

**Boston Harbor Islands Partnership  
Meeting Minutes  
McCormack Building, 1 Ashburton Place, 21<sup>st</sup> floor, Boston, MA  
September 21, 2010, 3:00 PM – 4:30 PM**

**Attendees:** Maureen Cavanaugh, Greg Ketchen, Chris Montgomery and Charles Norris—Boston Harbor Islands Advisory Council; Joel Reck—Boston Harbor Island Alliance (BHIA); Richard McGuinness—Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA); Antonia Pollak—City of Boston; David Cash and Susan Kane—Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR); Jim Doolin—Massachusetts Port Authority; Marianne Connolly—Massachusetts Water Resources Authority; Bruce Jacobson—National Park Service (NPS); Peg Wheeler—The Trustees of Reservations; 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 July 20, 2010, meeting of the Partnership were approved.

**End of Season Remarks by Partners**

David Cash said that early reports show a 30% increase in ferry ridership. He thought it was not only a reflection of good weather, but also demonstrates the effectiveness of marketing efforts by Boston Harbor Island Alliance and the draw of improvements like the Georges Island visitor center developed by DCR.

CDR Nate Knapp reported that it was a safe year both in terms of lighthouse tours and search and rescue in Boston Harbor. He noted participation in Little Brewster programs was lower than in the past, but considered very successful.

Marianne Connolly said that Deer Island's walking trails were heavily used by residents of the surrounding communities.

Arthur Pearson reported Thompson Island had a successful and safe season. This summer Thompson Island partnered with NPS to promote curriculum-based summer programming. He noted that the island is currently quite active with school groups.

Joel Reck complimented the Partners on their work, particularly the Georges Island improvements and Boston Light programs. He said construction of the Boston Harbor Islands Pavilion is half-way complete and expected to open by next summer.

Jim Doolin said leisure travel is growing again so airport numbers are way up. He reminded all that there are posters, displays and brochures about the park available throughout the airport to both international and domestic travelers. He complimented Boston Harbor Island Alliance on their recent gala, and stated it was a great time of year to be on the islands.

Bruce Jacobson said NPS and DCR seasonal island staff were phenomenal this year and worked together very cooperatively and effectively. He mentioned the spring interagency training and encouraged more Partners' staff to participate. Bruce announced that NPS recently filled a new full-time education technician position. Bruce reported that stewardship efforts have grown and many scientific research studies are ongoing.

Antonia Pollak said Spectacle Island landfill cap repairs are holding. She reported Camp Harborview on Long Island served over 600 youth this summer. She announced that Ellen Berkland, City Archeologist, has taken a new job with DCR.

Richard McGuinness said it was a record year for activity at Long Wharf. He said signage for the Boston's Best Cruises ticket booth really helped visitors find the ferry. He said he was looking forward to the opening of the Pavilion.

Susan Kane said visitation was up on all the islands, more events were held, and she received very positive feedback about the visitor center on Georges Island. One recurring comment was that people learned more about the fort and the island in one trip to the museum than they had in many years of visiting. Susan also mentioned the events put on by Summer Shack were doing well.

Chris Montgomery reported the Advisory Council's Native American interest group helped plan the August Native American festival on Georges Island and it was considered a success. He announced the upcoming annual memorial day on Deer Island and invited Partners to attend. He said the memorial project is working through some delays, but they are hopeful that the sculpture will be installed by spring.

### **Lighthouse Preservation Update**

Bruce reminded all that in the park, the three lighthouses (Boston Light, Long Island Head Light and The Graves Light) are currently owned by US Coast Guard. The Graves Light and Long Island Head Light are listed on the National Historic Register, and Boston Light is designated a National Historic Landmark. Under guidelines of the National Historic Lighthouse Protection Act (NHLPA), federally-owned historic lighthouses such as these can be transferred to other organizations. The US Coast Guard wishes to divest themselves of both The Graves Light and Long Island Head Light. The light beacons would remain active and serviced, but the towers would no longer be maintained by USCG. The General Services Administration (GSA) administers the disposition. NPS has a role in overseeing the application process. Due to their location with the park boundary, the two properties will first be offered to NPS, then other federal agencies. If there are no takers, they will be offered to non-profits and municipalities, and then they would go up for sale to the highest bidder.

The Partners asked Bruce if NPS was interested in ownership. Bruce said NPS is exploring a transfer of Long Island Head Light and keeping it accessible to the public, in a way similar to current situation. He said the location of The Graves makes it difficult to land on, and particularly expensive to maintain. The tower has a steep spiral staircase, and also contains hazardous materials like lead paint. These factors make it virtually inaccessible to the general public. If NPS takes ownership of lighthouses, no additional funds are expected to be allocated to the park. Bruce asked the Partners to think about what the best approach would be for the park, and how they suggest proceeding.

Antonia Pollak asked if remediation would be done by USCG before the transfer; the answer was no.

The Partners asked for specifics about maintenance and capital improvements costs and requested that USCG provide them if possible. The Partners requested more information about other options, including potential non-profit owners.

It was stated that Boston Light is not listed as excess property.

### **Climate Friendly Parks Action Plan**

Marc Albert, NPS, reminded all that the park is becoming a NPS “Climate Friendly Park” and Partners committed to conducting an emission inventory, setting emission targets, developing an action plan and educating staff and the public about climate change. He presented a preliminary draft of a climate friendly action plan. The plan, when complete, will define steps that island managers can take to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Bruce Jacobson said a draft action plan will be available by the next Partnership meeting. Partners requested that current energy savings actions be recognized and included in reporting.

### **Pets in the Park Discussion**

Bruce Jacobson said that park managers have started discussions about developing a park-wide pet policy. He reported the Advisory Council held a scoping session on September 15. Maureen Cavanaugh added that the meeting was well attended and a lively discussion ensued. Members had a variety of positions on the topic, but focused on developing a list of issues for managers to consider.

The Partners discussed. Bruce Jacobson said NPS policies are varied; the details depend on the location and resource but that dogs must always be on-leash. Susan Kane said dogs are not allowed at DCR campgrounds, but allowed on-leash at most state parks. She said that up until this year, dogs were not allowed on the Harbor Islands. She said it remained unclear why dogs are not allowed and that they are taking another look at the policy. Marianne Connolly said the on-leash policy at Deer is violated frequently; it is an enforcement issue. Bruce added that a study was done at Cape Cod National Seashore at a tern nesting site and they saw more than 400 dogs off-leash in the area occupied by a few nesting pairs of terns. Antonia Pollak said that there are people/dog and dog/dog interactions that are also of issue. She also added there may be additional concerns regarding Spectacle Island, because it is a capped landfill. Greg Ketchen said there are also benefits to allowing dogs, a new constituency is served.

Rob McPherson, City Water Taxi, said he has found that there is a high level of interest from dog owners in trips to the islands. He ran trips for owners and their dogs to Thompson Island and Lovells Island in the off-season; and reported he brought out many people that had never visited before. He said there continues to be a high demand for the trips.

David Cash designated a subcommittee of the Operations Committee to work on developing a dog policy and made Bruce Jacobson Chair. Antonia Pollak, Susan Kane and Advisory Council representatives will be included as members and Rob McPherson was invited to participate.

### **Bringing Youth to the Islands Committee Report**

Arthur Pearson said the Bringing Youth to the Islands Committee will meet on November 9. He reminded all the committee was charged with: finding innovative ways to connect more kids to the resources of Boston Harbor and the Islands; getting an accurate count of current youth served and program opportunities; and, to look for collaboration opportunities with Partner organizations. He gave an overview of current

youth employment and curriculum-based programs, and other programs and subsidized opportunities designed specifically for youth. Partnership agencies brought approximately 21,000 youth to the islands for these formal programs in 2010. (In addition schools, camps, and other organizations brought youth groups to the islands and the Partnership hired college-age seasonal staff.)

### **Advisory Council**

Maureen Cavanaugh said the next Advisory Council will next meet on December 1. Greg Ketchen announced he will step down from both the Council and the Partnership as of March 2011, as he has moved to Cape Cod and does not spend much time in Boston anymore.

### **New Business**

Bruce Jacobson said NPS is working with University of Idaho to explore possibilities of developing a robust visitation counting system for the park.

### **Public Comment**

Bill Hale asked for an update on Peddocks Island improvements. Tom said the Boston Harbor Island Alliance Board voted to pursue demolition, stabilization and rehabilitation of one (or more) building(s) on Peddocks. He said they are still in discussions with DCR and with Massachusetts Historic Commission on the specifics, but he was optimistic that work would begin soon.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 PM.