much. Rehabbing an Officers Row house in its current configuration instead of breaking it up into apartments might cost marginally less. But the amount of work discussed for the reconfiguration was minimal to begin with to comply with Secretary of Interior standards.

Dorothy Guzzo asked if they looked at any creative hotel uses for the buildings?

Jen Nersesian answered that various people have looked at that over time. A hotel at Sandy Hook would be challenging and different from other models like Cavallo Point in San Francisco. Sandy Hook is remote, it's seasonal, and there's no option for major new construction to help subsidize the preservation aspects of the project. These things really set the Fort Hancock leasing project apart from similar type models that were researched. With the risk involved in investing in short-term residential lodging or hotels, a viable solution hasn't been found. No developer has been willing to attempt this. Jen added, to put into context, these buildings sat on the market for years before anybody put in for many of them. She continued that there have been some individual success stories and doesn't mean to minimize those at all. The park is thrilled to have the eight or so buildings in operations. But the larger hotel interest was never found for the rest of the buildings. Jen went on that Stillman did look at different market opportunities for uses in evaluating the level of business risk and level of market risk, compared with the level of investment that was needed. In that analysis, he settled on long-term residential as the only really viable use for them, moving forward. Jen said she did not know if that assessment would be different with a different investor but suspects they would have similar considerations.

Bennett Brooks asked if all of Stillman's work was focused on market rate housing and if the numbers didn't work at market rate housing. Jen Nersesian confirmed this. The numbers she is quoting are based on market rate housing. Stillman has expressed a willingness to look at other models if the park could help create them. Affordable housing in whatever flavor- veterans, disabled population, or some other kind of affordable model. This is a different economic model that would need subsidies, partnership, or some other kind of financing model to help make the equation work.

Tony Mercantante said he deals with developers all the time. There's no question that rental housing is the big winner in most types of uses. Residential rents are high and attractive and probably the only thing that's viable for financial support in this type of project. He continued that he thinks there's a threshold problem with affordable housing considering the distance and remoteness of the location. Putting that aside, there are options. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) issues housing choice vouchers or project-based badges (what used to be called Section 8). If you have a building with five units, you could have five housing choice vouchers for the building. The owner and developer would get market rate rent. The program pays the difference of what the tenant pays, which is 30 % of their gross monthly income. That form of affordable housing is just as attractive to a developer as getting market rate rents. Tony continued that is an option to look at. He thought NPS could talk to HUD. Perhaps they could assign some vouchers to one or two of these buildings.

Tony said the other thing that needs to be discussed is parking. If there are five apartment units in 20-25 of those buildings then there is a need for more parking spaces. A concept plan needs to be developed to describe how, if these buildings are converted, there will be enough space for the necessary parking for not only tenants, but also visitors. He thinks this is a practical problem that needs to be solved.

Bill Kastning asked if there were opportunities for owners to get naming rights. Jen Nersesian answered there are very limited opportunities for naming rights within the National Park Service. Our laws and policies are prescriptive about naming rights. A building cannot be named after someone. An interior space can be named after someone for a period of five years. The Sandy Hook Foundation does have a new program where they are putting people's names on rocking chairs on porches.

Dorothy Guzzo said that these are iconic buildings. The interiors are important, and once they are stabilized then you can look at other solutions. She asked if there was a non-profit organization that can potentially take on this idea of the exterior of the building. She thought it would be easier for a nonprofit organization to find funding than the National Park Service. The exterior of these buildings could become part of a mission for a nonprofit, then a private

developer could concentrate on the interior. She added the Historic Trust often matches nonprofits and buildings and then works on fundraising.

Stabilizing the exterior could take a large amount of money out of the equation. That way instead of spending the profit margin on the exterior the developer can focus on fine tuning the interior. She asked if there was an existing nonprofit or would Stillman be amenable to starting a nonprofit? Sometimes projects will be completed with both.

Jen Nersesian said that the Sandy Hook Foundation could be the nonprofit partner. Gateway has a philanthropic partnership with them already. They have indicated an interest in playing a role in the leasing project, although that role is not defined yet. Dorothy Guzzo said they should be invited to the working group/subcommittee meeting. Jen Nersesian agreed that we could invite the Sandy Hook Foundation.

Bennett Brooks reminded Committee members of questions not yet discussed. Is there any banking or financial expertise that can be brought to the table to help the group understand what the financial stumbling blocks are and what the opportunities are? Any thoughts on that that we should be exploring that could potentially be tied into discussed working group or its own group? Any thoughts on that for those of you who have worked in that world?

Michael Walsh said that he would not hold much hope for someone connected to local banking. He doubted that financing through the traditional bank system would work. He thought maybe the group should try to find someone who's been in the banking industry in Monmouth County and understands what this project is.

Bennett asked Jen if she had any questions for Michael about banking expertise? Jen said she doesn't even know enough to ask the right questions. That's why Gateway needs the advisory committee.

Jim Krauss said it's important to be accurate and truthful. He agreed with Michael's statement about traditional financing not being possible. He continued that he worked for 40 years as a certified public accountant. Banks want interest and a return on investment. Private financing or those investing in equity also want a return on investment, much like Stillman wanting a profit. He continued that there might be banks with philanthropic money, though he is not sure if they would want a return for their interest or investment.

Lillian Burry asked if there was any ex-military person who would be willing to underwrite this project. She asked if anyone had a connection? Shawn Welch said there was an investment group from NYC that came out in 2015-16. They were West Point graduates. They looked

around but disappeared. He said that was the last group he knew of with a military background and an investment track record.

Gerry Glaser said that if the group looks for financial experts who work within the current world of mortgages and finances all the problems just raised will surface. He thinks the group should break past all those traditional barriers as a kind of creative thinking model. He understands that the current restrictions and guidelines can't be ignored, but it might be useful to explore what options exist. He continued with an example from New Zealand (he thought). Someone was given the charge to replace fossil fuels in the country. An idea was to put up wind turbines. They discovered that people didn't want to pay to have a wind turbine installed and built on their property. The answer was don't worry about it. The wind turbine would be built and given to people. They would get a cut of the energy that is generated. Fast forward- wind turbines are now the primary source of energy for this country. Gerry said this is an example of a crazy sounding idea that defies all the current models about how things get financed. He thinks it'd be fun to have somebody with that type of creative thinking capacity to talk to.

Tony Mercantante said that banks generally have community reinvestment accounts. He thinks there might be a bank that would be interested in this project. But only if Stillman is the developer since he has a track record and portfolio that can demonstrate that they can do the project. Tony continued that Stillman's company has the best shot of finding a financing entity, much better than Gateway. He added that he thinks that Stillman needs to be involved in this conversation about financing.

Bennett Brooks summarized the discussion by saying this is a big challenge, but that the committee has a tremendous amount of energy to tackle. There's a lot of support to create a working group/subcommittee to research fundraising and financial options. What would it take to get state and/or county funding. What are pathways to explore? Part of this is making sure double dipping and governmental funds are considered in making sure these paths are available. There's also interest in the committee in researching nonprofit potential for the Sandy Hook Foundation as well as other philanthropy that could potentially support this type of effort. Bennett continued that Mary Eileen had raised her hand to spearhead, and Dorothy is also interested. Also, membership of this group does not need to be limited to advisory group committee members since there is other expertise that could be brought in, and that Stillman should be part of the conversation as well. Bennett said this feels like a concrete recommendation. There were also some suggestions about the NPS finding if there were standards that could be relaxed or flexible in a way that doesn't undermine the historic preservation mission). Even though Jen had said this probably wouldn't create enough savings to close the gap, it is still worth exploring.

Other comments discussed what phasing would look like. Should there be a focus on exteriors? Focus on building stabilization and Officers' Row.

Bennett continued that there are still some fundamental questions. The trade-off between getting dollars from a private entity and the issue of privatization, also the issue of parking. These issues need to be part of ongoing consideration and thinking. Bennett said he has not heard any recommendations other than creating the working group.

Shawn Welch said the working groups are not out of the realm of what the committee does. There have been many other working groups. He thinks this group should be created now so they could go ahead and meet before the next FACA meeting. The members could update the whole group via email.

Bennett asked if there needs to be a formal recommendation for this group? So far the group is Dorothy and Mary Eileen.

Shawn Welch volunteered for the group as well. He said it's important to start brainstorming and looking for places to go. There will also need to be coordination with the NPS team. He also thinks Mike Walsh should be on the committee.

Gerry Glaser agreed with Shawn that this should be a small group. He also would like to hear recommendations for a place or person with the experience needed in financing outside of the group.

Jen Nersesian thought that Mike Holenstein would also be a good working group member. Shawn Welch agreed.

Bennett Brooks said the following committee members will be in this working group: Michael Walsh, Mary Eileen, Dorothy, and Shawn. As well, Shawn will reach out to Mike Holenstein. Bennett continued that Gerry suggested looking for other expertise outside of the committee. Bennett asked if this is the next step? Or is a formal recommendation needed to proceed?

Jen Nersesian said the recommendation that really puts us on record is saying that this working group is being created to work with the Park Service to explore these issues.

Shawn Welch said that Lillian should also be in this group.

Bennett Brooks said: "The advisory committee recommends that the Park Service establish a small working group evolving advisory committee members and appropriate external parties as needed to explore the potential financing option for state and county funding, private financing, philanthropic sources, etc."

Shawn Welch liked the recommendation.

Bill Kastning agreed it covered all the bases.

Gerry Glaser thought Tony should also be in the group, although he acknowledged that it was meant to be a small group.

Tony agreed to be part of the group.

Bennett Brooks said the members of the group are now Tony Mercantante, Lillian Burry, Michael Walsh, Dorothy Guzzo, Mary Eileen Fouratt, Shawn Welch and Mike Holenstein (if he's willing).. Bennett thanked the committee for an open conversation and being willing to push at this issue. He said he knew that everyone wished that Stillman would have told us that the plan worked. Since that's not the case, the committee and park service need to figure out options.

Break

Park Updates

Jen Nersesian

Jen said that the park has a lot going on in terms of projects and investments at the historic post area and across the peninsula.

Roof Project

The Officers' Row roof project is about 70% complete. This project encompasses 15 buildings. Its current scope is bigger than it was at the start of the project. The park is trying to stem deterioration and seal up some of the buildings. The first idea was for temporary roofs to buy time until long term rehabilitation or replacement could take place. But we want to do the project right, so were able to put more money into it. The buildings in the project are Officers' Row Building 2-15 and Building 27, the Bachelors' Officers Quarters. Permanent roofs are being added to all these buildings. This project should be done in the winter. This was a more than \$3 million project. This project was identified as highest priority in terms of what we could do for the buildings to help keep them standing and stabilized and stem further deteriorations.

Deteriorated rafters were replaced in kind as was deteriorating tongue and groove roof sheathing. Copper flashing was replaced, and a new weather barrier was added to each roof surface. Composite shingles crafted to look like historic slate were used on the roofs. This project will be done before the next meeting.

Jen continued that this is the type of project that should be considered as the group talks about phasing. This is a potential direction for going system by system.

Multi-Use Path

Another ongoing project is the multi-use path (or MUP). This was a more than \$1 million investment to rehabilitate the seven-mile-long, multi-use path at Sandy Hook. This project consisted of resurfacing and patching or replacement of the asphalt in the areas that were most deteriorated and should be completed by early December. This is a popular visitor amenity; it's used by both visitors and locals.

Jen also gave a status update on the major projects that had been discussed at earlier meetings. These are all major projects that are at least \$1 million.

Water Well Replacement Rehabilitation

The water well replacement rehabilitation is a \$4 million project and construction is underway. There are a pair of seawall projects along Officers' Row and by the chapel. These are coming from two different funding sources. One is the Great American Outdoors Act. The other is our National Park Service major construction fund. Together, that's a \$36 million investment in those shoreline protection features. The purpose of these projects is to keep the shoreline intact. It is being designed with future climate change and sea level rise predictions in mind. It is not a protection from all levels of storm surge but will keep that shoreline along the Bayside from eroding out well into the future.

Rehabilitation of Water and Wastewater System

Rehabilitating the water and wastewater systems at Sandy Hook is another Great American Outdoors Act project. Construction on this \$14 million project should start in December. Most of these initial Great American Outdoor Act projects are focused on utilities and protective infrastructure, not on buildings. This is true across the National Park Service. Investing in the really deteriorating critical infrastructure that supports those other uses where there is no way to find funding for any other way. Gateway, especially Sandy Hook, has received a lot of this investment. It is worth reminding everyone that much of the waste water and potable water systems were originally built at the turn of the last century (1900) with major updates in the 1940s and again in the mid-1960s. Much of the system is more than 80 years old.

Rehabilitation of the Electrical Network

The rehabilitation of the electrical network at Sandy Hook is another project. The electric wires are being moved underground. Construction has not started yet, but hopefully will soon. This project is \$9 million and should make the electrical system more sustainable. This project should help decrease power outages and increase aesthetics by removing the wires from view. Another smaller project is dredging off the tip at Sandy Hook. This is an Army Corps dredging project that is done on a periodic basis. It should be completed in a few weeks.

Bennett Brooks asked if anyone had any questions for Jen.

Shawn Welch said he thought the start point of the seawall project was the original Army wall. He asked if the baseline started with the historic wall and moved from there. Jen Nersesian said she thinks so. The bulkheads beside the chapel are historic, but she's not sure if the entire length down Officers' Row is. But the project will address all of that.

Gerry Glaser said this is all fantastic news. He said that early on in this process, potential lessees commented about the adequacy of both the water and wastewater system. These are huge investments that the committee should help broadcast. Also, the roof project addresses a large percentage of the roofs that need replacement.

Shawn Welch added that only a couple of barracks (bldgs #24 and #25), the YMCA (bldg #40) and the Officer's Club (bldg #114) are missing in the roof project, and those are under a letter of intent.

Gerry Glaser said that none of these investments would make it easier on the potential for a lessee for the Officers Club. Jen Nersesian said the utility investments will serve the whole area. But there is not a project for the Officers Club roof or anything of that nature. Gerry Glaser said we have a brave lessee who's taking that on.

Michael Walsh asked if it was possible to bury propane tanks for Officers' Row buildings if that's the type of heat chosen. Patti Rafferty said that propane tanks have been buried at Sandy Hook. This is the practice the park has been using after Hurricane Sandy. Karen Edelman added that in terms of the lease, the opportunity is there subject to compliance.

Public Comment

Bennett Brooks said that is important for the committee to hear from the public. No one signed up in advance, so he opened the public comments to those in the audience. He reminded everyone that comments could also be made by putting them into the Q & A or via email to Daphne.

Muriel Smith said she lives in Highlands and loves Sandy Hook. She was disappointed that Dr. Ford was only on for two minutes, and nobody questioned him about why the county has not gone out to bid yet. She asked if the committee knew why they had not. She also asked why the architectural drawings had to be withdrawn? She thought they were completed. Her third question was if the building that would be used for the drill field would also have bathrooms and changing rooms. She also hoped this building would be air conditioned, since the other buildings were not.

Bennett Brooks said the committee does not have answers to these questions, but someone will get back to Muriel.

Shawn Welch said he thought there were a few answers given by Dr. Ford. He mentioned supply issues and cost issues. Those would both drive changes. He also spoke about compliance issues and having to change codes and ask for exceptions. Those would also drive changes. Additionally, he spoke about historic compliance. Shawn said he thought Dr. Ford had listed about five things that would have necessitated changes. He thought these things were all reasonable.

Bennett Brooks thanked Shawn and said he heard similar things. He asked if there were any other members of the public who would like to make a comment? There were no more commentors, so the committee resumed with the agenda.

Advisory Committee Leasing Program Updates **Bennett Brooks, Jen Nersesian**

Bennett reminded the committee that at the April meeting everyone had a chance to take a deep dive into the 30-plus recommendations from the leasing workgroup. This led to a rich discussion that resulted in six recommendations for the Park Service to follow up on. Bennett said Jen and her team will discuss the status of these recommendations at this time.

Jen Nersesian shared a chart showing the Advisory Committee's Recommendations and actions taken. One of the recommendations was to report back to the committee what Gateway is doing about the working group recommendations. Jen started with those updates.

First are waste management recommendations to minimize impacts to wildlife. Gateway does have provisions about waste management, and these are also in the leases. The provisions include things like requiring trash be placed in tamper-proof containers. Beyond those provision sincluded in the lease, if impacts are seen, the park can adaptively manage through further requirements in the operating plans.

The next recommendation deals with feral cats and wildlife. Feral cats are an ongoing management issue in many areas of the park. People shouldn't feed wildlife in the park, that is not how the National Park Service manages wildlife. Jen continued that these specific issues will be addressed through leases and operating plans. She said another tool that has come out the conversations and recommendations is the development of a lessee handbook. A handbook for the construction process has been developed and is shared with people at the beginning of the lease process. This would be a different type of handbook which would discuss rules for those living in a National Park. How should you exist in a park and respect wildlife, the ecosystem,

other visitors? Are there areas that are off limits, or areas that are closed at certain times? The park is bringing on an intern and someone on a temporary basis (a detail) who will focus on putting this together. Issues like feral cats and wildlife will be addressed through this handbook. The next recommendation is about mowing frequency and timing. In general, the lessees will not be doing mowing. The National Park Service will continue to be responsible for landscape management. In general, lessees only get their buildings, and in some cases they may get small external footprint. Generally, we are not talking about any areas big enough to be thinking about mowing and impacts to birds. However, if that were to change or there was a situation where that was a consideration, absolutely the park would be looking to manage it in a way that was in conformance with wildlife protection and habitat management goals. Jen said that idea speaks to the next item as well, about managing turf. The park will continue to be responsible for that.

Impacts for campfires and fireplaces – again, generally the lessees are not getting land, and the park will not allow campfires next to buildings. Fireplaces are not currently in working order in these buildings. None of the plans that have been approved so far have included anything about returning them to working condition. We don't currently have a prohibition on fireplaces, but we would look at this carefully and consider how to safely manage a fireplace in a historic building. Parking is an issue. The park is taking a comprehensive look at parking, and recently had an analysis done. Some possibilities include converting Hartshorne Drive into a one-way road and creating a traffic loop around the parade ground and then a one-way road down the other way. Other ideas include converting one lane of traffic into parking spaces or using a shuttle service. The park realizes this needs to be examined in a holistic and comprehensive way. Parking will need to be accommodated somewhere, but we will not just pave over everything and put parking lots everywhere. Jen assured everyone that as the park moves forward with this study the committee will be kept informed and engaged.

Anticoagulant traps for pest control. These are not allowed according to our current policies. Any use of pesticides within the park has to be approved with a compliance audit. That will be a very prescribed process with a great deal of oversight.

Fertilizers. Any kind of chemical application would have to be reviewed and approved by the National Park Service. Again, in general, these leases do not include land assignments. If they are, they will be very small and for specific uses. People are not going to have a yard where they will be responsible for mowing or thinking about fertilizers.

Managing waste oil disposal. We will not be monitoring this every day but will manage this in terms of rules and inspections. Any kind of food establishment is subject to our public health inspections. Gateway has a public health sanitarian on staff who regularly inspects all food operations at the park. This includes waste oil disposal.

PFA containing fire extinguishers and firefight foams. There are restrictions in place on those things. Those were the environmental recommendations that came back from the working group to the committee. Part of the next recommendation is to identify dedicated resources to manage the leasing program on an ongoing basis. This type of management is shifting form soliciting opportunities, asking for proposals, and managing leases to more on-site oversight. Things are currently managed according to the terms of the leases and the operating plans. The park is also staffing up to calculate rent offsets and to make sure historical requirements are met. The business services division is being expanded to handle some of the oversight management need so the leasing program.

Another recommendation is to maintain communication and transparency about how the park is addressing environmental concerns and providing a list of the measures in a proactive easy-to-use online format. The slides today tracking some of the environmental concerns that have been raised (and how and where we are addressing them), will be on our website after today's meeting. Operating plans will also be up on the website and publicly available. Jen said the park doesn't have anything beyond that developed yet but is willing to discuss further what kind of tracking mechanism is appropriate and maintainable and would provide the kind of information that the committee and the public are looking for.

The next recommendation is to report back on environmental impacts and the park will address them. Jen thought some of this was covered between Karen's report out from the working group recommendations, and her touching on some of those issues here. How they are addressed in our on-the-ground management, as well as our rules and policies. The park will continue to communicate these things out. If there are additional specific things the committee want the park to report out on, the park will.

Jen addressed the next recommendation – with regards coastal hazards and vulnerabilities – and to include a section in the lease that articulates the potential risks associated with coastal hazards. The park will make sure to look at ways within the leases to ensure people are aware of these risks and taking them into account. In terms of the park's efforts to understand what these risks are, the park had a comprehensive climate vulnerability assessment completed. The park is always looking at sea level rise projections and shore modeling when investments and management decisions are made in the park, especially long-term investments. This assessment will give the park more comprehensive data that is specific to our individual park structures and geographic areas. This will be used to inform more comprehensive climate change strategies. The data can be used to help decide future investments. What's most vulnerable? What time period are we talking about? Are we going to try to mitigate some of these risks? Are we retreating from some of these risks? Or are there other kinds of adaptations to structure or other types of strategies to pursue with awareness of the probabilities of climate change factors. The park has a planner who will be leading that effort. There is funding and support through the

Inflation Reduction Act to bring on staff, including a climate change planner, who will be shared with another park. As we move forward it is our intention to be transparent with what data we are bringing in and how these decisions are made.

Jen continued with the next recommendation, which deals with social equity. This is something the park continues to discuss. The committee recognized that this conversation started with the working group and affirmed that the committee's interest in this moving forward. Gerry will update you in a few minutes some of the efforts that are happening there.

Jen said that was all the recommendations. She feels it is a positive thing to be responding to these recommendations and giving updates at each meeting.

Bennett Brooks thanked Jen for reporting back on these recommendations. He asked if anyone had any questions. He added that these were the recommendations made by the committee in April. Are the recommendations on track? If not, what should be done?

Michael Walsh thanked Jen and her team for their work.

Working Group Update and Status

Jen Nersesian

Bennett Brooks reminded everyone that the working group was set up by the advisory committee in spring of 2021. The group has done a tremendous amount of work. It has met 14 times and really dove headfirst into these issues. The committee has received the benefit of the work group thinking through the recommendations. Today we are going to spend a little bit of time catching up on the latest working group discussion and getting the committee's thoughts on the working group status and future direction.

Jen Nersesian said that normally, although she sits in on all the meetings, she would not be reporting back out to the committee on the working group. The information flows from the working group to the advisory committee to the National Park Service. This last meeting with the working group was different. It was a check-in to see what if the group's goals have been accomplished and to see what, if any, items are still outstanding. What does this mean for the working group moving forward? Jen will share the highlights of that conversation. When the working group was first formed, a charter and mission statement were created. The committee members were asked to contribute their time and thoughts to this, so it was important to be clear about the goals and what the park wanted to achieve. The goal in the creation of this group was to pull together representatives from many of the groups that had expressed concerns about the Stillman proposal so that the park could really understand these concerns and work together to

see if there were ways to address them in the context of the park's leasing process and historic preservation goals.

The mission statement stated that the work group was being established to fully understand concerns related to the Stillman proposal and to maintain open dialogue with interested external entities, so that everyone was working with the same information. And assess alternatives and develop recommendations to the National Park Service in ways to incorporate strategies in the leasing project that addresses those concerns.

There are also specific charges included in the charter: evaluate concerns and understand which are based on misinformation or misunderstanding and those related to issues with the Stillman proposal and leasing framework. For the former ,work on a communication strategy that helps dispel miscommunication; for the latter ,assess whether there are modifications to the leasing proposal that can help to address those concerns and formulate recommendations for the advisory committee.

Jen noted that there have been very good conversations with the leasing subcommittee and as those issues have been shared with the larger Advisory Committee, and recommendations then issued to NPS based on those, a lot has been accomplished for environmental issues raised. Our leasing instruments have been strengthened and the operating plans have been developed. These conversations will also continue to inform as the new lessee handbook is created and to help with the management of more people and minimizing the negative impact.

Social equity was also addressed. Recommendations were passed to the advisory group and the park has acted on many of them.

There are a few outstanding issues, including social equity. Gerry will speak about that in a minute. This has been discussed conceptually over the last few meetings, and it was decided that the working group alone is not the right group to address this. Other experts and people with community connections and experience in this area have been brought in. The advisory committee discussed this and agreed it should be at the advisory committee level, with a working group or other process to continue to move forward with the committee.

Jen said there's a strong interest in climate change related issues from the leasing subcommittee. She said she had just outlined the bigger process in the park that will be looking at this. She continued that all working group members are welcome to learn about this. Once there is more information in that process there could be a conversation with the working group. That is on the to-do list. Another thing that was flagged during the recent working group discussion was the notion of privatization. This is what stoked a lot of opposition many years ago to the first leasing process, which ultimately failed. It was also raised three-plus years ago when the park received

the Stillman proposal. The fear, concern, or opposition to the perception of leasing park buildings to a private developer and that the public may not have access to the interiors of the buildings. For many, that constituted the privatization of a public good.

People currently cannot get inside the buildings that are available for lease. They can get in representative buildings like the History House or the Fort Hancock Post Museum. If nothing is done with these buildings, they will fall down, and nobody will ever get in them. The cultural landscape and the exterior of the buildings will be lost. The leasing program can restore the exteriors and give public full access to the site, to the cultural landscape, and to the experience of what this place looked and felt like in its heyday. In general land is not leased, buildings are. The public still has access to the site. All these issues have been previously discussed. Despite this, there still is the gut reaction in the public to the perception of privatization. The working group recognizes this and that it is something beyond the working group. What Gateway is doing with private leasing, even private residential leasing, is no different than what is happening in many areas across the National Park Service with leasing authorities to accomplish historic preservation goals. The working group recommended that this issue be brought to the advisory committee for it to think about and discuss strategies about that moving forward. It's important that another public outcry about privatization doesn't happen when the park is at the start of construction with an investor. We will come back to these issues in some form of the working group.

Another charge of the working group was communication. Jen said she hopes that all the working group members are communicating with their own organizations and members. It is important to keep all those lines of communication open, so that the park can hear their reactions. As different process milestones are met, the working group can meet for updates and to get any additional feedback and reactions.

Jen said that nothing she has said leads to any type of recommendations from the park about disbanding the working group. She just wanted to highlight that many of the goals have been accomplished and emphasize those items that need to be addressed by the advisory committee itself (or through other means). The working group will stay in touch and come back together as needed in the future. Jen welcomed working group members to add anything she had missed.

Bennett Brooks asked if any of the committee members who are also on the working group wanted to amplify anything said or had any reflections around privatization. Bennett confirmed with Jen that the working group is not being disbanded. It will be used as a resource as issues come up. There is no need for recommendations or a formal action.

Jen Nersesian agreed and said that it's important for the advisory committee to keep privatization within its focus as the leasing program moves forward. It's important to understand how to address this concern since it keeps recurring.

Tony Mercantante said as far as privatization, everyone discussed the popularity of the Mule Barn Tavern earlier. There is often over an hour wait for a table. People are not driving six miles out there just because it's a great restaurant; they also are going because they love Fort Hancock and love the idea that historic buildings are being saved. He continued that if it wasn't for privatization nobody would be able to set foot in the Mule Barn. But now the restaurant has opened, and thousands of people have. From private investment, these buildings will never be accessible to the public. Some will have residential uses. They will be a hundred percent accessible to the public. They will be accessible to families. Their families and relatives will visit them. Many hundreds of people will get to visit these buildings, who wouldn't have otherwise. That's what is needed. There's a great affection for the Sandy Hook peninsula (and Fort Hancock) in this part of Monmouth County because of its historic significance. We should not lose sight of that and should respect that. Tony said that's the only way to realistically save that the buildings, and that should be our message. Privatization will make the buildings more accessible to the public than they were before.

Shawn Welch added to Tony's comment about people's love for Fort Hancock as a reason the Mule Barn is so popular. He said the organization he is part of, Army Ground Forces Association, has had people donate to them at the Mule Barn Tavern on three separate occasions. The park and committee should encourage actions that help ensure this positivity continues.

Bennett Brooks asked if anyone had thoughts about how to keep this conversation on privatization going forward?

Linda Cohen said that since the inception of this committee her dream has been to see some type of focal point at Fort Hancock. She always imagined it would be some type of art and science facility that would attract families. She feels the Mule Bar has done this, created an initial presence. She continued that Jen spelled this out in a way she hadn't quite seen. Although the public won't be getting into every building, they will have access to representative buildings, as well as the fact that restoring the buildings gives everyone access to the cultural landscape. She thinks this is all very impressive.

Bennett Brooks thanked Linda. And agreed that access is essential- and that this idea is access to the landscape. Bennett asked Jen if she was looking for anything more specific or just flagging this as something the committee needs to think through.

Jen Nersesian said this was something we need to keep thinking about, and not just discuss it at meetings. This issue needs to be a focus, no matter what the next steps are, in case it comes up again. A communication strategy that goes along with every milestone that underscores the public good that comes out of this type of investment is what is needed.

Social Equity Update

Gerry Glaser

Bennett Brooks said the last topic of the meeting is a social equity. Gerry Glaser will provide and update on the thinking around social equity and some of the outreach that has happened.

Gerry Glaser said he first wanted to react to Jen's point about not closing out the issue with privatization. In many respects the conversations that have been had about social equity grew out of discussions over privatization. People feel they won't have access to the things that are being done. It is important to understand why people feel like this and develop strategies that are inclusive for all who want access to the resources of the park.

Gerry said he sees the issue as misunderstanding what privatization means, in terms of denying people access to the park. He thinks the small group created will tackle that. Linda Cohen and Norah are both on the committee. Other members include the head of the Monmouth County Affordable Housing Allegiance, a woman who's done a lot of outreach at Coney Island, and an environmental scientist who's a professor for the SUNY system. This group is working on how to best frame this conversation and if the whole conversation can take place among this small group. The working group will also explore ways the conversation can be rolled into a discussion with a larger community, since there is such interest. The scope is important, the reach and objectives of what it means to improve these social equity issues. The group will be moving forward to explore what the objectives should be. Gerry emphasized that this is an integral part of the discussion around privatization. The goal is to show that there is equal access to all these facilities whether they are subject to other leases of other things like that.

Gerry asked if Linda had anything to add. Linda Cohen thanked Gerry and said the group will add to this conversation as the continue to work.

Gerry Glaser added that the group is struggling with how to keep focus since this is such a huge issue. It's important to have proper balance while navigating around the space of the issue.

Bennett Brooks said this was raised in the April committee meeting as well and thanked Gerry for making that point.

Around the Table Comments

Bennett Brooks and Committee

Bennett said an important thing the committee does at every meeting is to have some time at the end for committee members to weigh in on whatever they saw or heard. What were your key takeaways from today's meeting, are there impressions or reflections you want to share? Thoughts or issues for a future advisory committee meeting based on what was discussed today?

Daphne Yun added that there is a brand-new policy that requires the committee approve the minutes. She said she sent them out earlier. The minutes were accepted and approved by the committee.

Gerry Glaser said he wanted to propose the possibility of an in-person meeting at Fort Hancock. This was seconded by Shawn Welch. Jen Nersesian said this will be challenging since we do not have a setup to fit enough people into a space for a hybrid meeting. But she said there could be a possibility of a less formal outing to tour the buildings and spend some time together on-site. Shawn Welch asked if the Fort Hancock Post Museum would work.

Daphne Yun answered that the connectivity is the main problem. Outside computers would not be able to plug in, the current system only works for DOI computers. She added that she knows Tony Mercantante offered Middletown's new office space, and maybe that could be explored down the road. Tony Mercantante said even though it's not Fort Hancock, it's close. They have the ability for a future meeting. Shawn Welch said connectivity at Sandy Hook has improved.

Linda Cohen thought Tony's building is ideal for the committee and it should be considered. She continued that it would be great to meet in person again. Gerry Glaser said perhaps we could have a hybrid meeting at Tony's office followed by a field trip to Fort Hancock. Linda Cohen and Tony Mercantante both agreed that suggestion was good. Bennett Brooks suggested a meeting in Middletown followed by lunch at the Mule Barn.

Tony Mercantante said he's been thinking about the issue and concern of privatization and closing off the area, closing off buildings to the public. There are currently buildings housing MAST and other groups that aren't open to the public. Are there buildings that could be turned into some sort of cultural resource like a local history facility? A museum-like space where people can learn about the fort that's open on a regular basis. That would address the equity issue to some degree. He continued that there's an educational component that comes along with the privatization of the buildings. This would ensure that the public do have a place to visit.

Jen Nersesian answered that this is something the park also wants. There are already facilities in addition to the lighthouse keepers' quarters. The history house and the Fort Hancock Post

Museum. The latter was opened about five years ago on the other side of the parade grounds. It's a museum but also can be used for smaller meetings or events.

She continued that from the National Park Service standpoint there are only so many places we can staff and maintain. Not every building can be or needs to be a museum. If the ideas for space is beyond what we currently offer, four or five public accessible Museum-type, visitor services type spaces that were discussed, the park would be open to it. Someone would need to operate it, as it's beyond Gateway's capacity. This is the conversation we had about the Spermaceti Lifesaving station. It was used as the summer visitor center and damaged by Hurricane Sandy. The park has stabilized it but can't operate it without shutting one of the other facilities down. The Sandy Hook Foundation came to the table with interest in operating there. Jen said other opportunities like that are part of any rehabilitation strategy.

Linda Cohen said that is one of her goals at Sandy Hook. She was approached by an artist who has a family foundation and wanted a studio to exhibit out at Sandy Hook. People could see work as well as make work. Linda said she was interested in the building beside the Mule Barn, which is not on the current leasing list. The Sandy Hook Foundation is interested in this idea. Linda said she also had been approached by someone who wants to create a science center- a type of discovery center for children of all ages. That person is interested in one of the buildings at North Beach, which is not in bad shape. She would need to write grants for funding. Linda wanted to introduce these two at this point.

Bennett Brooks asked Linda if there were any next steps for either of the expressions of interest she mentioned. Linda Cohen said she'd like some feedback to share with these two.

Mary Eileen Fouratt said she thought these were great ideas. She continued that funding is always an issue. Mary Eileen asked if the artist should be talking to the park directly to find out what is possible? Jen Nersesian confirmed that the artist has spoken directly to Gateway staff. Linda Cohen added that the Sandy Hook Foundation has put the artist in contact with Pete McCarthy. Pete McCarthy confirmed that he has met with Caitlin. He said she has an interesting idea, but it needs to go to the business office and the superintendent for consideration.

Tony Mercantante said we should see if the Jacques Cousteau Society might be interested. They currently have a small aquarium-type facility at Tuckerton and run a lot of educational programs out of it. He continued they are an organization with resources that would be worth connecting with. Gerry Glaser said he knows someone who used to run the program, so he will help make the connection.

Next Steps and Recommendations

Bennett Brooks

Bennet Brooks reminded everyone that there was one recommendation made today. It was focused on the follow-up from Jen's update on the Stillman proposal.

The Advisory Committee recommends that the Park Service establish a working group, which can include external parties to explore financing opportunities. What might these potential pathways for private philanthropic or other types of funding be.

Bennett Brooks said the power point that was shared today should be on the website soon. There were some questions raised during the public comment period about MAST. There's also a very strong interest in having a hybrid/in-person meeting- possibly in Middletown. This could be followed up with an informal community gathering. There were also a flurry of ideas including a possible artist studio, science center, Jacques Cousteau Society.

Bennett said he thought there were a lot of good thoughts about how to address the issue of privatization and a communication strategy. It's important to understand what the concerns are and how to address them. How should we discuss what's happening? Even if property is not fully public it still adds value and benefit to the public. This conversation could be picked up in the next meeting. Bennett thanked the group, the captioner, and Nitsan.

Jen Nersesian asked Karen Edelman to introduce the new business staff who are on today's call.

Karen Edelman introduced Matt Hankin, Mimi Berfield, and David Jordan. They've all recently joined Gateway's business services team and bring a wealth of experience to the park. Matt comes from the MPI program, a competitive program within the NPS. Mimi is from the Presidential Management Fellowship program, and David Jordan comes from the Judiciary Department. He has a lot of expertise managing real estate issues in the federal government.

Jen Nersesian thanked all the committee members on behalf of the National Park Service for continuing to work to figure out next steps. Helping the park to keep an eye on the long-term goal and figuring out how to make progress towards it, knowing that there are many challenges and changing circumstances. Gateway appreciates your wealth of experience and knowledge, and the skills you bring to the table in helping us navigate through this. She continued that she is looking forward to working with the new working group on different strategies and models.

Meeting End

