

**Boston Harbor Islands Partnership  
Meeting Minutes  
Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr LLP  
60 State Street, 26<sup>th</sup> floor, Boston, MA  
February 15, 2005, 3:00 PM – 4:50 PM**

**Attendees:** Linda Haar—Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA); Cathy Douglas Stone—City of Boston, Department of Environmental Services; Karl Pastore—Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR); Tom Powers—Island Alliance (IA); Marianne Connolly for Fred Laskey—Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA); George Price—National Park Service (NPS); Jim Scully—Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center (TIOBEC); Cmd. John O'Connor—United States Coast Guard (USCG).

Cathy Douglas Stone, Vice-chair, called the meeting to order.

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the meeting held on January 18, 2005, with a correction to the attendees list. Cmd. John O'Conner was the USCG representative. **The motion was unanimously approved.**

## **Park Updates**

### NPS

George Price reported that there is some good news for the 2005 budget for the NPS office. After early projections showed the possibility of as much as a \$90k shortfall for the office, the park did not incur a shortfall, and actually received additional funds. The increase is for this year only, and will support the seasonal ranger program and community stewardship activities.

George announced that he has been assigned to Cape Cod National Seashore, and will be leaving at the end of the month. He will be Acting Superintendent there, and Bruce Jacobson will be Acting Superintendent here. At this point, the assignment is temporary, but it could become permanent. There is a send-off for George on February 24.

### DCR

George Price stated that Kathy Abbott was asked to resign as Commissioner of DCR, and he believed that it was a great loss to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the parks system and the Boston Harbor Islands. He reminded all to continue to be supportive of the DCR employees with whom we work closely. There is a good deal of re-organizing stress just with the merger of the former DEM and MDC, and a change of commissioner will be an additional challenge. It is important to keep on track and move forward as the summer season approaches. Many people involved with the park have already met with Acting Commissioner Stephen Prichard. He has been very receptive and supportive of the islands.

Karl Pastore, Acting Regional Director, reported that Allan Morris, Acting District Manager, will run the district that includes the islands. Karl said that a contract is in place for the septic system project on Georges Island. Work will begin on April 30, and continue throughout the season, with the least disruption as possible. The leak in the

water line to Georges Island was located and is in the deepest part of the channel; there are plans to repair it in time for the upcoming season. Karl also reported that DCR has allocated \$100k for the park-wide sign project. They will produce dock identification, island welcome and orientation signs for all of the DCR islands accessible by ferry. Marianne Connolly and Bruce Jacobson are assisting the effort.

Tom Powers said that the utility feasibility study for Peddocks Island is complete. The proposal to install a utilities micro-tunnel from Hull with water, sewer and communications lines, as well as to restore the guardhouse and transform it into a visitor center turned out to be more expensive than originally thought. The micro-tunnel will take the majority of the available \$5M. The Island Alliance Board of Directors explored other options that would still provide utilities and provide more visible improvements for visitors. But, it became clear that the operating costs of providing utilities would be so high, that it was not a sensible thing to do. They plan to move ahead with the construction of the micro-tunnel and are working to obtain the required permits.

### **Water Transportation**

George Price reminded all that that deficit for the water shuttle for the 2004 season is around \$36k, which still needs to be resolved. He introduced Bill Walker from Harbor Express to talking about planning for the upcoming season.

Bill Walker said that one of the most significant issues last year, was boat capacity in the summer. He has been working with the DCR, NPS, and Island Alliance on a variety of options. Bill said that they are currently focusing on having two new boats built that will be dedicated to serve the islands. They will be fast, bow-loading catamarans, seating 200 and will be available for use July 15, 2005. With these two boats in service, there would be regular half-hour departures from the mainland to Georges. During the time between late June and the date the boats come into service, they plan to charter additional boats to cover needs. Tom Powers added that this would be a significant investment and risk for Harbor Express, and they have requested an extension of the contract beyond the current 5-year term to support their investment.

Cathy Douglas Stone asked if Spectacle Island was included in the transportation planning. Tom said that they are working with DCR and the City of Boston to obtain money for water transportation to Spectacle Island. Marianne Connolly asked if Island Alliance will continue to hold the water transportation contract or if it will be transferred back to the state. George said that since the reason for the transfer the contract from the state to Island Alliance on behalf of the Partnership, was that there is a possibility of it becoming a revenue generator.

### **Increasing Visitation**

Bruce Jacobson, NPS, reminded all of the suggestion to alternate business meetings with workshops. The intention of the holding workshops is to move away from simple report-outs and engage the Partners in "problem-solving" discussion. The first one will be today.

Larissa Fawcner and Kelly Fellner gave a PowerPoint presentation on Marketing and Visitation (An amended version of the presentation is attached; it changes the notation about the 2003 total visitation regarding Long and Thomson islands.)

The Partners discussed the drop in park visitation, the possible causes, and how to raise visitation both short-term and long-term. They offered suggestions to reduce marketing costs. Partners also suggested new groups of people to target. Cathy Douglas Stone requested that the B.E.A.N. program participants give their thoughts on what they would like to see offered on the islands. There was an idea to auction off the naming of the new boats. The discussion will continue at the next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:55 PM.