**Pemaquid Lighthouse Park**

**Stakeholders’ Meeting - review of 2017 season**

Bristol Town Hall, November 2, 2017, 3 pm – 5 pm

In attendance: Clyde Pendleton and Laurie Mahan (Parks Commissioners); Lara Sargent (Parks Director); Caren Clark (Friends of Pemaquid Lighthouse); Brooke Cotter (Seagull Shop); Will Kefauver (Pemaquid Group of Artists); Pat Porter ((Pemaquid Point Association); Chris Hall (Town Administrator).

Apologies: John Allen (Fishermen’s Museum); Marty Welt (Friends of Pemaquid Lighthouse).

Lara Sargent asked people to introduce themselves, and that we start by reviewing the numbers for visitors and revenue for the season. Park admissions were down by 12,000 paying visits, to approximately 62,000, but offsetting this was a strong take-up of over 900 resident passes, most of whom would have been unrecorded repeat visitors. Revenue was ahead of last year because of the increase in admission fees from $3 to $4. Caren Clark gave a summary of the Lighthouse’s visitor count and donations, showing 35,076 visitors climbing the lighthouse and paying an average donation of 73 cents per person: a decline in numbers of visitors, but an increase in average donations. Chris Hall showed the group a letter from John Allen showing a similar pattern at the Fishermen’s Museum: almost 20% decline in visitors, to 29,724, but donations actually slightly ahead of 2016. Will Kefauver concurred: although the Gallery does not keep a count of visitors, he believed their footfall was down while their sales had been strong. The Seagull Shop could not make year-to-year comparisons because of new management.

In discussion of the reasons for the numbers, Pat Porter pointed to the change in exchange rate, which with other factors appeared to have dropped the number of international visitors to the Point this year. Clyde Pendleton suggested that 2016’s record numbers could also be due to the lack of wet days throughout that year; 2017, while dry, did have a number of wet days with few visitors.

There followed discussion, without any particular decision, of the need for more or for different advertising of the Lighthouse Park attractions. Regarding the passes for residents and property owners, it was pointed out that it is necessary to make people realize that these are good for the beach as well as the Lighthouse Park. It was noted that the Lincoln County Guide will change its format next year, with sections on food, entertainment, style and activities; it may be appropriate to take a $200 quarter page ad in the activities section, and $55 smaller ads in the other editions. Also, Walpole resident and TV reporter Don Carrigan has offered to do a special piece on the Lighthouse Park for free on Channel 6.

Chris Hall asked that before moving to 2018, the group review safety. Clyde Pendleton reported that no persons had been swept away this year; there was one broken leg in a fall on the rocks, and the usual several cuts and bruises. Parks Commissioners had discussed safety with the Selectmen in October, and proposed to change from yellow ‘Caution’ tape to red ‘Danger’ tape in future on storm days. A number of people had apparently assumed the yellow tape referred to the poison ivy. Caren Clark offered access to the Lighthouse out of visitor hours for Bristol Frst Responders to practice evacuation of persons falling in the lighthouse or for Fire Department training. She also offered a startling photograph by Sherry Tucker of her son being swept off the rocks in a lawn chair, for use in warning material.

There was discussion as to whether the Lighthouse tower could have an emergency key kept in a Knox Box for Fire Department access. Caren Clark pointed out that the Coast Guard (who still own the tower) had in the past resisted any attempts to widen access; Clyde Pendleton said that other buildings in the Park did have Knox Boxes with access keys, and that it may be worthwhile having the Fire Department go through the Coast Guard chain of command in Portland to get approval for a Knox Box, which would not need a change in the lock, as a preferable alternative to emergency use of chain saws for access. (For future discussion with FPL/ALF).

On other matters, Caren Clark and Pat Porter commended the Parks staff for the excellent garden this year, which had prompted many favorable comments. Caren suggested that a kiosk could be constructed, with a map, information on the several stakeholders’ attractions, and feature stories on the history of the Lighthouse and the Point – such as the battle between the *Enterprise* and the *Boxer*. This met with general support, along with interest in improved signage within the park – especially to the restrooms.

Looking to the future, it was noted that Santa Claus flies in on November 26th at 12.30 pm. Brooke Cotter will be returning from Florida to open the Seagull Shop to provide free cocoa and cookies, as in past years. The Gallery is considering doing more events in the 2018 season – they did two in 2017 – one option is a Wet Paint Auction of members’ art painted the day of the auction. The Seagull Shop reports more inquiries for wedding receptions, where the wedding itself is usually at the Park. As these are on weekends when she is busiest, this is hard to do; the restaurant only seats 44, and receptions have to be held outside with hope for fine weather. This led to discussion on availability of a large tent for functions, but the cost of these was felt to be prohibitive.

Lara Sargent reported she is making grant applications for repairs on the Keeper’s House roof; it was suggested that the several 501(c)(3) groups that utilize the Park (ALF, Fishermen’s Museum, Caring For Kids) could write in support of applications.

It was agreed that the meeting was useful and should be repeated; a further meeting was therefore scheduled for Thursday, February 15th, at 3 pm, to allow time to plan for the start of the season next year. Arrangements will be made for access on Skype for those who will not be here in February.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Hall

Town Administrator