

**Boston Harbor Islands Partnership
Meeting Minutes
Environmental Protection Agency
5 Post Office Square, 15th Floor, Boston, MA
September 18, 2012, 3:00 PM – 4:30 PM**

Attendees: Maureen Cavanaugh and Charles Norris—Boston Harbor Islands Advisory Council; Tom Powers—Boston Harbor Island Alliance (BHIA); Antonia Pollak—City of Boston; Phil Griffiths and Susan Kane—Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR); Marianne Connolly—Massachusetts Water Resources Authority; Bruce Jacobson—National Park Service (NPS); CDR Jason Smith—United States Coast Guard (USCG).

Antonia Pollak, Acting Chair, welcomed all and called the meeting to order. A quorum was present. There was a motion made to approve the minutes of the July 24, 2012, meeting. **The motion was unanimously approved.**

Water Transportation

Bruce Jacobson mentioned the park received a certificate of excellence from Trip Advisor, and the visibility and recognition of the park is up, particularly due to increased marketing efforts of Boston Harbor Island Alliance. It was noted that Boston's Best Cruises is working collaboratively with Boston Harbor Island Alliance and also are increasing their marketing efforts.

Jane Ellis, Boston Harbor Island Alliance, reported that ferry ridership this August was up 22.7% over last August and that ferry ridership in September (as of September 17), is already up 20% over last September. Jane said capacity issues experienced last year were addressed effectively this year by the addition of a 3rd ferry to handle overflow at busy return times. She added that in addition to the ferries, there were 3 water shuttles in operation, and passed out a chart detailing the number of visitors using the mainland and island boarding locations.

Partners asked if the increase in ridership had to do with weather. Bruce said rangers have been collecting data on weather and visitation on summer weekends for a few years. He said that as you would expect, good weekend weather leads to a rise in visitation, and rain causes a drop. Bruce added that a correlation between visitation and temperature has also been observed. When there are extremes in temperature (either very hot or very cold days) visitation drops. Both this year and last year were "good" weather years, there were favorable conditions on summer weekends. It was mentioned that the effect of the harbor-wide commemoration of the War of 1812 in early July was not particularly helpful to visitation. Lower visitation numbers were observed during that week and attributed to disruptions in harbor traffic and having so many competing activities going on at the same time.

Bruce Jacobson said the Planning Committee met recently and discussed the park's water transportation system – past, present, and future. The Committee discussed both short and long term goals. Bruce distributed the Planning Committee meeting notes and a draft water transportation timeline that summarized the highlights of the park's water transportation system over time.

Bruce reported the Planning Committee recommends that the Partnership secure a dedicated park gateway at Long Wharf in the Boston Harbor Plan. The Partners discussed. A motion was made to investigate having the Boston Redevelopment Authority designate Long Wharf as a gateway to the park to secure water transportation access from Downtown Boston and also to have the Boston Harbor Islands Pavilion officially recognized on city and state maps and publications. **The motion was unanimously approved.**

Bruce reminded all that the current contract for ferry service expires in 2014. The Planning Committee identified many things to consider in developing a system, as described in the meeting notes. The Planning Committee recommended bringing in outside expertise to aid in crafting the specifics of the park's future water transportation system as a way to help inform the preparation of the new contract. The Partners discussed. They recognized the many aspects to the system that should be considered, and thought that consultants could be helpful in developing criteria for a new contract. Partners mentioned the importance of developing an efficient system, getting enough quality data for analysis, understanding charter and private boater use, choosing appropriate gateways, and figuring out how to fund the ferry system in a sustainable way.

Advisory Council

Maureen Cavanaugh, Vice-chair, said the council last met last week. Tom Powers and Bruce Jacobson presented information about the *NPS Call to Action*.

Other Business

Bruce Jacobson reminded all that the park's Strategic Plan calls for a review of the GMP as the park approaches the first 20-year mark. He said discussions are on-going with Dr. Silva of Boston University about having his students review as part of their master's program.

Public Comment

There was no additional public comment

The meeting was adjourned.