Recommendations for Improvements to the Waterfront at Mitchell Field

Prepared by:

The Mitchell Field Committee

November 20, 2015

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Section I. Executive Summary

The Town is at a pivotal point regarding future use and development of the waterfront section of Mitchell Field. Important decisions on individual waterfront projects must be made in the context of the larger vision embodied in the Mitchell Field Master Plan (Reference Document A). To assist the Town, the Mitchell Field Committee has crafted an updated vision for continued development of the waterfront area. Future waterfront development will require substantial funds from the town itself and whatever matching State and Federal Funds may be available. This document addresses three key issues:

Updated Waterfront Vision

The committee has developed an updated vision for future waterfront development decisions and projects while preserving the key guidance that it accommodates a mixed range of activities including commercial uses and public recreational uses consistent with the Master Plan. The Town should upgrade current facilities as usage increases, and as marine business district development proceeds as presently zoned.

Pier Recommendation

The Mitchell Field Committee recommends that the Town's **objective be to replace the pier with a new or renovated facility that can accommodate both public recreational and appropriate commercial uses.** Additional analysis is required to determine how much of the pier should be demolished, can we build a reef from the fill material, and what should the replacement facility look like.

Boat Launch Recommendation

The Committee recommends that Town update the existing boat launch design in accordance with the committee's recommendations and **build a boat launch ramp at Mitchell Field**. In addition to the boat ramp, this project must also address additional parking requirements, traffic entry and exit from the facility, and user fees.

Report Content

A detailed list of all the committee's recommendations, discussions supporting each recommendation, and actions required to execute those recommendations are contained in the subsequent sections of this document. Additionally, the committee has provided recommended strategies to support these initiatives. Section VII of this report contains a table that summarizes the committee's action recommendations to the Board of Selectmen and Budget Advisory Committee for the 2016 and future Town Meetings.

Section II. Reference Documents

Over the past decade, the Town has undertaken a number of plans and studies looking at the future use of Mitchell Field. The Master Plan establishes the overall policy direction for the use of Mitchell Field. The other studies look at the options and costs for various elements of the facility. The following documents provide the basis for the committee's recommendations. They are all available for viewing on the Town's website.

A. *THE MITCHELL FIELD MASTER PLAN - SUMMARY*
September 13, 2007
Holt & Lachman Architects/Planners

B. *PRELIMINARY INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING*
Mitchell Field Business District, Harpswell, Maine
February 2012
DeLuca-Hoffman Associates, Inc.

C. *CONDITION ASSESSMENT - Options For Repair Or Demolition MITCHELL FIELD PIER*
February 21, 2013
Baker Design Consultants

D. *MITCHELL FIELD BOAT LAUNCH FACILITY*
Feasibility Study and Recommended Layout
December 29, 2011
Baker Design Consultants

Section III. Updated Waterfront Vision

As the Town begins to make decisions about the future use and development of the waterfront portion of Mitchell Field, it is important that those individual decisions be made in the context of the "big picture" for what the community wants to happen with this area. The Mitchell Field Committee stepped back and put together a brief "vision" for how it sees the Mitchell Field waterfront being used and developed in the future. Our "vision" is grounded in the Mitchell Field Master Plan (Reference Document A).

Overview of the Master Plan

In 2007, the Town developed a Master Plan for Mitchell Field based upon significant public input. The Master Plan was subsequently adopted by Town Meeting. A page from the Master Plan depicting the general use and development concepts for the waterfront is included at the end of this section.

The following is a brief overview of the key aspects of the Master Plan that relate to the waterfront area.

- The pier is upgraded to include a float docking system for both recreational and commercial use.
- A boat launch is developed north of the causeway for public access.
- Public parking is provided behind the administration building and trailer parking is provided at the truck turn-around uphill from where the bandstand is now located.
- The beach area south of the causeway is retained and improved for public access.
- Building #126, the administration building, could be developed for public use such as bathrooms, storage, and vending
- The marine business district is developed with a variety of marine businesses

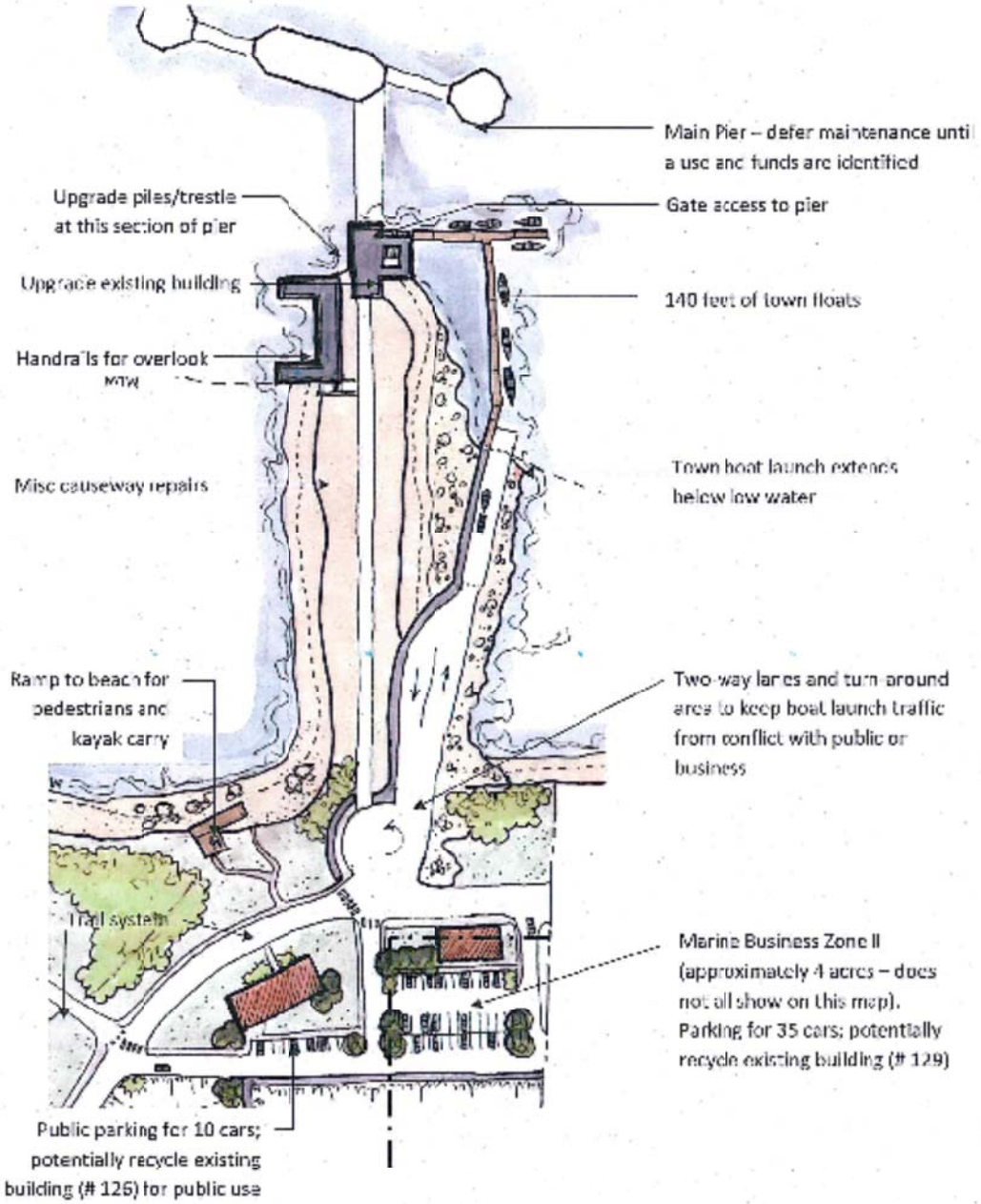
Updated Committee Vision

The Committee created the following broad vision for the waterfront area to fine-tune the vision in the Master Plan and update it to reflect current conditions at Mitchell Field and the work done since 2007:

- As use of Mitchell Field increases and additional facilities are developed, the broad concept is that the portion of the waterfront south of the causeway should be primarily a public recreational area, and uses or activities that potentially conflict with public use should not occur within this area.

- The area including and north of the causeway should be a mixed use area that accommodates a range of activities including commercial uses and public recreational uses on the pier and along the immediate waterfront and on existing paths and trails.
- All or most of the existing pier should be demolished and replaced by a new or renovated facility that can accommodate both public recreational use and appropriate commercial uses. The new or renovated facility could be a part of the existing pier, a smaller new pier, or a system of floats at the end of the causeway
- A new "all tide" boat launch should be developed on the north side of the causeway. The launch should be designed to be adequate for launching and retrieving both pleasure boats and small/moderate size commercial vessels. The facility should include floats and related facilities.
- To reflect the different uses of the two portions of the property, the road and parking facilities may need to be revised somewhat so that commercial and boat launch traffic is directed away from the public use areas.
- The administration building should be available for public and community uses including the possibility of restrooms, an office for support personnel, storage space, etc.
- The immediate waterfront area to the north of the causeway and proposed boat launch should remain substantially undeveloped and continue to be available for passive recreational uses, walking, etc.
- The beach and bandstand areas should continue to be upgraded with improved support facilities such as rest rooms, pedestrian access, additional parking, and any other future improvements if required based on usage.
- The remainder of the land and facilities within the marine business district should be developed/redeveloped and used as allowed under the current zoning.

Waterfront Detail:
Recreational Access; Pier Structure; Public Boat Launch; Small Marine Business Zone



Section IV. Pier Recommendations

In 2012, an infrastructure assessment report (Reference Document B) identified the pier's deterioration as significant enough to warrant its immediate closure. The Town then hired Baker Design Consultants to evaluate the condition of the former "Navy Pier". In 2013, the firm presented the Town with the condition assessment and options for repair or demolition (Reference Document C). The following photo taken from the report provides an overview of the entire pier and the causeway connecting it to the shore.

In this report, Barney Baker and his sub-consultants investigated the condition of the various components of the pier above and below the waterline, laid out possible options ranging from full rehabilitation of the entire pier (except for the breasting dolphins) to complete demolition as well as options involving partial demolition and partial rehabilitation. For each option, the report laid out the estimated costs of that option. The report highlighted the potential to use inert material from the demolition of the pier or parts of it to construct an artificial reef in approximately the same location as the breasting platform and dolphins (see discussion below). The artificial reef option has the potential to significantly reduce the cost of demolition of the breasting platform and

dolphins.

Objective

The Mitchell Field Committee recommends that the Town's objective with respect to the pier at Mitchell Field be to replace the deteriorating "Navy pier" with a new or renovated facility that can accommodate both public recreational uses and appropriate commercial uses. The new/renovated facility should be of an appropriate scale to serve these types of uses and provide safe and convenient facilities (see discussion below). This recommendation is consistent with the Mitchell Field Master Plan that envisioned the joint use of the "Navy pier" for public recreational uses and commercial use related to the marine business district.

The new/renovated facility should be developed to accommodate the following general types of uses although additional work needs to be done to determine the desired future use of the replacement facility:

1. **Possible Commercial Uses of a Pier**

    - Berth for a small-moderate size research vessel
    - Berth(s) for tour boats (power or sail – day sails, etc.)
    - Berths for fishing/lobster boats
    - Staging location for fitting out boats as part of a marine-related business
    - Dock for small–moderate size ferries
    - Facilities for fishing/lobstering gear to be loaded/unloaded
    - Operating base for a sailing school or similar activity

2. **Possible Recreational Uses of a Pier**

    - Public landing for recreational boats (short term tie-up)
    - Overnight berthing for transient boaters
    - Seasonal berths for larger boats
    - Dinghy dock for a potential mooring field
    - Staging location for boats launching from or recovering at the boat launch
    - Scenic lookout for tourists/residents (benches, binoculars, interpretive signage, etc.)
    - Recreational fishing

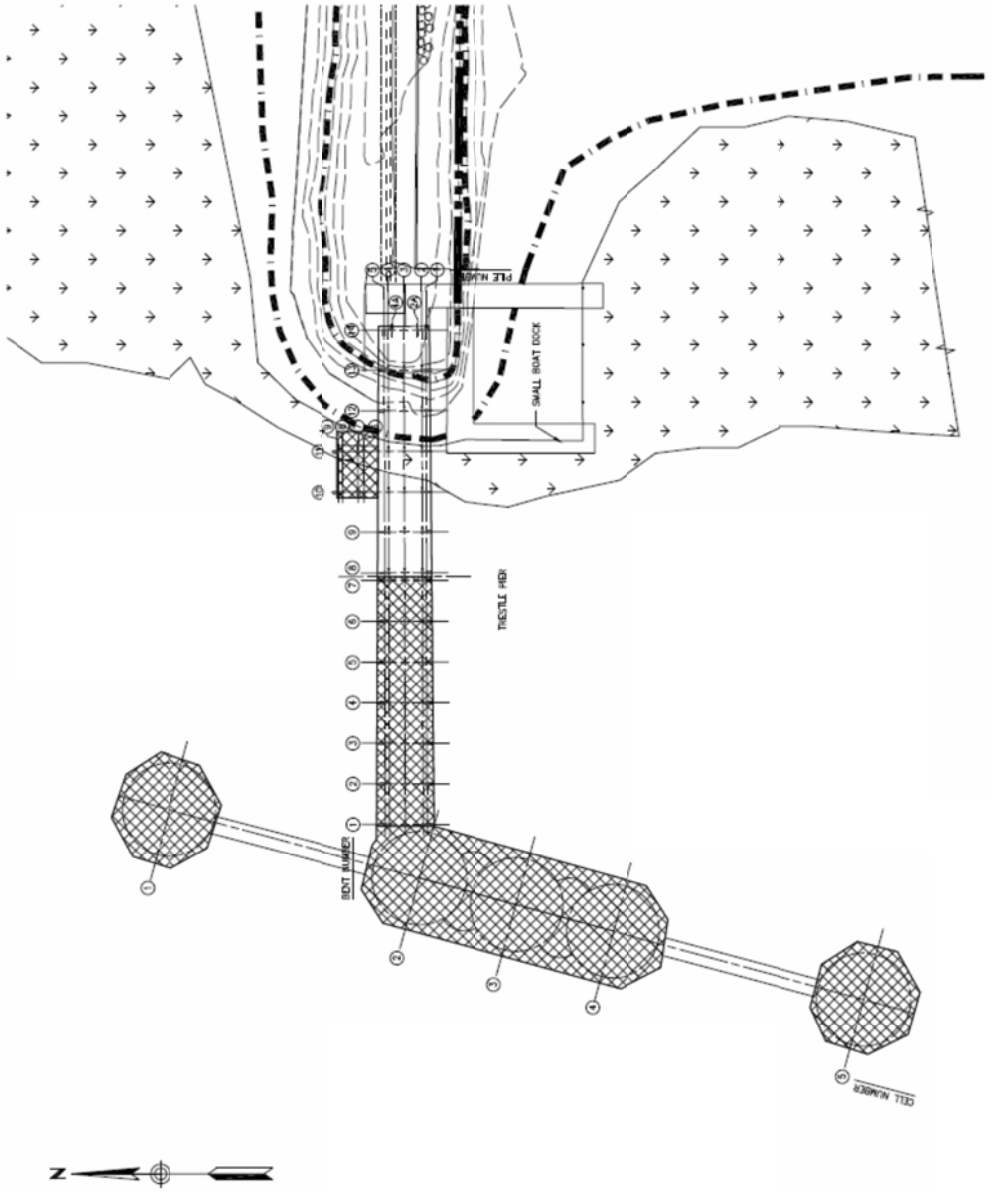
Recommended Strategy

To accomplish this objective, the Mitchell Field Committee recommends that the Town pursue the following strategy:

A. The Town should initiate planning for and funding of the demolition of all or most of the existing "Navy Pier". This project will require analysis of the feasibility of retaining any portion of the existing pier. The committee recommends removal of the north and south dolphins, the breasting platform, and at least the outer half of the connecting pier (see paragraph B. below). This concept is shown on the following drawing taken from Reference Document C. If analysis indicates that the remaining portion of the pier has exceeded its life expectancy, then the entire pier should be demolished.

This effort should include the following:

1) Clarifying with the appropriate regulatory bodies what the Town's responsibilities are or will be under various scenarios of demolition and collapse of the pier.
2) Developing refined estimates of the cost for demolition to serve as the basis for a budget item on a future Town Meeting warrant.
3) Developing the necessary final technical documents needed to solicit bids for the pier demolition.
4) Exploring the feasibility of permitting the construction of an artificial reef with the inert demolition materials (Reference C estimated that the construction of an artificial reef could reduce the demolition costs for the breasting platform and dolphins by $700,000-750,000). This will require that the Town undertake additional studies of the habitat impacts and benefits of an artificial reef. Under this approach, the inert material from these components would be used to build a reef essentially in the same location where the dolphins and breasting platform are currently located (see the following drawing from the report). The reef would be constructed so that there would be a minimum depth of twenty feet over the reef at low tide to preclude interference with boats using the pier or boat launch.
5) Beginning the process of obtaining the necessary permits for the demolition and reef construction.
6) Exploring the possibility of delaying the removal of the pump house debris with the DEP and doing it as part of the larger project if this reduces the Town's costs.
7) Seeking outside funding to assist with the demolition of the pier.

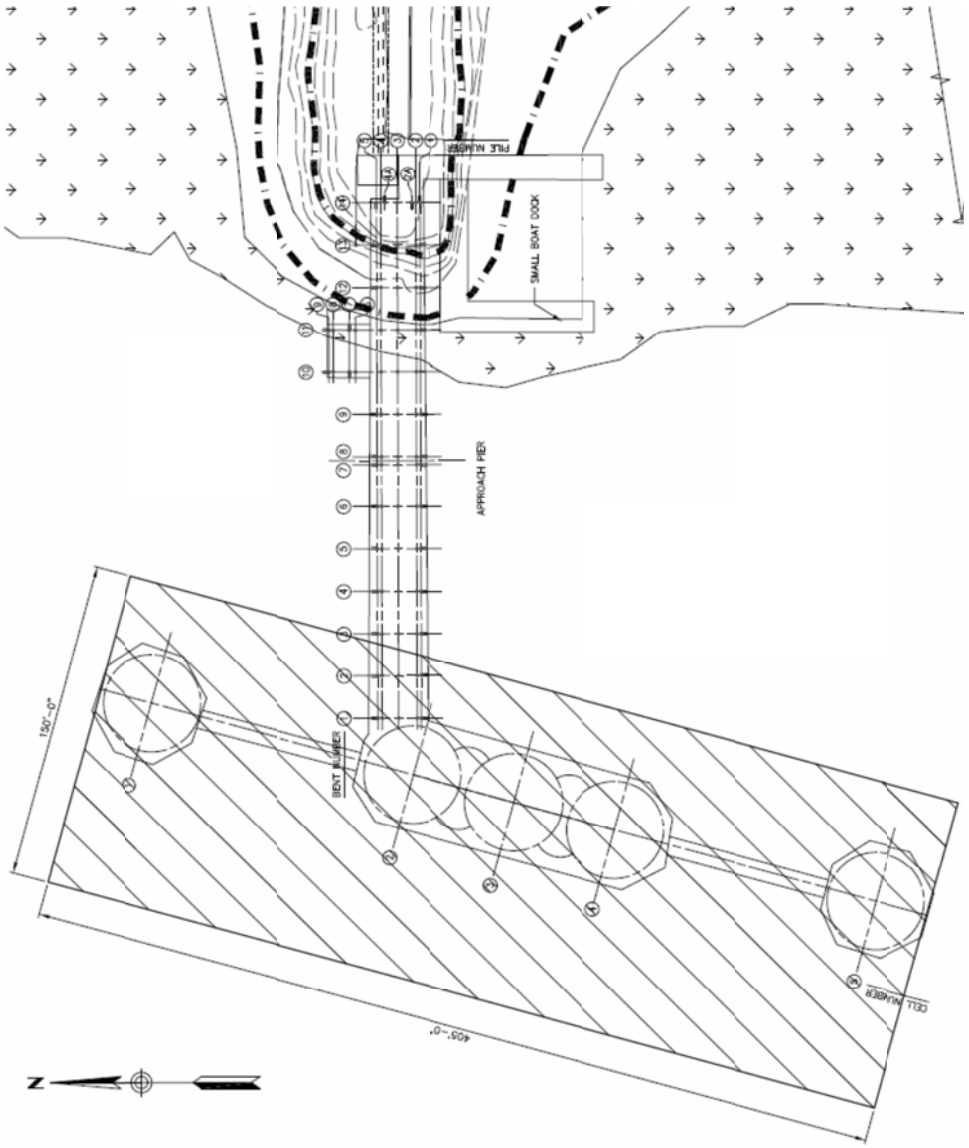


B. The Town should investigate the need for and design of a replacement facility. This should look at three options: 1) the renovation of the inner half of the connecting pier including the provision of floats, ramps, fencing, etc., 2) the demolition of this section of the pier and the construction of a smaller pier with floats, etc., and 3) the provision of floats from the end of the causeway.

To accomplish this, the Committee recommends that the Town do the following:

1) Undertake a study of the potential recreational and commercial uses of a new/renovated facility and develop a "design program" that can be used to evaluate the various options. This study can be done by the Town Planner and Harbormaster with the Mitchell Field Committee.
2) Provide funding for technical assistance to explore the feasibility and costs of the various options and develop a preliminary design and cost estimates for the recommended option.

Possible Location of an Artificial Reef



Section V. Boat Launch Recommendations

In 2011, the Town hired Baker Design Consultants to explore the options for the construction of a boat launch at Mitchell Field as envisioned in the Mitchell Field Master Plan. Barney Baker looked at options on both the south and north side of the causeway. The recommendation in the final report – Mitchell Field Boat Launch Facility – Feasibility Study and Recommended Layout (Reference Document D) proposed a launch on the north side of the causeway. The report included an estimate of the cost for developing the boat launch. The costs were update in the fall of 2014.

The Mitchell Field Committee recommends that the Town move forward with solicitation of a contract to build a boat launch ramp at Mitchell Field. The new facility should be of an appropriate size to provide safe and convenient facilities for designated uses (see discussion below). This recommendation is consistent with the Mitchell Field Master Plan for a boat launch facility to serve public recreational uses and commercial use related to the marine business district.

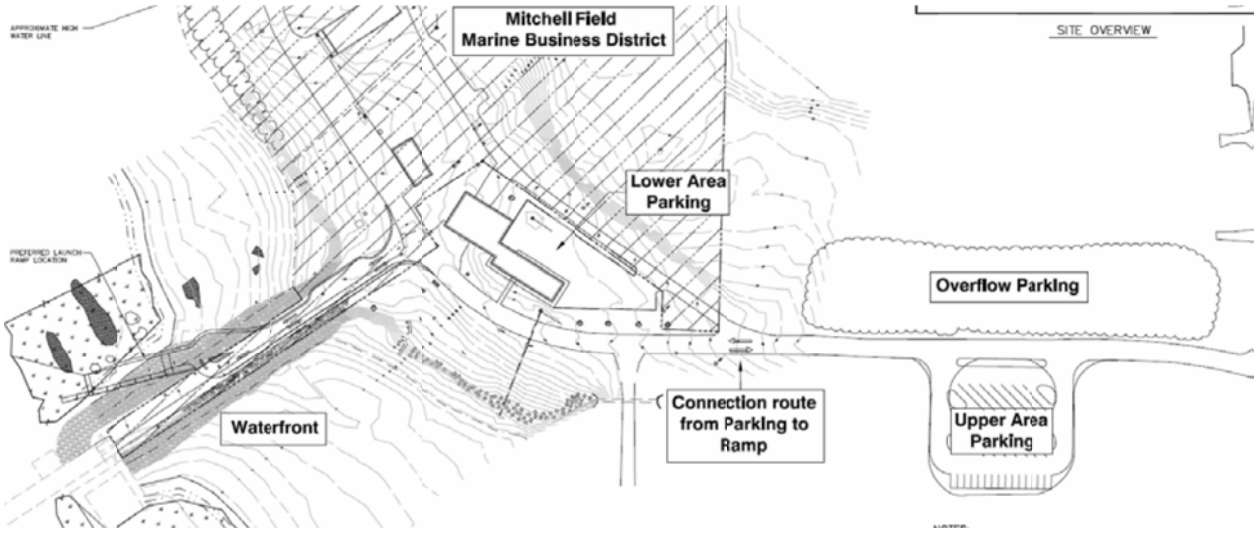
The Boat Launch Facility would accommodate the following uses:

- Launching/recovering fire and rescue support vessels
- Launching/recovering personal recreation power/sail boats.
- Launching/recovering fishing/lobster boats
- Launching/recovering boats as part of a marine-related business
- Launching/recovering boats for a sailing school
- Removal of floats for winter storage and storm preparation

Final Design

- The ramp should be designed for all-tide use.
- The ramp width should accommodate two trailers, side-by-side, for simultaneous launches and recoveries.
- The design should include a causeway approach road and turn around to facilitate safe and efficient launch and recovery operations.
- A float system would be constructed along the south side of the ramp.
- The design must include a pedestrian walkway along the south side of the boat launch road on the causeway that allows safe access to the small boat basin and any future pier that might replace the existing pier structure at the same time boat launch and recovery operations are occurring.

The following drawing is taken from Barney Baker's report and shows the basic concept for the launch.



The following photosimulation taken from the Baker report illustrates what the recommended boat launch facility might look like.

Parking Areas [Reference Document D]:

- A trailer parking area would be located at the concrete pad just above the bandstand grass meadow.
- An overflow parking area should be located just opposite the trailer parking area in the lower meadow.
- The parking area behind the admin building should be enlarged and improved for non-trailer parking. This would be for use by people accessing the admin building spaces, rest rooms, waterfront, pier and beach areas.

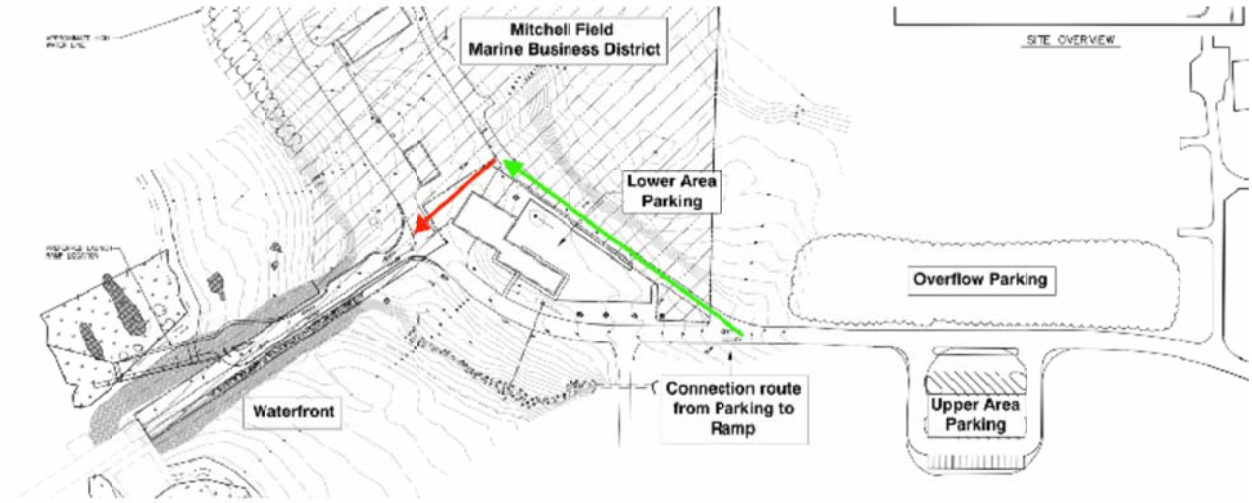
- All of the parking areas will support other uses besides boat launch traffic.

Traffic Pattern

There are two critical issues that must be addressed in the overall design to ensure the safety of everyone using the Mitchell Field facilities.

- Improved sightlines at the entrance to Mitchell Field. There are three options in increasing order of cost.
  1) Work with MDOT to evaluate options along Route 123 north of the entrance road to Mitchell Field that improve safe entry to and exit from the field. These may include: lowering the speed limit to 30 mph and other measures. [Reference B, Option 4]
  2) Move the entrance closer to the north side of the fire station property, using the former housing driveway as the entrance road point. Estimated cost - $50,000. [Reference B, Option 3]
  3) Move the entrance to the south side of the fire station which would require extensive redesign of the entrance road and perimeter road walk path. Estimated cost - $90,000. [Reference Document B, Option 5]

- Design and build roadway so that boat trailers access the launch ramp without conflicting with non-boating waterfront recreational users.
  1) Boat trailer traffic would access the launch facility from roadway behind and to the north of the administration building.
  2) Build a pedestrian walkway along the south side of the boat launch access road on the causeway allowing safe access to the small boat basin and any future pier at the end of the causeway.
  3) The following drawing depicts proposed boat launch traffic routing from the main access road to the boat launch. The green line is an existing road. The red line would be the new road section proposed in paragraph 2 above.



User Fees

Fees should be established to help defray the boat launch operating expenses without making it cost prohibitive for residents and the broader public to use the facility. Experience of commercial launch operators suggests that a minimal fee discourages users who might not respect the facility. Criteria for the fee schedule and administration include:

- Resident recreational fees should be lower than non-resident fees and similar to other Maine town launch facilities. If the facility is built without using state or federal funds, the town can elect to make resident-use free of charge while still charging non-residents to use the facility.
- Commercial fees should be regionally competitive.
- Fees should be available on a seasonal and single use basis.
- Fee collection should be low cost and easy to administer (e.g., honor system with payment via windshield collection envelope).
- Onsite staff support should be available to monitor launch operations and fee payment.

Annual Operating & Maintenance Costs

The boat launch design study [Reference Document D] does not address costs beyond construction of the facility. Annual budget requests will have to address expenses for boat launch facility operations, maintenance, repairs, required inspections and /or permits, float removal & storage and staffing support.

Recommended Actions

To accomplish this objective, the Mitchell Field Committee recommends that the Town pursue the following strategy based on approval of the committee's design recommendations:

1. Contract professional services to update the construction designs and cost estimates for all aspects of the project to include:
    a. The boat launch facility, causeway access road and turnaround.
    b. The parking areas: the trailer parking area, the overflow parking area, and upgrading the admin building parking area.
    c. Any required entrance road upgrades.
2. Contract professional services to develop a cost estimate for annual operating, maintenance and staffing costs.
3. Develop funding options for approval at town meeting.

Section VI. Needed Outside Assistance

The Town needs to make important cost efficient decisions about the Mitchell Field waterfront and the future of the former "Navy Pier". The Town has done a significant amount of work to improve Mitchell Field since taking ownership in 2003. It has also made a significant investment in background studies to enable the community to make informed decisions about the future use and improvement of Mitchell Field as proposed in the Master Plan. While the work done to date provides some of the answers, the Town needs to develop more detailed and refined information before it decides on the future of the Mitchell Field waterfront. While some of this work can be done by Town staff (Town Administrator, Harbor Master, Town Planner) and committees such as the Mitchell Field Committee, outside technical expertise will be needed to address some issues. The following outlines the areas where the Town needs outside assistance:

1. The Town should contract for professional services available to the Board of Selectmen, the Mitchell Field Committee, and Town staff to provide advice and guidance on how the Town should proceed with various technical and regulatory issues.

2. The Town should contract for professional services for exploring the feasibility of permitting the construction of an artificial reef with the inert demolition materials (Barney Baker estimated that the construction of an artificial reef could reduce the demolition costs for the breasting platform and dolphins by $700,000-750,000). This will require that the Town undertake additional studies of the habitat impacts and benefits of an artificial reef.

3. Based on a staff and committee study of the potential users for a pier facility, the Town should contract for professional services to explore the feasibility and costs of the various replacement options including the rehabilitation of part of the pier and complete demolition of the pier and the construction of a new smaller pier or the installation of floats at the end of the causeway. This work will include developing a preliminary design and cost estimate for the recommended option.

4. The Town should contract for professional services to update the construction designs and cost estimates for all aspects of the boat launch final design as recommended in Section V to include:

a. The boat launch facility, causeway access road and turnaround.
b. The parking areas including the trailer parking area, the overflow parking area, and upgrading the administration building parking area.

c. Any required entrance road upgrades.

5. Contract for professional services to develop an estimate for annual operating, maintenance, repairs, required inspections and /or permits, float removal & storage and staffing costs of the all of the waterfront facilities.

Section VII. Summary of Recommendations

The Mitchell Field Committee recommendations in the body of this report are summarized here.

Recommendations for 2016 Warrant

Recommendation	Action
Acquire advice and guidance on technical and regulatory issues related to this vision	Town contract professional services
Clarify Town responsibilities under various scenarios of demolition and collapse of pier	Town contact appropriate regulatory bodies.
Study potential uses of the **pier facility** to guide design process and develop recommended option.	**MFC** gather public input to inform professional study and input from Harbormaster and Town Planner **Town** contract studies including: • Feasibility and cost of replacement options • Design and cost estimate for recommended option
Explore permitting for construction of **artificial reef** from pier demolition.	Town contract professional services including habitat impact and benefit study
Defer pump house demolition if cost effective	Town request contractor estimate
Update construction designs & cost estimates for **all aspects of boat launch facility, parking and entrance road upgrades**	Town contract professional services and request DOT action
Develop **Annual Operating, Maintenance, Storage Cost Estimates of all Waterfront facilities**	Town include these in scope of work with professional consultant or assign to town planner
Provide Funding for above	Budget committee, BoS

Recommendations For Future Warrant

Recommendation	Action
Update final pier demolition cost estimates based on recommended option	Town contract professional services
Obtain necessary permits for demolition and reef construction	Town Staff with professional assistance (?)
Solicit public input on recommendations for all elements of waterfront vision.	MFC with support from professional service providers
Seek outside funding for Pier demolition and Implementing Final Waterfront design	Town identify sources and bring to 2017 town meeting as part of recommended financing

Section VIII. Mitchell Field Committee and Contributing Personnel

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