



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

Wednesday, February 26, 2014  
Atlantic Wharf, 290 Congress Street

**Attendees**

**Advisory Group:**

Janean Hansen, Phil Griffiths, Vivien Li, Bruce Berman, Meredith Rosenberg, Lois Siegelman, Joanne Hayes-Rines, Greg Vasil

**City of Boston:**

Richard McGuinness, BRA; Lauren Shurtleff, BRA; Chris Busch, BRA; Michael Sinatra, Councilor LaMattina's Office;

**Consultant Team:**

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

**Government Representatives:**

Valerie Gingrich, CZM; Ronald Killian, MassDOT

**Members of the Public:**

M. Willock, Barbara Yanke, Julie Marino, Gisele Gagnon, Conrad Ganon, Robert Stricker, Arthur Lyman, Dian Rubin, Al Raine, Bill Zielinski, Maria Peters, Chris Fincham, Thomas Nally, Kanan Alhassani, Jim Duffey, Tamara Roy, Steve Mitchell, Ann Lagasse, Victor Brogna, David Kubiak, Rob Cardad, Don Chiofaro Jr., Laura Jasinski, Sy Mintz, Carolyn Spicer, M. Holland, Gary Mendoza, Rita Advani, E. Murray, S. Brill, K. Prince

**Meeting Summary**

Chris Busch, BRA, opened the meeting and noted the BRA is still updating the new administration on the Downtown Waterfront Municipal Harbor Planning effort and provided a summary of the planning process to date. He noted today's meeting would focus on a review of the draft Public Realm Plan and Watersheet Activation Plan which embodies the planning principles outlined in the Notice to Proceed filed with the state and functions to organize many of the activation and programming concepts raised in the public charrettes and workshops held last year. He also mentioned there would also be a review the basics on Chapter 91 and the mechanics of municipal harbor planning.

Matthew Little, Utile, provided a general overview of the Public Realm and Watersheet Activation Plan and process related to its review. He reviewed the nature and extent of open space resources in and around the planning area and noted the plan endeavors to refine and find ways to make those spaces better, more legible and easier to get to. He noted the plan documents many of the uses in the area, seasonal and otherwise, and provides some counts and metrics on what attractions are drawing people to the waterfront and how individuals are accessing and moving through the planning area. He also referenced the broad themes of the plan, noting that the planning area already includes a number of attractions and a finite amount of public realm assets, so the document focuses on how to maximize and

improve the uses we already have and maximize their use. He then touched on ways of organizing and managing open space more effectively and accomplishing the plan's goals and how to and make the public realm more legible and increasing activation of public spaces along the Greenway and waterfront. The organizational frame work of the plan was also discussed including the topics connectivity, legibility, and activation and programming, and the spatial template for the plan including the general areas of the Northern Avenue gateway, Rowes Wharf and India Row, Central Wharf and Long Wharf, and the watershed area. The uses and primary activation topics that related to each of the areas was also covered as well as primary connections to adjoining areas. The document also reviews how the plan components may be implemented in the future through private development and regulatory permitting. He also noted that the plan is focused on developing a wish list this is part of a larger Chapter 91 strategy and input and comment on the plan that is specific would be the most helpful in developing the final version.

Vivien Li, MHPAC Member, stated that the draft plan provides a good summary of the findings from the charrettes and the planning process over the past ten months, but expressed interest in seeing more detail in the plan, including a synthesis of the prior presentations from the developers. She referenced a number of existing facilities and amenities mentioned during the planning area property discussions that are not being fully utilized and activated. She provided examples of Rowes Wharf and the gazebo and water transportation terminal at the location, as well as the sculpture and planned landscape improvements at Harbor Towers, which could be enhanced and more fully integrated into the plan. She expressed an interest in having the plan provide recommendations on how existing assets and public amenities can be enhanced to have their potential fully realized and develop a more ambitious effort that brings the Downtown Waterfront into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. She also reference d the aspect of the plan specific to the watershed and noted it also needs to be built upon and provide greater detail on amenities on the water.

Bruce Berman, MHPAC Member, seconded Vivien's sentiment that that the draft plan does not fully capture all of the planning work completed to date. He noted much of the work the property owners and developers have done and are planning is not reflected in the plan. He expressed an interest in having the document be more ambitious and is concerned that in translating the amenities and improvements in the current plan into substitutions and offset that it does not go far enough and will box in and limit the potential of public improvements and enhancement for the waterfront. He noted the benefits need to be more extensive and are currently not proportional in time, duration and extent related to the potential development programs planned for the area.

Tom Skinner, Durand and Anastas, provided a refresher on the applicable Chapter 91 performance standards related to harbor planning, as well as the terms and elements that go into the development of a MHP. He began with reviewing the public interest and water dependent use priorities framed in Chapter 91 and the eight dimensional standards in the regulations that facilitate those objectives and how the MHP process allows for communities to alter and tailor those standards to meet local planning goals. He summarized the City's objectives for the planning effort, which are referenced in the Notice to Proceed filed with the state last August, and also framed in the Public Realm and Waterfront Activation Plan. The dimensional standards specific to the planning area and the anticipated development parcels were also covered. He clarified that the offset provisions are not termed as variances as there is a specific variance process under Chapter 91 that is not related to the MHP standards or process, although the MHP acts similar to a variance process. Regarding offsets he noted that they must mitigate to a

comparable or greater degree the impact of a substitution upon the public's interests in state tidelands. He then provided a number of examples of prior harbor plans and related substitution-offset programs and spoke of how each neighborhood and waterfront is unique and requires different approaches to the substitution, offset and amplification MHP framework.

Tom Palmer, noted that prior to the discussion of offsets a determination needs to be made that additional height and density is appropriate and desirable and inquired as to how that decision is developed. Richard McGuinness, BRA, noted that it is a contextual discussion that involves the surrounding built area and density and provided some examples of projects and buildings related to previous MHP's. He noted that wind and shadow from proposed building volumes need to be reviewed as they relate to impacts upon the public realm and the Chapter 91 performance standards. Bruce Berman stated that there is a lot of passion and thought that goes into height and density decisions and they are political as well and advised that the process be as transparent as possible.

Vivien Li inquired as to the height standards under Chapter 91. Tom Skinner responded that within 100 feet of the limit is 55-feet and beyond that limit height may increase by a foot for every two feet further landward from the 100-foot limit. He further clarified that the height limit applies throughout the Downtown Waterfront planning area as it is all subject to Chapter 91 jurisdiction. He also indicated that the consultants would be providing their recommendations to for the MHP to the City and Advisory Committee at a meeting in the spring.

Tom Skinner then discussed amplifications under Chapter 91 which apply to the discretionary standards within the regulations which are non-numeric or quantitative. He provided some examples of how amplifications define the discretionary standards with greater specificity noting in the Fort Point Channel the waterfront activation standards were developed into requirements for water transportation and the installation of docks. Bruce Berman asked if amplifications could occur off of the property subject to licensing. Tom responded that the MHP needs to be as clear as possible and ensure that amplifications are specific and enforceable so that they may incorporated into a license, so amplifications that are general in nature or not specific to the planning area could be problematic. He then covered the approval standards that the state will use when reviewing the MHP submitted by the City.

Vivien Li asked how long it will take to submit the plan to the state and how long will the state take to for their review the plan. Tom Skinner responded that we hope to a plan submitted under the Patrick Administration.

Sy Mintz, noted that he helped develop the original urban renewal plan for the Downtown Waterfront which is now fifty years old. He stated the waterfront has changed dramatically over the years for the better, however, he echoed Vivien's statement that the area needs to be brought into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the planning effort should seize on the current opportunity and not feel boxed in by what is currently in place. He made specific reference to options for building out new piers, improvements to the parking area behind the Chart House, and an emphasis on an active mix of uses in the planning area to increase the level of activity. He also expressed concern over the lack of Advisory Committee members present for the meetings, and exhorted the BRA and Advisory Committee to think boldly in the development of the plant to create a great waterfront.

David Kubiak, noted that he was confused with the lack of progress on the Public Realm and Watersheet Activation Plan, and expressed concerned with the primary purpose of Chapter 91 being water dependent uses, however, the number one objective of planning effort was residential and commercial uses. Chris Busch, interjected that it was a component of an objective, not prioritized as the primary goal of the planning initiative. David Kubiak also noted his concern with the lack of discussion on the amount of open space that is needed as well as destination open spaces to attract the public. He finally indicated that there has been a lack of process and noted the BRA should open the planning effort more to the public.

Tom Nally, ABC, stated that there should be additional working sessions to further develop the plan and add more specifics.

Tamara Roy, ADD Inc., indicated that the goals of the draft plan are too intellectual, with terms such as legibility and connectivity, and recommended the plan should be more aspirational and discuss more of the vision that had come from the charrettes with more references to fun, accessible and interesting activities that change along the waterfront. She noted it would be helpful to see more data on how height and density effect activation, referencing the Atlantic Wharf property which was lacking in activity prior to the redevelopment, to help push the dialogue along.

Richard McGuinness, noted that more detail could be outlined in the plan which is a vision for future years. He indicated the Walsh Administration is being updated on the Advisory Committee and additional members or new members will be discussed to garner more participation.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 4:50 p.m.