

**Boston Harbor Islands Partnership  
Meeting Minutes  
WilmerHale, 60 State Street, 26<sup>th</sup> Floor, Boston, MA  
January 15, 2008, 3:00 PM – 4:30 PM**

**Attendees:** Maureen Cavanaugh, Bill Hale and Charlie Norris—Boston Harbor Islands Advisory Council; Jim Hunt—Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA); Marianne Connolly for Fred Laskey—Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA); Bruce Jacobson—National Park Service (NPS); Arthur Pearson and Jim Scully—Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center; CDR Fred Myer—United States Coast Guard (USCG).

Jim Hunt, Vice-chair, called the meeting to order and Partners were introduced. There was a motion to accept the minutes from the November 20, 2007 meeting. **The motion was unanimously approved.**

### **Park Marketing Strategy**

Carol Thistle, Island Alliance Marketing Director, introduced herself to the group. She had several years of experience in marketing. Most recently, she worked as the Tourism Director for the City of Salem prior to that worked for the Boston Museum of Science.

Carol reminded the group Island Alliance received a grant to develop a branding strategy for the park. Corey McPherson Nash (CMN) was awarded the contract in late August. In September, CMN met with the Marketing Committee, and interviewed 30 people involved in the Partnership. CMN reported recommendations for marketing strategy, and a creative strategy was prepared. Carol gave a presentation; the point of the strategy was to create an overall look and feel of the Harbor Islands to attract more visitors, both residents and tourists. Key design concepts included using close-ups of people having fun, mixing graphics and photos, and connecting the visuals used for advertising with the park's website. She also presented five different slogans and asked for comments. The partners discussed.

The slogan "*Minutes Away, Worlds Apart*" was well received. Partners commented on a few aspects of the graphics, but were supportive of the concept. Partners did stress the graphics need to match guiding principles of CMN's previous recommendations and should reflect the diversity of different neighborhoods. Marianne Connolly offered photos for the project from MWRA, and Jim Hunt offered some from the City of Boston.

### **Operations Committee**

Jim Scully said the Subcommittee on Water Transportation presented a proposed fare increase. Harbor Express is proposing fares for 2008 as follows: \$14 for adults; \$10 for students and seniors; and \$8 for children. In addition, there would be a \$3-5 charge for the interisland shuttle. The increase was mostly due to rising fuel costs. The Operations Committee was reluctant to endorse at this time, and would like more time to review. Carrie Zeisse, Island Alliance Business Development Director, said support for vendors in the park is a way to invest for future growth—they should not be expected to operate at a loss. She has requested a formal financial report from Harbor Express; the Operations Committee has been working with estimates. Mike McGurl added information about how expensive the water shuttle system was to operate.

Improvements to the water transportation system were also discussed. In 2008, the season will be extended; ferries will operate May 3 to November 2. Passenger capacity will be raised for the interisland shuttles; two new 74 passenger boats will be operated by Harbor Express. A new ticketing system will be implemented including offering ticket sales online and timed tickets. There will be a new ticket kiosk on Long Wharf, and more personnel to staff it. Hingham will be added as a departure point, giving easier access to Grape and Bumpkin islands. Harbor Express will also staff the dock on Georges and Spectacle Islands to assist visitors with the boats. The partners discussed.

There was a question about collecting fees from charter groups to support the water transportation system. Island Alliance tried to collect last year, but only Harbor Express responded to the request. At this time, DCR has an inability to collect fees, but the idea may be revisited with the agency's lawyers.

Jim Hunt asked if anyone had done a market assessment, concerned higher prices may be a barrier to enter the park. Bob Durand, Durand & Anastas Environmental Strategies, responded by comparing costs of other local attractions; whale watches and duck tours were double or more than the proposed cost of the ferry, and entry into the New England Aquarium and Museum of Science were both more expensive. He said, it seemed even with the increase it remained a very good value. Kristen Wyman, Island Alliance, commented prices were being compared to private enterprise and museums and not to entrance fees to publicly-owned parks. She was concerned the Island Ambassadors are doing outreach to local communities, but many of the households, especially those with many children may not be able to afford to visit. Bruce Jacobson added information about other boat services used by national parks. Though difficult to compare directly because of distance traveled and schedule differences, all were more expensive than our ferry service, some considerably so.

Tom Powers said Island Alliance is committed to providing subsidized access to underserved communities. Last year, over 3,000 students were brought out for free on curriculum-based programs, hundreds of youth were brought out through the Junior Ranger program, and 100 tickets a day were available for non-profit groups on weekdays in July and August. The group discussed other discount possibilities, coupons, season passes and guest passes. Raising the fare would give Harbor Express more flexibility to consider discounted rates. Suzanne Gall Marsh asked for specifics of interisland shuttle as it was a substantial change. She also inquired about discounts for members of the Volunteers and Friends of the Boston Harbor Islands.

### **Education Committee**

Bruce Jacobson said the Education Committee and the National Park Service has recognized the changing use of electronic media, and has been exploring educational opportunities through the use of the internet, videos, YouTube, and handhelds. He announced the park, specifically, Kelly Fellner, Dan Knapp, and Kristen Wyman received a national NPS award for the Native American oral history DVD and accompanying curriculum "*Living in Two Worlds*". Bruce presented the award to Kristen Wyman. He also showed a video clip from the film to the group.

### **Advisory Council**

Maureen Cavanaugh announced the Advisory Council will hold a workshop on January 16<sup>th</sup>; and the annual meeting will be held at University of Massachusetts–Boston on March 5.

### **Public Comment**

There was no additional public comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 PM.