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CAMERON ENGINEERING & ASSOCIATES, LLP

South Shore Blueway Kickoff Meeting MEETING SUMMARY

Tuesday, September 25, 2012 Freeport Rec Center, Room 102 - 10:00 a.m.

Present

Project Advisory Committee:

Patrice Benneward, Nassau County Resident
Michael Fehling, Empire Kayaks
Steve McDonald, North Atlantic Canoe & Kayak
Dennis Mildner (Phone) Department of State
Kyle Rabin, Nassau County/Town of Hempstead Resident
Brian Schneider, Nassau County, Dept. of Public Works
Tara Schneider, Town of Hempstead, Dept. of Conservation and Waterways
Nora Sudars, Village of Freeport
Rob Weltner, Operation Splash

Project Team:

Going Coastal: Barbara LaRocco; Zhennya Slootskin; Cassandra Reyes-Jones
Cameron Engineering: David Berg

Meeting Notes - Recorded meeting available from Going Coastal, Inc.

A) Introductions

1. Kyle Rabin opened the meeting; attendees introduced themselves and their affiliations.
2. Brian Schneider advised Vincent Falkowski no longer active in PAC, remove from communications.

B) Role of Project Advisory Committee (PAC)

1. Kyle Rabin reviewed the role of the Project Advisory Committee: provide the consultant team (project team) and the Village of Freeport with timely, trail-related guidance and expertise from a range of stakeholder/interest groups and to review project deliverables.

C) Advisory Committee Roles & Responsibilities:

1. Advising and assisting on community and stakeholder engagement, outreach and education.
2. Advising on trail priorities, site design, designations, stewardship, and other issues.
3. Reviewing project documents, plans, maps, and other print and electronic materials.
4. Forming subcommittees as needed to develop recommendations on specific issues.

D) Review of Project Scope - *Scope of Work – Attachment 1*

1. Dennis Mildner, NYS DOS reviewed the project grant: \$50k Local Waterfront Revitalization Program grant to be matched by \$50k from the Nassau County Environmental Bond Act Program. Dennis also discussed the Scope of Work tasks, responsibilities and deliverables:
 - a. Although the plan calls for seven launch sites, the selected sites should balance community needs and there should be flexibility in the final number of sites designated.
 - b. Task 3- Draft Blueway Plan is to be reviewed and commented on by DOS before public review.
 - c. Tasks 6 – 11 – Brochure, Website and Wayside Signage. Project team to deliver 3 designs for DOS and PAC approval and provide mockup of final designs for production.
 - d. Task 15 – Final Design and Construction Documents to be completed by the Village with assistance from the consultant team,
 - e. Task 17 – Semi-Annual Reporting to be completed by the Village.
2. Additional comments:
 - a. Kyle Rabin clarified that Dennis Mildner is not part of the PAC, but should be copied on all communications
 - b. Dennis Mildner advised that funder attribution language needs include the Village of Freeport and Nassau County and needs to appear on all draft and final products, including the Outreach Plan if it is to be made public. Kyle Rabin and Dennis Mildner will provide the project team with suitable attribution language for project documentation.
 - c. Barbara La Rocco requested partner credit information and logos for print and electronic media, including the Town of Hempstead and Town of Oyster Bay for the About or Resource pages of the project website.
 - d. Patrice Benneward suggested that the South Shore Estuary Reserve Council be recognized on the respective About or Resource pages of the website.
 - e. Kyle Rabin requested the project team research future opportunities for the Blueway Trail, such as American Canoe Association grants. Barbara La Rocco acknowledged that funding research is to be included in the Draft Blueway Plan.

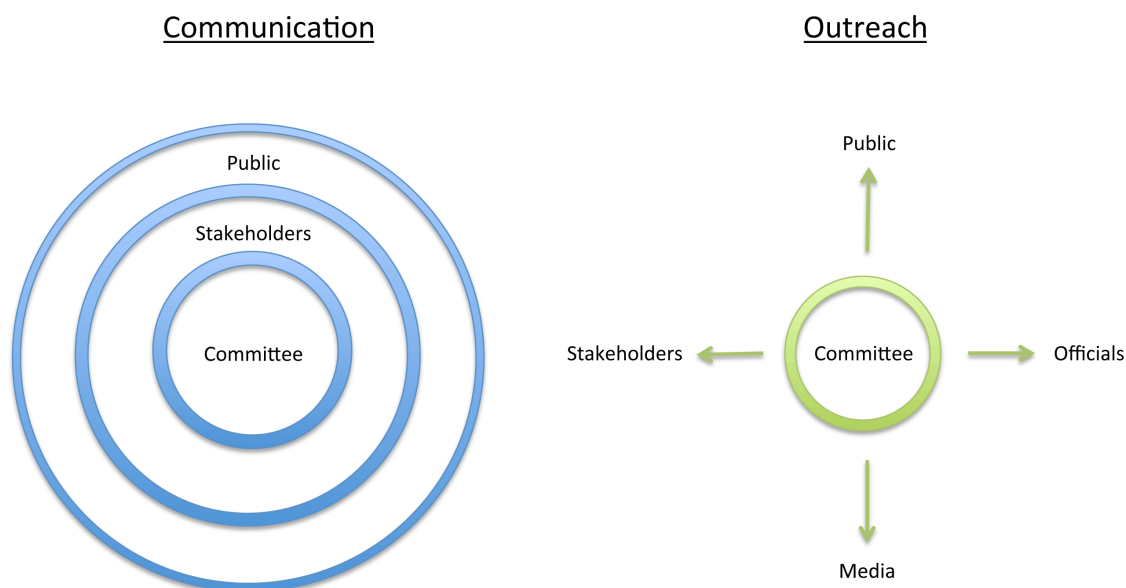
E) Information Needs

1. Zhennya Slootskin reviewed the physical boundaries of the Blueway to be mapped
 - West: Nassau County/Queens border – Inwood could link to NYC Trail;
 - East: to the Nassau County/Suffolk County border, including South Oyster Bay
 - North including inlets and creeks
 - South to the bayside of the barrier beaches
2. Data/GIS needs

- a. Zhennya Slootskin detailed the need for data related to conservation, bird nesting and fragile habitat areas. Tara Schneider stated that the Town of Hempstead (ToH) can provide this data for the Hempstead Bays and suggested contacting the Town of Oyster Bay (ToB) for similar data for that portion of the project reach.
- 3. Other Water Trail Projects
 - a. Patrice Benneward suggested coordinating existing watertrail efforts (e.g. ToH, NYC and Babylon watertrails)
 - b. Tara Schneider noted how the ToH water trail program could benefit from the South Shore Blueway effort. The Hempstead plan identifies sites at town parks in the West Bay. Tara/Kyle gave the project team a copy of ToH trail planning documents.
 - c. Zhennya Slootskin noted the project team will incorporate the ToH launch sites into the Blueway website map and the overall Blueway plan.
 - d. Brain Schneider suggested that there is an opportunity to collaborate with other property owners on the West Bay, such as Nassau County and the State of New York
- 4. Additional comments:
 - a. Kyle Rabin stated the South Shore Blueway Trail should provide opportunities for all paddler skill levels including beginners
 - b. Michael Fehling pointed out the need to create a main artery trail that provides easy access and connections to secondary trails as fingers off main artery.

F) Identify Stakeholders

- 1. Flow of Communication and Outreach Plan (See *Communications Graphic*)
 Barbara La Rocco illustrated how the PAC is central to communication and outreach efforts. PAC to provide lists of other stakeholders, organizations and groups who should be involved in the planning process. In addition, PAC to forward project communications, email blasts, press releases, etc. to their media lists and email lists.



- a. Patrice Benneward suggested PAC engage Citizens Campaign for the Environment, Maureen Dolan Murphy, Chair
- b. Steve McDonald stated that he has a database of close to 1000 email addresses of paddlers.
- c. Michael Fehling stated he also has an extensive email list. Though these private lists could not be shared with the project team, information provided to Empire Kayaks and NACK would be disseminated to their respective lists. In this way, individuals that choose to give feedback on southshoreblueway.com will become part of the project database.

G) Identify Outreach Mechanisms: newspapers, blogs, in-house vehicles, etc.

1. Brian Schneider suggested the project team create a press release for the Village and Towns to issue through their press channels. Barbara La Rocco stated that a release would be circulated next week for Dennis Mildner and PAC review and distribution.
2. Cassandra Reyes-Jones said she is developing lists of local blogs, newsletters, club papers, Facebook pages, etc. to advance outreach to stakeholders and requested that PAC members forward any contacts to info@southshoreblueway.com
3. Kyle Rabin asked if a project Facebook page would be established. Barbara La Rocco explained that the function of a Facebook page is to generate website traffic and stakeholder feedback, so the priority is to first develop the website. She advised that the project team would work to have a Facebook page in place by the time the press release is issued.

H) Identify Existing Complementary Efforts: Bayway, greenways, underwater trail

1. Barbara LaRocco - the Blueway project strives to coordinate with existing complementary projects in the region, such as the Bayway, SSER, bike trails and other efforts identified by PAC.
2. Kyle Rabin stated that the South Shore Blueway is a key component of the South Shore Bayway Plan
3. Nora Sudars asked Dennis Mildner if the PAC could invite someone from SSER to the committee, suggesting Lou Seigel. Dennis replied that it was up to the SSER director and PAC should contact SSER directly.

I) Site Selection Criteria

1. Barbara La Rocco reviewed site standards and criteria to determine sites best suited and least suited for launch sites. (See – *Attachment 2 – Site Selection Criteria*)
2. Michael Fehling and Steve McDonald noted that restrooms are not essential at the site and provided a list of five essential site needs:
 - a. Safe water access (*i.e.* avoid slippery ramps)
 - b. Nearby parking
 - c. Short carry/portage to the water
 - d. Minimal user conflicts (*i.e.* need for dedicated non-motorized launch sites)

- e. Launch into safe water conditions (*i.e.*, avoid areas with currents)
3. Zhennya Slootskin asked Michael Fehling and Steve McDonald to collaborate on the website public access map by reviewing sites based on the 5 criteria and to initiate changes and corrections.
4. Brian Schneider noted that the Google public access map on the website contained some outdated information regarding fees and permits at County parks. Tara Schneider suggested the project team verify the information with the Towns and County. Cassandra will verify all site information on the Google map and public access database developed by the project team.
5. Permits.
 - a. Tara Schneider said that the ToH would determine whether launch permits, even if free, should be required for their water trail.
 - b. Steve McDonald noted that permitting could be useful to keep track of access.
 - c. Barbara La Rocco gave as an example of the National Park Service at Gateway National Recreation Area at Jamaica Bay water trail initially had a \$50 hand launch permit fee that was later removed except for a cartop permit in fishing locations already requiring parking permits. Also, NYC Parks & Recreation charges \$15 for annual launch permit for park sites.
6. Town/County restrictions/overlap
 - a. Tara Schneider stated that ToH parks are open to the public, free to residents and with fee for nonresidents. Nassau County has the Leisure Pass for county parks.
 - b. Barbara La Rocco - the project team will review access point restrictions.
7. Additional suggestions and comments:
 - a. Steve McDonald - use conflicts, such as Wantagh Park where the parking lot is for trailered vehicles only. Suggested exploring parks/sites with existing facilities, like showers should be preferred to avoid substantial expenditures
 - b. Nora Sudars question to Dennis Mildner: Does the environmental protection fund grant require the site to be open to the general public? Dennis Mildner to obtain clarification.
 - c. Tara Schneider - ways to get boaters to file Float Plans. A Float Plan it was noted is necessary to let someone know the boater's itinerary in the event of an emergency.
 - d. Brian Schneider - the municipality cannot be the recipient of the Float Plan due to liability issues.
 - e. Barbara La Rocco suggested a QR (quick response) code link to a generic Float Plan or a smart phone app, such as the one Going Coastal developed for the NYC Watertrail, where boaters can fill out the Float Plan and email it to a friend.

J) Community Outreach Plan

Barbara LaRocco reviewed the draft Outreach Plan (See – *Attachment 3 – Outreach Plan*)

1. Meetings

a. Stakeholder Meeting

- Barbara La Rocco - that the Stakeholder's Meeting would seek input by dividing

attendees into interest groups by geographic reach – West Bay, Middle Bay, East Bay, South Oyster Bay.

- There was a consensus that February 2013, early evening would be best timing for the meeting. Barbara to follow up with suggested dates.
 - Nora Sudars - the Freeport Recreation Center has suitable space for both the Stakeholders and Public Meetings.
- b. Public Meeting
- The Committee agreed on April 2013 for the Public Meeting to take place, suggested time of early evening 6pm to 8pm. Barbara to follow up with date suggestions.

2. Website

Barbara La Rocco projected the project website (<http://www.southshoreblueway.com>) reviewing that the website will be a primary communication and feedback tool for the PAC, stakeholders and the public. Google utilities have been used for the site, project documents, maps, calendar and databases, because it facilitates collaboration and allows for a more stable user experience. In addition, it offers an option to limit sharing to the PAC only or to extend access to the public.

- a. The *Calendar* is set up for PAC collaboration to add events. The collaboration tool needs to be fixed. Barbara will email the PAC with calendar interface instructions.
- b. The *Contact Us* form automatically builds a database from visitor contact information. Contact can also be made via: info@southshoreblueway.com
- c. *Photo Gallery/Videos*: Empire Kayaks supplied initial images and video. In the future, visitors will be able to upload photos and video.
- d. *News/Announcements*: Visitors can subscribe to news and an RSS feed will be set up.
- e. *Trail User Input*:
 - Request for PAC to test and review interactivity prior to public distribution and press release
 - User Survey - to be reviewed against the Town of Hempstead survey
 - Site Suggestions – a ‘heat map’ will be created to help visualize the most requested sites.
 - Where Do You Paddle? Allows visitors to plot their paddling routes
- f. *Public Access Map* – Zhennya Slootskin – stressed the need for local knowledge by having the PAC paddlers collaborate on the website Google map.
 - She asked Steve McDonald and Michael Fehling to collaborate on the website Google map and mark sites that meet their top criteria, as well as providing initial logistic and safety input regarding potential hazardous conditions.
 - Michael Fehling said Empire Kayaks developed a map in the free web mapping site Community Walk. Zhennya asked if Empire Kayak would share the GIS KML data from their Community Walk map with her for the site selection review process only.

K) Next Steps

1. Dennis Mildner - Attributions and an introductory paragraph should be included in the Community Outreach Plan. Barbara La Rocco asked if Kyle Rabin and Dennis would provide the attribution language for all print/electronic materials.
2. Barbara requested that the PAC review the website content prior to public distribution of the press release and promotion of the website.
3. Barbara – to create the Kickoff Press Release by next week for DOS/PAC review and PAC dissemination.

L) PAC interaction with Large format map of the Blueway Project Reach

1. Steve McDonald pointed out that the channels under the Wantagh Pkwy bridge provide the only passage for boats between East Bay and South Oyster Bay. There are very strong currents and tidal flow in the channels, which makes non-motorized navigation difficult. Steve noted that Reynolds Channel is the only connection between Middle and West Bay.
2. Rob Weltner pointed out popular sailboat cruising areas due to deep water and embayments popular for motor boat raft-ups. (*e.g.* Zacks Bay)
3. Steve McDonald - shallow channels between hassocks can be confusing, paddlers might get lost.

Meeting adjourned 11:45 am