

**Boston Harbor Islands Partnership
Meeting Minutes
WilmerHale, 60 State Street, 26th floor, Boston, MA
March 15, 2011, 3:00 PM – 4:30 PM**

Attendees: Maureen Cavanaugh, Chris Montgomery, and Charles Norris—Boston Harbor Islands Advisory Council; Tom Powers—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); Bruce Jacobson—National Park Service (NPS); Arthur Pearson—Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center (TIOBEC); Peg Wheeler—The Trustees of Reservations (TTOR); CDR Nathan Knapp—United States Coast Guard (USCG).

Chair David Cash welcomed all, called the meeting to order, and announced a quorum. Partners and the audience introduced themselves. There was a motion made to approve the minutes of the January 18th meeting with one change to correct the date of the meeting year. **The motion was unanimously approved.**

Water Transportation

Melissa Walker, Boston's Best Cruises, gave a presentation on ferry service that included a summary of operations from last year and some of their future plans. She said their fleet includes two ADA, low emissions, ferry boats that seat 200 and are climate controlled and have a snack bar, a 140 passenger interisland ferry, and a larger back up boat for use on busy weekends. Melissa reported that ridership was up dramatically, and that they are involved in a marketing campaign to increase their presence in the marketplace. She said they currently advertise through CTM brochure racks, QR codes, Living Social, foursquare, and other social mediums to engage new audiences. Melissa said they are looking into a library pass program, and are also involved in cross-promotional activities with their other lines of business.

Melissa said BBC is looking forward to the opening of the Boston Harbor Islands Pavilion, which should improve the visibility of the park. Bruce Jacobson, NPS, gave the group an update on plans to install temporary, seasonally-placed, ground markings that lead from the Pavilion to the ferry, which he hopes can be implemented this summer.

Melissa said that after reviewing zip code reports from riders, they determined that current visitation is mostly from local residents, and they hope to expand to serve more tourists in coming years. She said they are exploring partnerships with trolley and Segway tours and other ticket sellers. Melissa added they are also working with concierges of local hotels.

Bill Walker, BBC, said they expect to grow ridership for the 2011 season and mentioned the ferry center has 8 operating windows that will aid expansion. Online ticketing systems are improved, and a self-service ticket kiosk will be placed at Boston Harbor Islands Pavilion.

The Partners had an opportunity to comment and ask questions. Tom Powers, BHIA, said the ticketing ran much smoother last year, and that the timed tickets were working

to reduce wait times. He noted that ticketing for Free Fun Fridays went particularly smoothly, even when hundreds of people showed up for each departure.

Antonia Pollak, City of Boston, asked if BBC tracked weather. Bill said they do collect data, but haven't formally analyzed it; though it was generally thought that last season was a good weather year. He said it is definitely a weather dependent business, rain and temperature are factors. Antonia mentioned that visitation to city parks was up 30% from the prior year.

Bruce reminded all that the park is never closed. Michael McGurl, BBC, added that the winter cruises were very successful this year.

David Cash asked about timeliness of the scheduled boats. He said he visited on a busy day last season, and waited in lines on both ends of the trip. Tom Powers reminded all that on time performance is ± 10 min due to the unpredictability of harbor travel (traffic, weather conditions, LNG disruptions etc.) that boats deal with in the harbor. He said the ferries were on-time most of the season. Bill Walker said the schedule is set to maximize passage; he will look up "on-time" statistics and report back to the Partnership.

David did comment that the boat and ranger staff did a good job of communicating about the delays on the day of his visit. Bill said there were many improvements to communications with on-the-ground-staff. The managers from the park and BBC also meet every Tuesday to discuss operations. David asked if there are any technology-related solutions, like smart phone applications, or GPS technology that might be implemented. Bill Walker said MBTA currently has GPS tracking for their vehicles. Bruce said staff are now getting radio or cell phone updates about boat status and it has improved communications tremendously. He asked if Twitter could be used for updates; the rolling screens at the Pavilion are intended to be used for boat updates and could easily post a Twitter feed or GPS data. Melissa said they are happy to explore possibilities.

Michael responded to a question about a new proposed commuter run from Hull to Boston on weekends. He said there was no agreement as of yet, but he was willing to explore a potential stop at Bumpkin Island if the opportunity arose.

Charles Norris, Advisory Council, said effort should be made to invest in signage to direct visitors to the Pavilion, that it would be a missed opportunity if not done.

Mary Raczko, NPS, asked about how ticketing for staff and volunteers would work this year. Melissa said online ticketing will be available from Boston in a couple of weeks and vouchers would continue to be used from Hingham.

Summer Programming

Rebecca Smerling, BHIA, handed out a list of programs planned for the season. She said the two main themes of this year include *Let's Move Outside* and the commemoration of the Civil War. *Let's Move Outside* activities include yoga, *Spectacle Island Fun Run*, and DCR's *Great Park Pursuit*. Phillip Marsh, NPS, distributed copies of the thematic framework developed by national parks in Massachusetts for the 5-year

commemoration of the Civil War. The overarching theme is Civil War to Civil Rights. Jessica Renehan, DCR, described the significance of Fort Warren on Georges Island during the Civil War, and programming that will happen over the season. She invited all to attend the Civil War Commemoration Day on July 9th, and said that a daily dispatch and tours of the fort will start on May 7. Jessica said that programming this season will include more costumed interpretation, living history presentations, and talks by historians.

Antonia Pollak mentioned Larry Meehan would be very interested in the activities and requested the schedule of events be sent electronically to the city. Rebecca will send, and mentioned she is working with the city's Marketing Director.

David Cash asked if there was any way to tie the Civil War theme with honoring the current military forces. Bruce said there should be, as the NPS themes are meant to highlight not just the history of the Civil War itself, but to understand how the war's legacy continues to play itself out today. CDR Nate Knapp said quite a few tall ships and Navy vessels are likely to visit the harbor during the anniversary of the War of 1812. He suggested a contact at Hanscom Air Force Base that may know the schedule of the ships. Bruce reminded all that the commemoration lasts for 5 years and that certain types of programs will be more relevant in certain years.

Rebecca announced BHIA was successful in getting sponsors for free ferry days again this year. The first free day will be June 21. She said Georges and Spectacle Islands are included on a Scavenger Smart Phone App, where participants are encouraged to visit. Rebecca said Emilie Kendall, BHIA, is working on revamping a public service announcement about the park.

Advisory Council

Charles Norris said the Advisory Council held its annual meeting on March 2. Phillip Marsh gave a presentation, *Trent Affair and Boston Harbor Islands*, to a crowd of about 50. He announced Maureen Cavanaugh stepped down as chair, and he thanked her for her service. Rob Moir, Executive Director of Ocean River Institute, was elected Chair, and Maureen as Vice-Chair.

New Business

Tom announced a new BHIA membership program and distributed a brochure about it.

Jane Ellis, BHIA, said the park will participate in the AAA Great Vacations EXPO in April and Cambridge Science Festival and Earthfest in May.

Susan Kane said DCR is hosting Park Serve Day on Spectacle Island on Saturday, April 16.

Public Comment

There was no additional public comment.

The meeting was adjourned.