



## **Downtown Waterfront Municipal Harbor Planning Advisory Committee Meeting**

Wednesday, October 8, 2014  
Atlantic Wharf, 290 Congress Street

### **Attendees**

#### **Advisory Committee:**

Sydney Asbury, Lois Siegelman, Greg Vasil, Linda Jonash, Vivien Li, Bruce Berman, Meredith Rosenberg, Janeen Hansen, Joanne Hayes-Rines, Phil Griffiths, Susanne Lavoie, Eric White, Richard Meyer, Paul Saperstein, Nigella Hillgarth

#### **City of Boston:**

Lauren Shurtleff, BRA; Chris Busch, BRA; Dick Mulligan, BRA

#### **Consultant Team:**

Tom Skinner, Durand & Anastas; Utile; Meera Deean, Utile

#### **Government Representatives:**

Ron Killian, MassDOT; Ben Lynch, MA DEP; Maria Puopolo, Senator Petruccellis Office

#### **Members of the Public:**

Chris Fincham, Robert ViDaver, Thomas Nally, M. Barron, Barbara Yanke, Victor Brogna, Jim Cravens, Rick Moore, C. Romanuik, Rita Advani, Dorathy Keville, Pam McDermott, Bill Zielinski, Judah Sugarman, Terry McLaughlin, Gary Murad, Karen Marcarelli, Al Raine, Ann Vassos, Carolyn Spicer, Nathan Storning, Charles Norris, M. Holland, Gabor Korodi, Todd Lee, M. Willock, J. Mairanu, Elis Evans, talya Moked, Valerie Burns, Mike Horn, Sy Mintz, Eric Krauss

### **Meeting Summary**

Chris Busch, BRA, opened the meeting and noted that today's meeting would focus on the Long Wharf Marriott property and mentioned that the Hook Lobster property would be reviewed at the next meeting, and staff from the state's Office of Coastal Zone Management and Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs would also be in at a future meeting to review the state's involvement in the MHP process and answer questions.

Suzanne Lavoie, MHPAC Member, inquired as to the proponent representing the Long Wharf Marriott. Chris Busch responded that property owner is Sunstone Wharf LLC and the operating agent for the property is managed by the Marriott. Yanni Tsisipis, Colliers, affirmed that Sunstone is the owner and project proponent.

Matthew Littell, Utile, provided an overview and background noting that the Marriott previously presented on the property and their interest in expanding the ground floor areas around the site with retail and restaurant pavilions. He noted that the BRA and their consultants had then made some modifications to the expansion design to address some urban design issues and priorities from the Public Realm and Watersheet Activation Plan. He reviewed the Marriott site and discussed the opportunities and challenges related to the site regarding the public realm and connectivity. He noted the Marriott's original proposal brought the total lot coverage from 64% to 84% with the height of the

new expansion areas being approximately 22-feet. He then reviewed some of the primary comments made by the Committee when the matter was last reviewed and presented further modification made to the site plan based upon prior comment and means to improve connectivity, wayfinding, sight lines and pedestrian legibility. Proposed changes included further paring back of the expansion massing on the north and south sides of the hotel, bringing the lot coverage to approximately 80%, improved legibility of the public passage through the hotel from State Street to Christopher Columbus Park and the inclusion of a Harbor Islands Gateway facility on the northeasterly side of the building. He also noted that many of the noted improvements could be included in the MHP as baseline requirements for the proposed expansion.

Bruce Berman, MHPAC Member, asked how much space would be available for pedestrian passage on the south and northeasterly side of the building with the expansion. Matthew responded that there is approximately 20-feet of clearance on the north side and 10-feet of sidewalk remaining on the south.

Vivien Li, MHPAC Member, inquired whether the open space and lot coverage calculations were made based upon inclusion of the BRA parking lot behind the Chart House. Matthew noted that the calculations did not include the lot area.

Joanne Hayes-Rines, MHPAC Member, asked about the BRA property immediately adjacent to the hotel on the north side of the wharf. Chris Busch, noted that there was a Long Wharf Master Plan that was developed and an area was designated for a Sicilian's Fisherman's Memorial, however, the process for establishing the memorial has not progressed.

Matthew Littell, then referenced the open space requirement and needed offset for the loss of open space with the proposed expansion, and that the offset discussion will be reviewed after a more comprehensive review of all the substitutions and proposed offsets throughout the planning area, as the offsetting metrics and measures will need to be applied district-wide. He referenced the existing conditions around the hotel, particularly on the eastern waterside extent of the building do very little to activate the area, and the additions of the proposed expansion areas are an effort to accomplish greater activation, however, the additions will take up available open space. He then reviewed the general prioritization scheme for offsetting loss of open space based upon prior MHP precedent.

Suzanne Lavoie, inquired as to who would make the determination on the prioritization of offsets for open space. Tom Skinner, Durand & Anastas, stated that the BRA would develop recommendations for the Advisory Committee to review.

Dick Meyer, MHAPC Member, asked about the BRA parking lots disposition and how the conversion of the lot to open space would be linked to the expansion on the east side of hotel. Matthew Littell, noted there would have to be a transaction with a property owner to convey the land, and the disposition of the property will affect how the expansion is shaped and massed at that end of the hotel.

Bruce Berman, asked if enhancements could be directed, would the Aquarium Plaza function as a location for offsets. Matthew Littell responded that improvements to the existing open space on the plaza could fit within the hierarchy of open space offsets.

Greg Vasil, MHPAC Member, asked if the last option were exercised would the funds have to go to an existing organization or could be dedicated to a specific use or series of programs. Chris Busch, noted

that it could be either and referenced the Fort Point Channel Operations Board which functions to review and facilitate funding provided by the Atlantic Wharf and 500 Atlantic properties for activation and programming along the Fort Point Channel in accordance with the Fort Point Channel Watersheet Activation Plan.

Vivien Li, asked if there was a sense from Island Alliance, Friends of Christopher Columbus Park and Boston Harbor Cruises with regard to the next five to 10 years and what those organizations have planned in the way of expansion to get a sense of future scenarios. She noted that much of what is proposed will not be implemented for another five years at a minimum and indicated that she was not comfortable with the extent of proposed lot coverage with the ambitions of all the area organizations to increase visitation to the Aquarium, Harbor Islands and waterfront. She mentioned that with the level of change proposed and increased pedestrian traffic there needs to be a significant offset, and that wayfinding and pedestrian legibility has to be addressed by more than a few planters and additional Harborwalk signs. She asked that more information is needed from the BRA with regard to the end of Long Wharf and the Chart House parking lot and future plans for those locations.

Matthew Littell then framed some questions for the Advisory Committee to inquire as to whether the modification that have been proposed address the aspirations of the Downtown Watersheet Activation Plan and prior comments made on the proposal.

Joanne Hayes-Rines, raised issue with the pedestrian, vehicular and tourist vehicle coordination and that the area between Long Wharf and Central Wharf is not comfortable and there needs to be more of a focus on improving pedestrian safety. Matthew Littell responded that many of the concerns regarding safety, flow and pedestrian capacity are addressed and analyzed through project design, and these are concerns we can have as part of the MHP language, and this can guide future development in the area.

Bruce Berman, noted that he shared Vivien's concerns, and stated that he thinks the Marriott proposal would function to activate the area and expressed concern that expansion without conversion of the Chart House lot to open space would create a substantial restriction for pedestrians along the eastern extent of the hotel. He asked that the BRA provide additional information on the disposition of the property and that any new design for the lot would have to address service accommodations for the adjacent marina. He also noted that many of the things that the Marriott wants to accomplish could be done with temporary uses and structures that can activate the area more immediately. He finally noted that the extent of expansion may not function to enhance connections and facilitate public access to and along the waterfront and could create new pinch points.

Jim Klocke, MHPAC Member, asked about the parking lot issue as well. Chris Busch, BRA, noted that he would confer with the BRA's Asset Management Office, and referenced the parcel as a potential open space offset due to the lack of space within the planning area available for new open space. He also stated that the lot could not be tied to a specific project or proposal and needs to be viewed more from an area-wide offset perspective.

Meredith Rosenberg, MHPAC Member, asked for more detail on what the expansion areas would look like and what the actual impact would be to those on the street. Lois Siegelman, MHPAC Member, also raised concern with accessibility through the hotel if additional retail in introduced within and around the hotel. Eric Wright, MHPAC Member, also inquired on the appearance and design of the expansion areas and the importance of enhancing Harborwalk. Dick Meyer, noted that it will be important to have

the areas function well even in the winter time such as the indoor court yard at One International Place, which functions well for those in the building and draws others in from the surrounding area.

Linda Jonash, MHPAC Member, expressed concern with focusing in on specific proposals and looking for fine-tuned recommendations when the context and vision is not being incorporated and recognized that the process is somewhat backward, and expressed an interest in looking at the process from more of a district level.

Matthew Littell, summarized some of the general comments made by the Advisory Committee, including an interest in how the improvement will look, feel and function, as well as more clarity on the Chart House parking lot, and asked Tom Skinner to discuss how such matters have been addressed in prior MHP processes and to what level of detail can the plans be. Tom responded that the MHP is an initial cut to attempt to shape future development along the waterfront and the planning and regulatory tools at the MHP level are awkward when it comes to framing details and formal design elements. He noted that in the past there have been efforts to get very detailed about what is in the MHP and those have run into difficulty as ownership and economic conditions change over time and one needs to be careful with how things are framed. He mentioned that the MHP can identify certain characteristics that the Committee would like to see related to Harborwalk and other open space amenities such as plazas, but getting into specific structural materials can be a problem.

Vivien Li, asked that there be more information provided on all the city owned properties in the area as well as Sargent's Wharf in the North End.

Bruce Berman, noted that the planning process is iterative and all that has been discussed will be advanced into a draft MHP which will allow for further comment by the Committee and then the plan goes on to the state where there is a separate public review process and then, once approved, the project specific review processes can go forward, so there will be additional opportunities to refine and comment on plan.

Todd Lee, Harbor Towers Resident, referenced the high-high tides that bring water into the planning area and the importance of managing and mitigating rising water in the Downtown Waterfront area.

Victor Brogna, North End Resident, asked about how the Marriott expansion components would break through the existing walls, and the need to transform the parking lot if there is to be a view of the waterfront, as well as an interest in discussing a watersheet activation plan.

Chris Fincham, Harbor Towers Resident, noted that a plan needs to be developed in advance of discussing any particular projects and that the process is somewhat backwards.

Mary Holland, Harbor Towers Resident, also expressed concern with project proposal being brought forth at this stage in the process. Sydney Asbury, Committee Chair, noted that we have to address the fact that there are property owner development proposals and that the Advisory Committee should have the benefit of all the information that relates to the properties within the planning area.

Sy Mintz, Broad Street Resident, referenced congestion around Old Atlantic Ave and State Street and that pedestrian flow could be facilitated and alleviated by opening up the passageway through the Marriott Hotel in the alignment of Old Atlantic.

Rita Avanti, Harbor Towers Resident, expressed concern with the proposed Marriott expansion and less open space and the need to maintain pedestrian open space and access.

Todd Lee, also referenced concern with congestion and pedestrians walking and forced out into the street in the area in the area of Old Atlantic Avenue.

Gary Murad, inquired as to whether the meetings could be held at a later time when more convenient for working individuals.

Chris Busch noted the next meeting will be on October 22<sup>nd</sup> and will focus on the Hook Lobster property.

Meeting adjourned at 5:00 PM.