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## Junkyard figures in New Bridge Landing plan



Photo courtesy of the County of Bergen

Historic New Bridge Landing Park Commissioner Robert Griffin, center, discusses the bridge at the site with Bergen County Executive Dennis McNerney, left, and state Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Bradley Campbell.

By STEVE KELMAN  
Of Twin-Boro News

RIVER EDGE — Several “pressing issues” concerning Historic New Bridge Landing — especially acquisition of the 1.7-acre junkyard site — were put before state Environmental Commissioner Bradley Campbell during a recent visit.

Historic New Bridge Landing Park Commissioner Robert D. Griffin said the Jan. 16 meeting of Campbell and park officials was designed to give the commissioner a “personal tour” of the site and discuss several topics.

Griffin said those issues included the need for “increased

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## New Bridge

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In a recent interview, she praised the commissioners, saying, “They are an extremely successful and hard-working group of volunteers who have brought this thing as far as they have with a lot of business acumen.”

Weinberg described the 18-acre park as “a wonderful but too-well-hidden historic site.”

“Historic New Bridge Landing has the only slice of state park (the Steuben House) in Bergen County,” she said, “and our residents deserve help from the state to give this site the profile that it deserves.”

The Steuben House is administered by Ringwood State Park.

Preservationists have secured a \$1.1 million federal grant from the National Park Service, with the effort of then-Sen. Robert G. Torricelli, but have been unable to reach an agreement with the family that owns the junkyard site on Hackensack Avenue.

One of the commission’s goals is to construct an interpretive center on the site that would explain the area’s history, provide artifacts and exhibits, and tell the story about “the bridge that saved the nation.”

Campbell had no specific comment regarding the general-store property that is located in New Milford on Old New Bridge Road. Negotiations to purchase this property have also apparently gone nowhere.

Bergen County Executive Dennis McNerney and New Milford Mayor Frank DeBari also attended.

DeBari said it’s time to get the junkyard owners “to sit around the table with representatives from the state and county, and not leave until a (purchase price) is finalized.”

DeBari, who is also the Bergen County director of parks, went on to say that because a purchase price for the property is dependent on a cleanup of the site, it was time to take some soil samples and send them to a lab to determine the amount of pollution.

Calling the stalemate in negotiations for the junkyard a “major stumbling block” toward making any progress in the area, DeBari said the 1.7-acre site would serve as a parking lot and entrance to the park with a visitor facility and gift shop or restaurant.

McNerney expressed contin-

ued support for the historic park calling it “the most important historic site in the county.”

Historian, and secretary of the Historic New Bridge Landing Park Commission, Kevin Wright said the area was “literally the crossroads of the American Revolution.”

Wright, a former curator at the Steuben House and now a regional interpretive specialist for the New Jersey Division of Parks and Forestry’s Northern Region, said New Bridge Landing “survived more of the war than any other place in America.”

“It was used in every year of the war, as a fort, military headquarters, battleground and encampment ground by the

armies of both sides,” he said.

Wright said the span at New Bridge became a “critical path.”

“If the British, who were three miles away, had stopped Washington’s army before he crossed the Hackensack, the war would have stopped right there.”

In what is now referred to as the “Retreat to Victory,” the Continental Army under Washington evacuated its garrison at Fort Lee and began a retreat across New Jersey after British forces captured New York City in November 1776.

“We always say he (Washington) would never have crossed the Delaware if he hadn’t crossed the Hackensack.”