



City of Methuen

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
April 8, 2009

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CONCEPTUAL DESIGN TO BE UNVEILED FOR METHUEN'S HISTORIC "SANDS BRIDGE" *Grant-funded studies show possibility for a community park honoring City's past, local historian*

The City of Methuen has been working for years on a plan for the restoration of the Sands Bridge on Hampshire St. On Saturday, April 11 at 10 a.m., the Historical Commission will review the next step of the plan. In a project funded by the Essex National Heritage Commission, the Waterfield Design Group has completed a landscape design that would create a park to encourage the public to enjoy the site.

The conceptual design includes paths, viewing areas, seating, and off-street parking. Historical markers at the site would honor the adjacent homestead of Colonial-era military officer Robert Rogers and recognize city historian Ernest Mack for his contributions to the preservation and documentation of Methuen's history.

The plan builds upon a previous study undertaken by the Dry Stone Conservancy to restore the mortarless stone arch bridge, which was completed in 2007 and funded by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Together, the two studies outline a plan for restoration with cost estimates at upwards of \$200,000.

So far, the City's Historical Commission and former Historic Planner, Lynn Smiledge, have been fortunate to garner grant support for these studies. Continuing this endeavor, Historic Planner Alene Reich intends to piece together a combination of federal, state, and local grant funds for the execution of these plans. Local artist Leonard Joiner has pitched in on the effort, selling fine art prints and notecards featuring his drawing of the bridge, which are available through the Methuen Historical Society and the Economic and Community Development Office at City Hall.

Mayor William Manzi, III. has long been interested in restoring the bridge; "It is an important historic site that will be a recreational asset to our City," Manzi said. "I am looking forward to the completion of the bridge restoration."

About the Bridge

The Sands Bridge, formerly known as the London Bridge, is a dry stone, double-arch bridge that is notable for the fact that it was built without mortar between the stones. One of Methuen's most significant historic resources, it is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Parts of the bridge date back to 1740, but the bridge in its present form was constructed in 1835. Long used to

handle traffic between Methuen and Salem, NH, the Sands Bridge was taken out of use in 1963 when I-93 was built.

Previous Articles

Basileco, John. “Work underway to designate bridge as historic site”, Eagle Tribune, March 27, 2006.

Harmacinski, Jill. “Grant will fund fix-up study of crumbling Sands Bridge”, Eagle Tribune, November 11, 2006.

Chelf, Stephanie. “Artist donates drawing’s profits to Sands Bridge Repair”, Eagle Tribune, July 3, 2007.

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