

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

**Attendees:** Marianne Farrington—Boston Harbor Islands Advisory Council; 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); Terry Savage and Bruce Jacobson—National Park Service (NPS).

Cathy Douglas Stone, Vice-chair, called the meeting to order. There was a motion to approve the minutes of the February 15 meeting. **The motion was unanimously approved.**

### **Report from DCR**

Karl Pastore reported that DCR is working to coordinate the capital improvement projects on Georges Island with public access during the upcoming season. Partnership staff took a trip out to Georges to choose event venues for the coming year that will be away from the construction zone. He also said that the seasonal hiring process has begun, and they expect the islands to be fully staffed for the season. Two DCR seasonal rangers are currently stationed at the Partnership Office working on educational programming and other projects in preparation for the upcoming season.

### **Water Transportation**

Tom Powers reminded all of the water transportation issues that were described at the February meeting. A central issue was the passenger capacity of the current ferries. Harbor Express has proposed purchasing two new catamarans that will be available for use in July of this year to raise capacity and move visitors more effectively. Because of the significant cost and risk for Harbor Express, an extension of the contract beyond the current 5-year term was requested to support and justify their investment. Tom reported that Island Alliance sent out a “request for expressions of interest” to over 70 local and regional boat operators for a 10-year water transportation contract servicing the islands. The deadline for response was at the end of the day, and so far Island Alliance has only received one response, from Harbor Express. No other interest was expressed. Tom asked that the Partners endorse the Island Alliance moving forward with the contract with Harbor Express for a 10-year period. Tom mentioned that the contract terms would be almost identical to the current contract other than time period and include a 5-year “without cause” cancellation clause. The Partners discussed, and indicated their general support.

### **Increasing Visitation**

Bruce Jacobson reminded all that there was a report given at the February meeting regarding park visitation and statistics. The report generated many questions about the visitation statistics. He reminded all that the Partnership adopted a “Visitor Tracking and Reporting System” in January 2003. The plan includes procedures for the Partners to follow to submit visitation data in a way that is consistent with the system. The

agencies really have not adhered to the system, nor used the supplied forms to submit data. The data comes in many different formats and without much of the required information. Therefore, consistency is lost, and the data becomes very difficult to compile in a meaningful way, similar to trying to compare apples and oranges. Bruce encouraged Partners to use the system.

As requested at the February meeting, students from the B.E.A.N. Program (Boston Environmental Ambassadors to National Parks) were present. The students reported on their activities which raise awareness of the park, as well offered ideas that would raise visitation to the park by their peer group.

The students described different games that they developed and have used at different after school programs which teach the history of the islands. They also are in charge of a grant program; B.E.A.N participants review proposals from other youth groups and issue mini-grants that fund the costs of getting to the islands. The B.E.A.N. students are scheduled to staff a table at Earthfest for the islands this April and plan to host a raffle again, giving away two ferry tickets. One of their ideas for increasing visitation was to set up a tent and information station at grocery stores, book stores and music stores to get the word out about visiting the islands. Other ideas included getting the World Series and Super bowl trophies out to Georges Island, hosting laser tag events, fishing trips, scavenger hunts or tours, and offering guided or self-guided tours. They said that they hoped the family activities would help parents spend more time with their kids and help families grow closer together. They thought the best way to attract their peers to the islands was by hosting a dance cruise in the evening. Partners offered their assistance, and invited them back to demonstrate the games they have created. The students asked for their assistance getting a boat for a dance cruise.

The Partners asked the students what they liked about the islands. The students responded that it was nice to get away from the city and that the islands were not too crowded. They liked the scenery and beaches and the fact that you could roam freely, hang out and feel safe. The Partners discussed other marketing ideas and groups to target, like families visiting Boston for college orientation.

### **Advisory Council**

Marianne Farrington reported that the annual meeting of the Advisory Council was held on March 2. Ted Elliman was the speaker and talked about invasive plants on the islands. The next meeting will be held on June 1; she will check the Aquarium for room availability. Bruce reported that Pat Morss was elected Chair, Claudia Smith-Reid was elected Vice-chair and new members were nominated for the interest groups. The Partnership representatives from the Council will remain the same.

### **Public Comments**

Steve Marcus, Friends of the Boston Harbor Islands, announced a presentation about Deer Island on March 28 at the Boston Public Library. He also said that the Friends cruise schedule for the season is set, and invited all to pick up a copy.

Karen O'Donnell, Friends of the Boston Harbor Islands, said that that the public art project on Spectacle Island is moving forward and that they have a pool of very talented artists. Hopefully a presentation will be ready in April with models of proposed

structures. They are also working on obtaining funding for the art through the Edward Ingersoll Browne Trust Fund. The Partners offered to write letters of support if detailed information was given to them.

Bruce Jacobson reported that the \$2.25M in the federal transportation bill for ADA floats is now in an NPS account. There is also \$300k for a Long Island dock in the bill. Six floating docks were delivered to DCR last year in a prior phase of this project. A sign project is underway for the DCR islands. Match money is still needed to fund it.

### **Future Meetings**

The April 19 workshop will be a workshop on water transportation.

The May 17 meeting will be held at the Boston Redevelopment Authority and topics will include a discussion about holding an All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory of the park.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 PM.