

**Boston Harbor Islands Partnership
Meeting Minutes
WilmerHale, 60 State Street, 26th Floor, Boston, MA
September 16, 2008, 3:00 PM – 4:30 PM**

Attendees: Maureen Cavanaugh, Bill Hale, Greg Ketchen and Charlie Norris—Boston Harbor Islands Advisory Council; Tom Powers—Boston Harbor Island Alliance; Jim Hunt—Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA); David Cash, Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs for Secretary Ian Bowles and Marianne Connolly—Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA); Susan Kane and Karl Pastore—Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR); Jim Doolin—Massachusetts Port Authority (MASSPORT); Bruce Jacobson and Terry Savage—National Park Service (NPS); Peg Wheeler—The Trustees of Reservations (TTOR); Arthur Pearson—Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center; CDR William Kelly—United States Coast Guard (USCG)

Jim Hunt, Vice-chair, called the meeting to order and introduced David Cash, Assistant Secretary for Policy, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs. There was a motion to accept the minutes from the May 20, 2008 meeting. **The motion was unanimously approved.**

Priorities Working Group

Jim Doolin said a working group of Partners met to examine how the Partnership functions and discuss ways to work together more effectively. He relayed the group's recommendations. The first was for the Planning Committee to continue development of a strategic plan with an end date of 2016. Bruce Jacobson added that the working group reviewed and endorsed five themes for the strategic plan: stewardship, environmental leadership, recreational experience, education, and professional excellence. Jim said water transportation emerged as a high priority because dependable, safe water transportation has an effect on all of these themes. The working group's second recommendation was for water transportation infrastructure and operations to become an over-arching priority of the Partnership in the coming years. Establishing an official Long Wharf Gateway, adding additional boat capacity, and obtaining permanent subsidy for interisland shuttle and educational field trips were mentioned as particular issues on which to work.

The Partners discussed. There was general agreement that water transportation was an appropriate topic to rally efforts around. Massport offered to reformat the boat schedule.

The timeline for the development of the strategic plan was discussed. The Planning Committee has reviewed the draft plan which contains about 10 goals under each theme. Work will continue on the draft plan through October and November and should be ready for public comment in December, and could be finalized by the Partnership in January. There was a suggestion to include a "green" energy initiative. There was a question asked about how the priority list the Advisory Council recently prepared fits into this strategic plan. Bruce Jacobson responded that it was considered, as was the Council's analysis of the first strategic plan. The draft 2016 strategic plan will be part of the discussion at the December meeting of the Advisory Council.

There was a motion made for the Partnership to endorse the recommendations of the working group. Specifically, for the Planning Committee to move forward with the 2016 Strategic Plan

and to make water transportation infrastructure and operations the priority of the Partnership. **The motion was unanimously approved.**

Boston Harbor Transportation Planning

Ben Lasley, Save the Harbor/Save the Bay (SHSB), reported on a new initiative of the organization, "Boston by Boat". He explained the effort is to assess water transportation services in Boston Harbor and to promote commercial and recreational use. Ben said SHSB reached out to more than 100 stakeholders including harbor residents, policy makers, and boat operators to get their perspectives. Results were shared at a summit in May. Ben noted a common concern regarding a general lack of basic information about available services. Other concerns focused on infrastructure shortcomings, and operational challenges. Data was collected about existing passenger vessel services, ridership and rider demographics. Ben said that from the estimates developed, there seems to be great growth potential. Next steps are to research how to turn this potential into ridership. Bruce Jacobson asked if specific outcomes were available, if an economic analysis was done, or if they collected data on boat capacities and how well vessels are currently utilized. Ben passed out the interim report; a comprehensive on-line listing of services is available on www.bostonbyboat.com.

Charlie Norris, The Boston Harbor Association (TBHA), said TBHA launched a multi-year Water Transportation Initiative to promote a robust water transportation network for Boston Harbor. He reported TBHA is hosting a series of panel discussions with experts in the field to tackle issues such as: management and funding structures; infrastructure of docks, vessels and landside facilities; and environmental technology issues. The next meetings will be held on September 25 and October 6. They expect to subsequently release white papers that address technical, market-based, economic, and mobility aspects related to water transportation. Charlie was asked to comment on how Boston's water transportation system compares to that of other cities and particularly to comment on the system for Boston Harbor Islands. Charlie said there are many models out there, and each unique because of many factors, such as climate, distances traveled, population, type of water bodies, etc. Some local boat operations, like whale watches and cruises, are doing very well. Charlie said that because the park relies on frequent, steady service, he suggested integrating the park into public transportation systems, and have charters as support to provide long-term sustainability. He offered to relay park initiatives to the panel and any questions the Partners may have.

Bruce Jacobson reminded all that NPS is looking for more federal transit funding; recent funding received includes \$1M for harbor pavilion planning and \$100k for the Georges Island pier. He said the NPS regional office has launched a transportation planning effort to connect parks from Maine to Virginia, with a focus on alternative modes of transportation, and that Partners would be asked to provide input into the NPS planning effort.

Preliminary review of 2008 Seasonal Operations

Tom Powers reported that ferry ridership was up slightly from last year at this time. He said that overall, the water transportation system improved from last year. Dedicated boats went to Georges and Spectacle and two higher-capacity water shuttle boats were put into service. Issues were summarized in the September Operations Committee notes contained in the meeting packet. Tom did note that he did not receive many complaints about the higher rates and charge for the shuttle.

Tom said weekend events were very well received and thanked DCR for all their efforts making those programs a success. He said that the agencies are working together better each year.

He reminded all that the events are not over, the Regatta is later this month and Halloween on the Harbor returns the weekend before Halloween. Bruce Jacobson said the youth programs—Native American youth Summer Institute, Island Pass and summer work crews—were very successful. He said the marketing this year was a huge contribution to success. Susan Kane mentioned the kayak program was not as popular on Spectacle as expected for a variety of reasons, though the free kayak program on Grape was very popular.

Bruce Jacobson said the marketing this year likely contributed to the success of the season. Tom Powers mentioned the banners on the Northern Avenue Bridge offered great visibility for the park this year.

Advisory Council

Maureen Cavanaugh said the Advisory Council has been taking a look at how it functions and improvements that can be made. They have started an effort to enhance membership, improve communications about partnership issues and perhaps create a steering committee to drive the process. The next quarterly meeting will be held on December 3. The council is also hosting a Georges Island Pier scoping session on November 19.

Public Comment

An upcoming MBTA public hearing was announced, partners were encouraged to go and comment as cuts to water transportation are expected. Bill Walker said one of the cuts was expected be to the commuter run from the South Shore to Logan Airport. At this point, he expected the future Quincy to Boston run to be similar to last year.

Greg Ketchen reminded all that the tri-centennial of Boston Light Station is coming up in 2016, the same year as the Park Service centennial and 20th anniversary of the park.

Bruce Jacobson introduced a new NPS staff member, Richard Armenia, Partnership Specialist. He will work on the administrative aspects of partnerships with NPS; for example he will be the contact for cooperative agreements.

Steve Marcus announced upcoming cruises the Volunteers and Friends of the Boston Harbor Islands are hosting.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 PM.