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MEDIA EVENT – 10am, November 20, 2012 at Kittery Town Hall

Community Effort to Illuminate the Memorial Bridge Launched \$80,000 Fundraising Goal to Create Lighted Span Connecting Kittery and Portsmouth to Honor Veterans

Kittery, Maine, November 20, 2012---The Bridge Illumination Sub-Committee of the Memorial Bridge Project will officially kick off the fundraising efforts to light the new Memorial Bridge at Kittery Town Hall. The media, town officials, business community and members of the public are welcome to attend.

The Sub-Committee has been working with the NHDOT and authorities in both Maine and New Hampshire for the past six months in an effort to develop a vision and plan for the illumination of the new Memorial Bridge expected to be completed in July 2013. The proposed plan calls for the illumination of the footings, the Memorial Plaque honoring veterans and the two towers using energy efficient color-capable LED (light emitting diode) light sources. The \$80,000, raised through donations, is expected to cover the costs of design, installation, operation and utility costs for the first five years.

“We believe that this is a once in a lifetime opportunity for our communities to have an impact on this bridge which will be enjoyed by both residents and visitors alike. It is an opportunity to create a unique and attractive connection for our seacoast communities and add to the beauty of the riverfront. We also believe that the illumination project will give an emotional uplift to our neighbors and businesses and already we have seen growing interest and support,” said Peter Somssich, chairman of the Illumination Sub-Committee and a Portsmouth resident.

The Illumination Sub-Committee was initially started by a handful of individuals including Ben Porter (Kittery), Rose Eppard (Portsmouth), Gail Drobnayik (Kittery) and Peter Somssich (Portsmouth) with additional help from Doug Bates (Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce), and Nancy Carmer (City of Portsmouth). Recently, two new members with professional lighting experience have joined our group, Bruce Morriss (Kittery) and Jon Di Gesu (Stratham) along with Gerry Mylroie (Town of Kittery).

“While many others including NHDOT were initially supportive of our plans, getting started was difficult. Finally, we took the initiative to hire a lighting designer with bridge illumination experience to propose a reasonable but affordable illumination plan. The sub-committee hired John Powell from Boston, at our own expense, so that we could have a proposal in hand to begin the discussions. John’s projects include the lighting of the bridges spanning the Charles River,” added Somssich.

Denis Switzer, NHDOT Contract Administrator, and Keith Cota, NHDOT Chief Project Manager, have engaged with John Powell regarding the requirements and needs of the bridge to accommodate the illumination project. In the course of these discussions, the planned conventional street lighting was also evaluated and it was discovered that using LED street lighting would provide a means for the NHDOT to significantly reduce the cost for the street lighting on the bridge. The leadership of NHDOT

Commissioner Chris Clement was responsible for the decision to use LED technology for the street lighting which also significantly reduces light pollution, and his support of the illumination project was critical for that project. According to Keith Cota, "The NHDOT fully supports this community effort and action which is anticipated to benefit the business community and the public at-large on both sides of the river."

The issue of light pollution was brought to the Sub-Committee's attention by two local amateur astronomers and Dark Sky advocates, David Speltz and Bob Gillette. Both requested that there be discussion with NHDOT regarding changing the illumination from an "up lighting" option to one that "down lights" the towers, thereby reducing unnecessary light pollution into the sky. The NHDOT has agreed to this improvement to the original proposal. An additional obstacle that arose was the question of exactly how a local citizen's group would be allowed to transfer funds to a federal project. This is where the Portsmouth Historical Society (Maryellen Burke and Richard Candee) and the City of Portsmouth stepped up to offer their support to facilitate the fund-raising (and tax-deductible) effort and allow for the transfer of the funds to the NHDOT.

The Illumination Sub-Committee is now ready to begin the first phase of the fundraising effort to illuminate the new Memorial Bridge by announcing a Pledge-Raising Campaign with the goal of reaching pledges totaling \$60,000. Once this goal has been reached, the Illumination Sub-Committee will begin to collect the tax-deductible donations that are pledged, and continue to fundraise until the initial goal of \$80,000 is reached.

"We are confident that our financial goal will be achieved, not only because we are convinced of the great value to the seacoast that this project represents, but also because during the past two months dozens of individuals and groups have already indicated that they want to be part of our fundraising effort. In fact as of now, our group already has in hand pledges totaling \$8,000. We ask the residents of the seacoast to join with us in this once in a lifetime opportunity to help beautify this new bridge and create a new seacoast icon which will certainly outlive many of us here today," said Somssich.

Residents and businesses can join the Memorial Bridge Illumination Pledge-Raising effort by contacting: Rose Eppard at Eppard@usa.net. For general information about the project, please contact Peter Somssich, 34 Swett Avenue, Portsmouth, NH 03801, tel. 603-436-5221. Additional information is also available by going to the Memorial Bridge Project website at www.memorialbridgeproject.com.

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