



## **Downtown Waterfront Municipal Harbor Planning Advisory Committee Meeting**

Wednesday, October 23, 2013  
Boston City Hall, Piemonte Room

### **Attendees**

#### **Advisory Group:**

Jack Hart, Vivien Li, Lorraine Downey, Joanne Hayes-Rines, Bob Venuti, Suzanne Lavoie, Bruce Berman, Joe Gambino, Rick Dimino, Lois Siegelman, Linda Jonash, Greg Vasil, Jim Klocke, Eric White, Philip Griffiths, Bud Ris, Cassius Cash, Louis Elisa, Richard Meyer

#### **City of Boston:**

Richard McGuinness, BRA; Lauren Shurtleff, BRA; Chris Busch, BRA; Dick Mulligan, BRA; Michael Sinatra, Councilor Lamattina's Office; Kristin Abbott, Councilor Linehan's Office; Maria Puopolo, Senator Anthony Petrucelli's Office

#### **Consultant Team:**

Tom Skinner, Durand & Anastas; Matthew Littell, Utile; Meera Deean, Utile

#### **Members of the Public:**

Matt Conti, Marcell Willock, Yanni Tsipis, Chris Fincham, Tom Wooters, Rob McPherson, Ann Lagasse, Mary Holland, Pam McDermott, Rick Moore, Steven Comen, Keiko Prinie, Thomas Nally, Kitty Armstrong, Wesley Stimpson, Ronald Killian, Bill Zielowski, Ken Fields George Beal, Tom Palmer, Victor Brogna, Sy Mintz

### **Meeting Summary**

Chris Busch, BRA, opened the meeting noting the meeting would focus on open space and public realm resources in and around the planning area. He announced the Office of Coastal Zone Management issued a Notice to Proceed for the Downtown Waterfront Municipal Harbor Plan on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, which had been distributed to all the Advisory Committee members and made available on the BRA's webpage. He also referenced the first meeting of the Waterfront Activation and Programming Subcommittee on November 1<sup>st</sup> at Atlantic Wharf.

Phil Griffiths, President of the Boston Harbor Island Alliance and MHPAC Member, began his presentation with some background on the Island Alliance noting the organization serves as the non-profit partner of the National Parks organization which oversees the Harbor Islands. He indicated the Harbor Islands are comprised of 34 islands which provide a number of recreational, cultural, historic and civic opportunities just minutes from downtown Boston. He noted that there are approximately 450,000 visitors a year to the islands and summarized some of the island resources and amenities. He mentioned the Island Alliance sponsors 150 free programs a year and the Park provides numerous educational opportunities and functions as a great resource for the whole city.

Regarding the history of the Park he noted in 1970 a state park was formed which was later integrated into a National Park under the National Park Service in 1996, which includes all the islands. He indicated the National Park is managed by a partnership of 11 different agencies, which own islands or have a property interest in the Park, with the Island Alliance serving as the non-profit partner. He further noted

the organization raises private funds to help the Park Service and DCR to invest in the Park, with over \$30 million expended over the past ten years for infrastructure improvements, events and access to the islands, including over 16,000 free trips a year. He referenced additional roles the organization serves, including the management of construction projects related to the islands as well as manager of contracts for services on behalf of the park including the ferries, food vendors, retail shops. He also referenced the Harbor Islands Pavilion which opened in June 2011 and staffed by NPS and DCR rangers.

Regarding issues related to the MHP planning effort he mentioned over 85,000 people this past year utilized the Pavilion for information and ferry ticketing and with millions of people passing through the Pavilion and Greenway area during the summer months there are significant opportunities to further program the area and bring even more people to the area. He stated that getting people out to the islands is key to the Island Alliance's mission and during the ferry service season of May through October there are over 125,000 passengers heading out to the islands with numbers going up steadily at 6-8% growth a year. He noted within the planning area the bulk of visitation goes through the ferry terminal on Long Wharf north which serves Georges and Spectacle Island, with additional service to Boston Light and Little Brewster Island from Central Wharf south. He referenced the organization's Strategic Plan which looks to double ferry ridership over the next five years, requiring integrated planning on landside areas and on the islands.

Regarding future challenges he noted that ferry capacity is currently maxed out with the existing fleet of vessels and spoke of the need for a more integrated ferry and water transit system. He noted there are opportunities through the planning process to leverage mitigation to improve water transportation service, infrastructure and facilities on the island, and referenced the rehabilitation of Spectacle Island through Big Dig mitigation as a great example of directing mitigation funds for development impacts within the Downtown area to enhancing the Harbor Islands. Other challenges referenced included a lack of dedicated space along the waterfront for Harbor Island access and a specific ferry terminal; lack of a real connection between the Pavilion and the ferries at Long Wharf; the temporary nature of the ticketing kiosk and facilities at Long Wharf and the need for more permanent facilities that can accommodate storage space for bikes and bags, as well as provide shelter from the sun and weather; and improved group and bus drop off locations. Looking forward he noted the organization would like to expand access to the islands from other locations such as South Boston, Quincy, and Lynn. He closed emphasizing the importance of making the connection between downtown Boston development and the opportunities to invest in the harbor islands and incorporating this into MHP planning process.

Bruce Berman, MHPAC Member, raised the issue of ferry capacity limitations in getting people back from the islands and noted there are solutions such as running a big run vessel at the end of the day which does away with having to schedule returns upon departure. He also suggested utilizing commuter and excursion vessels in a combined way to provide service.

Jack Hart, MHPAC Chair, referenced the need to leverage mitigation options to facilitate access to the Harbor Islands. Phil Griffiths noted that there is a real opportunity now to start developing an integrated water transportation system that takes advantage of both recreational and commuter vessel needs, and shared dock space.

Bruce Berman, asked if the HARBORWALK part of the park system. Phil Griffiths stated that technically the federal government did designate the HARBORWALK and various other properties as part of the

National Park. Bruce Berman, noted the legislation allows the federal government to invest in the whole park as well which opens up the potential for millions of dollars in funds.

Lois Siegelman, MHPAC Member, mentioned the importance of other points of access to the Harbor Islands such as the Charlestown Navy Yard to allow for increased visitor numbers. Phil Griffiths, noted that that the Navy Yard is another National Park and spoke of the need to link these federal park assets.

Jack Hart, inquired as to who the typical visitor is to the Harbor Islands. Philip Griffiths noted that there are over 450,000 visitors to all of the islands, including Deer Island and Worlds End and referenced a survey conducted in 2012 which determined that 70% of visitors are from Massachusetts and 60% are repeat visitors.

Suzanne Lavoie, MHPAC Member, inquired as to the Island Alliance's funding resources. Phil Griffiths stated that the operating budget is about \$1.2 million and the Alliance manages contracts on behalf of NPS and DCR, and also conduct about \$700,000 in fundraising. A majority of the \$30 million previously referenced for island improvements came from mitigation funds associated with the gas pipeline installations in the Harbor and Mass Bay. Lorraine Downey, MHPAC Member, asked how much of the \$30 million came from the federal government. Phil Griffiths, responded that approximately \$5 million which was used for the construction of the Pavilion.

Yanni Tsipis, asked what constituencies and communities can do to support the Island Alliance. Phil Griffiths noted that individuals could become members, join in one of the organization's capital campaigns and engage in opportunities to improve public amenities and infrastructure on the islands.

Bob Venuti, MHPAC Member, raised concern with congestion along the main pedestrian thorough fair between the Marriott Hotel and Christopher Columbus Park and the need for the Advisory Committee to look at options and opportunities to facilitate pedestrian flow and wayfinding through the area.

Jesse Brackenbury, Chief Operating Officer for the Greenway Conservancy, initiated the presentation on the Greenway noting that the Conservancy functions as the non-profit steward of the Greenway and was first established in 2004 as a fundraising organization, then later formalized as the management entity to oversee maintenance, horticulture and programming of the Greenway. He stated the Conservancy is a public-private partnership and funded through government dollars, private philanthropy and some earned income and endowment funds. He referenced the Greenway as a 15-acre 1.5 mile long roof garden over the Central Artery, functioning as a mix of beautiful and complex landscape and hardscape areas. He noted the Greenway plantings are all native to New England and is the only organically maintained public park in Boston, which has proven to be more cost effective than non-organic horticultural maintenance methods. Regarding park programming, the Greenway provides over 370 free events in the park, free wi-fi throughout the park and numerous amenities such as the food trucks and the new carousel. Regarding public art within the Greenway he indicated the Conservancy recently released a five year plan for public art focusing on temporary exhibitions of contemporary art, rather than permanent installations.

Linda Jonash, Greenway Conservancy Director for Planning and Design and MHPAC Member, began noting that the Conservancy can serve as a great resource for the public realm component of the MHP as an organization that has been managing public open space for the past four years and has a sense of what works and what challenges there are relating to public open space and public amenities. She

noted the MHP public realm plan can help make sense of the whole area and integrate all the open space resources while informing individual developments. She spoke of the importance of balancing passive and quiet experiences with active use areas and the need to spread out and calibrate uses. She emphasized a number of points including, the importance of edge conditions along the margins of some of the developed areas and how these parcels figure and relate to the Greenway park parcels; the need for flexibility in groundfloor uses and public realm areas such as sidewalks which don't always have to have permanent fixtures and infrastructure to make a space work, rather by adding flexible components concepts can be tested to see what works as large gestures are not always needed to make a place. Regarding landscape, hardscape and furnishings she emphasized the importance of not making an area too homogenized or diverse as simple common elements such as the Greenway's green umbrellas can thread through and connect and identify the different park components as part of a whole. She also referenced the organic horticultural practices which have created a far more resilient and robust landscape and plantings.

Regarding lessons learned she indicated many practices need to integrate early in the planning process. With regard to programming she noted the Greenway did not have programming person at table when parks were designed to establish needed infrastructure, such as electrical service, and plan out the mix of hard and planted surfaces. She noted the importance of having someone present who has participated in public space programming to determine functionality of space and maintenance as well to help inform how places are maintained. She also referenced the integration of public and private space and the need to maximize interface and make areas welcoming, referencing Rowes Wharf and NEAq as successful examples. She closed noting the design predisposition towards vehicular traffic in the area as the Greenway is the result of a highway project, and emphasized the concept of a shared street within planning area to serve all means of access as part of the public realm.

Bud Ris, inquired as to whether it would be possible to project the numbers of anticipated visitors and pedestrians that could be expected in a future condition and what types of improvements and infrastructure is needed to avoid some of the congestions issues the Innovation District is now facing. Bruce Berman, added that it might be helpful to utilize aspirational numbers by asking business, civic and cultural entities in and around the area how many people they would like to see or anticipate in the future based upon their own strategic plans or projections. Chris Busch, indicated the consultant team would review the feasibility of developing such numbers.

Joanne Hayes-Rines, President of Friends of Christopher Columbus Park and MHPAC Member, noted that there are few similarities between FOCCP and the prior organizations which are much larger entities. She stated the organization was started when the Parks Department completed renovations on the park in 2000 with the friends group developing as an offshoot of the project. The organization is comprised of resident and area business volunteers with the mission of enhancing, improving, promoting, maintaining and utilizing the park. She provided some history on the prior park improvements and current landscape design and amenities in the park resulting from the renovations. She noted FOCCP works closely with the Parks Department and involved in horticulture, entertainment, fundraising, maintenance, communication and outreach, a lighting winter nights program, and a capital improvement project which is a current focus which relates to the planning area. She mentioned funds go to provide new trees, annual maintenance including plant fertilization, which is all based upon a horticultural plan, as well as programming which includes an Independence Day Celebration, Sunday night movies during the summer, and a Columbus Day Celebration and the trellis lighting done every year which costs approximately \$30,000. She noted there is an infrastructure committee that maintains

the tot lot, and there are numerous volunteers working on watering of the rose garden, trash pickup, and other clean up events through the year.

Regarding fund raising she noted there are several events through the year and adopt a light program for the trellis, with the main revenue sources being corporate sponsors. She also noted area residential condo associations also provide support. For outreach she referenced a website and newsletter and a bulletin board in the park. She mentioned a current capital improvement project specific to a planter circle adjacent to Long Wharf, which has no irrigation and three struggling trees. To improve the area and the park the organization would like to expand pervious, vegetated space to make it more welcoming and provide some shade. She noted the organization has been working with the City Parks Department to develop a budget and vision to develop an 'urban oasis' with irrigated and electrical service. FOCCP has applied for grants and have a landscape architect involved to design the project which has a budget of \$225,000 which will require additional fund raising. She closed noting they are looking to break ground in the Spring 2014 on the project.

Bud Ris, inquired as to how the new landscape feature can be accommodated with the improvements planned at the Marriott Hotel and access to the waterfront. Joanne Hayes-Rines, noted that the project site is well outside of the Marriott's property line and the intent of the project is to maintain pedestrian flow through the area.

Jack Hart, asked what the city is doing to maintain the park. Joanne Hayes Rines, responded that the City maintains all the hardscape, lighting, infrastructure and turf areas. She noted that there are actually other parks in the city in greater need of resources and it is understandable that the Parks Department has resources focused on other areas.

Chris Finsham, Wharf District Council, stressed the need for improved signage in the whole area.

Harbor Towers Resident, referenced the importance of considering the residential populations in the area in the context of programming for the area, and specific concerns regarding noise pollution in the area.

Chris Busch concluded, referencing the next MHPAC Meeting on November 20<sup>th</sup> and first meeting of the Waterfront Activation and Programming Subcommittee on November 1<sup>st</sup> at Atlantic Wharf.

Meeting adjourned at 3:50 p.m.