

Boston Harbor Islands Partnership
Meeting Minutes
WilmerHale, 60 State Street, 26th Floor, Boston, MA
September 16, 2014, 3:00 PM – 4:30 PM

Attendees: Maureen Cavanaugh and Charles Norris—Boston Harbor Islands Advisory Council; Phil Griffiths—Boston Harbor Island Alliance (BHIA); Brian Swett—City of Boston; Susan Kane and Commissioner Jack Murray—Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR); Andrew Hargens—Massachusetts Port Authority; Marianne Connolly and Fred Laskey—Massachusetts Water Resources Authority; Jim Scully—Thompson Island Outward Bound Education Center; Giles Parker—National Park Service (NPS); CDR Marc Knowlton—United States Coast Guard (USCG).

Commissioner Jack Murray, Acting Chair, welcomed all and called the meeting to order. A quorum was present. The minutes of the May 20, 2014 meeting were approved.

Park Operations

Susan Kane, DCR, gave a presentation that summarized DCR operations over the season. The presentation is attached. She said a vital piece of the success this season was due to the extraordinary efforts of the 51 seasonal staff that worked on the islands this year (includes forest & parks supervisors, rangers, interpreters, lifeguards, maintenance workers, boat operators, and caretakers). She said that records were set for increased overall visitation, number of people participating in programs, and numbers of people camping. Fred Laskey, MWRA, suggested that the Partnership formally commend the field staff for their accomplishments this season.

Commissioner Murray noted it was the smoothest year for water transportation since he has been involved. He said his office received positive feedback about the ferry service this year, and that complaints were way down. Phil Griffiths, BHIA, added that ferry ridership was up, and he distributed a report containing ridership highlights (attached). Rick Nolan, Boston Harbor Cruises, said that it was a very good year and that they are happy to be serving the islands once again. He also said that they learned a lot this year about levels of demand to all the islands, particularly for service to Spectacle Island, which was much greater than anticipated. Rick said that they often needed to regulate ticket sales (by stopping sales around 3:00 pm) to ensure that everyone got back, even with the use of large sweep boats in the late afternoon. Rick said BHC is investigating ways to increase capacity, which includes looking at larger boats that could service the islands. Susan Kane added that managers are hoping to extend the Peddocks Island camping season into fall, at least on the weekends, and that water transportation would be an important piece of this.

Phil Griffiths said that Rita's Catering also faced some management challenges in their first year as food vendors on Georges and Spectacle Islands. It was a learning year for them and they were also faced with more people than anticipated. Demand for service also tended to high all at once as opposed to spread out over the day. He said that he received good feedback about the quality of food and that managers are working with Rita's to improve the consistency of operations.

Marketing

Becca Lille, BHIA, gave an update on the park's website and social media activity. There were significant gains expanding the social media awareness this year, and partnership collaboration increased substantially. The report is attached.

Youth Engagement

Paul Lamoureux, TIOBEC, gave an update on Thompson Island programming. He said that over 8,000 youth and adults were engaged in connections, challenged-based, or adult learning programs so far this season. Another 2,000 program participants are expected. He said that they work in partnership with NPS on the connections programs. These place-based learning experiences are evolving into an immersive experience where Boston Public School students will come out for multiple visits during their 5th – 8th grade years.

Rebecca Smerling, BHIA, reported on a successful pilot program with the Boys & Girls Club of Dorchester. She said a park ranger accompanied 70 youth and visited Georges, Spectacle, and Peddocks islands over 3 days. The youth engaged in a variety of activities to become official Junior Rangers. She shared a video that can be found at the park's [YouTube channel](http://www.youtube.com/user/Bostonharborislands) at <http://www.youtube.com/user/Bostonharborislands>.

Susan Kane reported that the park hosted two Student Conservation Association (SCA) crews this year, a college age group from Massachusetts by DCR and a national crew of high school age youth brought out in partnership of DCR, BHIA, and NPS. Both crews were based on Peddocks, and did a variety of improvement projects there, and the national crew also worked on Lovells Island. She passed out a summary report from the national crew (attached) and said that they are looking forward to working with both groups next year.

Bruce Berman, Save the Harbor/Save the Bay (SHSB), introduced Susan Woods, a new candidate for the park's Advisory Council and Amy Gaylord, who works with the youth program. He said that SHSB expanded their programming this year and brought out over 8,000 youth to the islands and over 10,000 youth to the harbor's edge. He stated what an important resource the islands were to the public.

Planning

CDR Marc Knowlton, USCG, said that the U.S. Coast Guard continues to prepare for the 300th Anniversary of Boston Light in 2016. He said over \$1.67M was invested this year in infrastructure improvements to the tower, outbuildings, and utilities. He said that another \$600k worth of work is needed specifically for the boathouse, but that there is no funding identified.

CDR Knowlton said that USCG is already preparing for the 2017 Sail Boston event, when the tall ships will once again return to Boston en mass.

Giles Parker, NPS, said that the first draft of the Boston Harbor Islands State of the Park Report was sent to workshop participants for review. He said that once they compile comments from the participants the draft will be available more widely.

Julie Wormser, The Boston Harbor Association (TBHA), gave a presentation on how climate change may affect Boston's vulnerable infrastructure in waterfront areas. She also spoke to the value of preparedness plans to increase resilience to coastal flooding.

The meeting was adjourned.