

Boston Harbor Islands Partnership
Meeting Minutes
WilmerHale, 60 State Street, 26th Floor, Boston, MA
July 20, 2010, 3:00 PM – 4:30 PM

Attendees: Maureen Cavanaugh, Greg Ketchen, and Charles Norris—Boston Harbor Islands Advisory Council; Tom Powers—Boston Harbor Island Alliance (BHIA); Richard McGuinness—Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA); David Cash and Susan Kane—Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR); Marianne Connolly—Massachusetts Water Resources Authority; Bruce Jacobson—National Park Service (NPS); Peg Wheeler—The Trustees of Reservations; Bill Dowd for Arthur Pearson—Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center (TIOBEC); Nathan Knapp—United States Coast Guard (USCG).

David Cash, Chair, welcomed all and called the meeting to order. Partners were introduced. The minutes from the May 18, 2010, meeting of the Partnership were approved.

Climate Friendly Parks

Marc Albert, NPS, reported the park is applying to become a “Climate Friendly Park”. Climate Friendly Parks is a NPS program that is part of a government-wide effort to understand and respond to climate change. Participating parks are tasked to develop a carbon emissions inventory and complete an action plan to reduce emissions. Marc recognized Bill Green for his contributions of volunteer time working on the program. He introduced Meredith Eustis, Park Intern, who reported on the progress so far (presentation attached). Draft baseline inventories were developed for DCR, TIOBEC and NPS/BHIA using 2008 data. Meredith presented a data summary and noted other partners will be added as the project progresses. She stated the park vision to become the first “carbon-neutral” park. Meredith distributed a “top 20” list of proposed actions toward the goal for review (attached). She described recent completed actions and improvements made toward the goal. The Partners discussed.

Bruce Jacobson said that although the impact of reducing our carbon emissions is admittedly small when looking on a global scale, the park can make a much larger impact with messaging about the issue. It will strengthen the message if the park is a good model, so it is important to do whatever we can. David Cash added that he would like to see the production of green energy added in as part of the solution. Partners were supportive of the initiative and David Cash offered space at Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs for an intern for the length of the project.

The group noted that water transportation was by far the biggest contributor of carbon emissions and discussed options to lower them. It was mentioned that biodiesel technology, though controversial, is changing rapidly and may warrant a second look. Charlie Norris said California is way ahead of the other states in converting to more energy efficient engines, and fuels for transportation. He noted that using these new technologies for park water transportation would likely have a direct impact of raising the ferry ticket price. Partners discussed the desire to invite the public into the discussion at both the student and broader public level. Vivien Li, The Boston Harbor Association (TBHA), suggested that since 63% of emissions totaled so far came from mobile sources, that partners consult with Massport.

Greg Ketchen added the islands are a great location to demonstrate cutting-edge technologies, perhaps harnessing wave/tidal energy or converting salt water to fresh. Pat Morss, Advisory Council, remarked on improvements made at Ellis Island, including use of geothermal heating and cooling, recycling, composting and upgrades to ferries. Susan Kane mentioned ways Jasper White, food vendor on Spectacle and Georges Islands, is taking steps to become more environmentally friendly. David Cash will follow up with Susan about developing public information displays for Georges Island improvements that might include those efforts.

Vivien Li added that adaptation is the most effective response to climate change and decisions about what or where to build, or what to protect, should always be considered in the context of climate change. Marc Albert mentioned Boston Harbor Islands is one of 10 parks using GIS elevation markers to detect changes to elevation in the park. This technology can help identify which resources are most at risk to sea level rise.

Celebrating 2016

Bruce Jacobson opened a brainstorming session about the possibility of the park hosting a celebration in 2016. He reminded all of the significance of the year 2016: It marks the 20th anniversary for Boston Harbor Islands national park; the centennial of the National Park Service; and the tercentennial of Boston Light. He passed out two handouts containing information about the 300-year history of Boston Harbor navigational beacons and the 55 years of the use of Harbor Islands as parkland. Partners asked if there was a possibility of federal funding; Bruce responded a funding source has not yet been identified. David Cash suggested that Boston Harbor Island Alliance use the anniversary as a tool to raise significant funds for park projects. Tom Powers said it is challenging to fundraise for events, and that it was a good idea to put forward to the BHIA board. The partners brainstorming session included the following ideas:

- Work with other national parks that are linked by water—Adams NHP, Salem NHS, and Boston NHP.
- Host special events all year long during 2016. Each month could have a different theme.
- Tall Ships
- Fireworks
- Summer events “50 free things” could all be focused thematically
- Re-open an island (Gallops, Rainsford, Calf, or Great Brewster) or showcase improvements on Peddocks
- High profile concert on Georges Island
- Incorporate national initiatives like “Get out, Get Moving”, “Let’s Move”, “Great Outdoors”
- Engage young professionals
- Major art exhibit

The Partners suggested getting input from the public about what they would like to see. The Advisory Council was asked if the topic could be included in their next meeting.

Advisory Council

Maureen Cavanaugh said the Advisory Council held a meeting on June 2. Susan Kane gave a presentation on Georges Island improvements, Rebecca Smerling, BHIA, gave a presentation on summer events and the council continued public outreach efforts. The next meeting will be held on September 15.

New Business

Tom Powers reported about 3,800 visitors rode the park ferries during Free Fun Friday on July 16, and the event was considered very successful. Tom thanked Boston Redevelopment Authority for the signs on the Boston's Best Cruises ticket kiosk on Long Wharf. Tickets were issued in 3-hour blocks, with a designated departure and return time. The ticket kiosk had 3 designated windows for both Georges Island and Spectacle Island, so lines moved quite well. Tom said an additional 2,000 vouchers were issued to visitors that arrived after the free tickets were handed out. These vouchers can be exchanged for free ferry tickets during the rest of the season. Susan Kane responded to a question about island capacity: She said Spectacle Island can hold 800 - 1,000 visitors comfortably, and Georges Island can hold more than 2,000 visitors at a time.

Bruce Jacobson said he received some comments from Partners on the draft communications guide, which was distributed for review at the May 18, 2010, Partnership meeting. Marianne Connolly thanked Bruce for his work on this.

Public Comment

Vivien Li, TBHA, gave kudos to the Partnership for all their hard work improving access and programming for the public. She mentioned the new visitor center on Georges Island, Harbor Park Pavilion on the Greenway, and Camp Harbor View and encouraged them to keep up the good work.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 PM.