

**Boston Harbor Islands Partnership
Meeting Minutes
WilmerHale, 60 State Street, 26th floor, Boston, MA
March 19, 2013 3:00 PM – 4:30 PM**

Attendees: Maureen Cavanaugh and Charles Norris—Boston Harbor Islands Advisory Council; Jane Ellis for Tom Powers—Boston Harbor Island Alliance (BHIA); Ed Lambert and Susan Kane—Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR); Marianne Connolly—Massachusetts Water Resources Authority; Michael Caldwell and Bruce Jacobson—National Park Service (NPS); Arthur Pearson—Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center (TIOBEC); CDR Jason Smith—United States Coast Guard (USCG).

Bruce Jacobson opened the meeting; the Chair had a meeting conflict, but would arrive shortly. A quorum was present. There was a motion made to approve the minutes of the January 15, 2013, meeting. **The motion was unanimously approved.**

Water Transportation Subcommittee Report

Jane Ellis said the Water Transportation Subcommittee has been working to finalize the ferry schedule and fares for the 2013 season. With less available funding to support the interisland ferry it was challenging to maintain service and not raise fares drastically. She was happy to report that there will be no increase in fares to Georges and Spectacle Islands from either Boston or Hingham. By making targeted schedule adjustments, service to and between those hub islands will be maintained at 2012 levels. There will be a \$3 additional fare for visitors departing from Boston that travel to Lovells, Peddocks, Grape, or Bumpkin Islands. Bruce Jacobson gave thanks to Jane Ellis, Tom Powers, and Susan Kane for their work, to Commissioner Lambert for his commitment to the islands and for the funding of the interisland ferry, to Brian Swett, City of Boston, for his participation and astute questions, and to Bill Walker, Boston's Best Cruises (BBC), for offering creative solutions.

Financial Accountability

Sarah Waterworth presented a Partnership Financial Accountability Report for the period 1996 – 2011. She said that within that time each federal dollar was met with 6 non-federal dollars, more than fulfilling the 1:4 ratio required by Congress. To date, park partners have reported spending over \$235M on park to provide visitor services, rebuild island infrastructure, and protect park resources. Sarah said the actual figure is likely to be much higher, as not all partners have reported consistently throughout the years. She passed out a report showing details of partners' financial contribution.

Sarah mentioned the Central Artery contributions were not included in the report due to the difficulty of pulling out the costs only for park-related improvements on Spectacle Island; it likely was an investment of around \$20M. She reminded all to submit their 2012 financial reports if they have not already done so.

Planning Committee Report

Bruce Jacobson invited all to a mid-term check in session on March 25, with Boston University graduates students working on a capstone project. Students are reviewing the park's general management plan and are working to develop an advisory plan for an update of the aging plan. They will present their findings and plan at an evening workshop hosted by the Advisory Council on May 13.

Bruce Jacobson presented information about a summer visitation study in 2012 and compared it to a visitor study in 2000. He said the studies are really snapshots in time, targeting the general visitor at peak times in the summer season. Overall, visitor satisfaction remains very high, first-

time visitors are trending up; return visitors are trending down. Visitor demographics remain similar, both studies show the average visitor is white, educated, comes from Massachusetts, and are in their early 40's. (This profile does not reflect the many school groups that visit the islands each year in the shoulder seasons.) The primary reason for visits stayed fairly consistent, though increases were seen in some categories, with a large jump for programming and special events. The presentation is attached. The Partners discussed. It was noted that more focus needs to be put on attracting diverse visitors to the park. Susan Kane said that the rise seen in groups of 2 coming to the park could be due to the opening of Spectacle Island, as it draws a different kind of visitor than Georges Island. Jane Ellis asked to see the comments on the ferry and food service. Charlie Norris said that data on return visits is useful to inform marketing efforts, as both new and returning visitors are important. It was suggested that outreach efforts could include a focus on college students.

Advisory Council

Maureen Cavanaugh, Vice-chair, said the Council held their annual meeting on March 6. Sally Snowman, USCG Light Keeper of Boston Light, was the guest speaker. Maureen reported that she was re-elected as Vice-Chair and Rob Moir was re-elected as Chair. Elizabeth Solomon was recommended as a Voting Alternate to the Partnership, and her nomination is in process. There is currently a vacancy for the other Voting Alternate seat representing the Advisory Council on the Partnership.

Other Business

CDR Jason Smith said USCG is hosting an oil spill workshop on Thursday. It will be robust drill for a response to a large spill that affected the islands. He said many park partners are already involved and invited all Partners to participate.

Bruce Jacobson announced that he is leaving his position as Superintendent as of July 13. He will be working as Senior Consultant at Heritage Partners, Inc. Bruce said that announcing this early allows for planning a smooth transition. Michael Caldwell thanked Bruce for his exemplary service, and explained the process for the transition. He said when a superintendent leaves, a transition team is sent to the park to talk to park partners and staff to get a deeper understanding of park operations, challenges, and issues facing the park. He introduced John Piltzecker, Northeast Region Associate Regional Director, who will lead the team here at Boston Harbor Islands. Mike said an Acting Superintendent will be named and it is thought that the permanent person should be in place by fall. Commissioner Lambert gave thanks to Bruce on behalf of DCR. He said that Bruce's presence and leadership will be difficult to replace and that he wishes him the best.

Public Comment

Steve Marcus, Volunteers and Friends of Boston Harbor Islands (FBHI), commented that it is a complex park with the various land owners and Partners, but that the Friends' contributions should not be overlooked in the financial figures as volunteers contribute substantially to the park. He mentioned the 75 exhibits in area libraries and the many ways FBHI helps bring people to the park. Bruce said volunteer contributions are counted and that FBHI service is part of the total number presented. He invited FBHI to submit financial information to Sarah for inclusion in future accountability reports.

Bill Walker, BBC, remarked that the visitor satisfaction measures of 80%–90% are very good, and that 97% is extremely high and quite an accomplishment.

The meeting was adjourned.