



Downtown Waterfront Municipal Harbor Planning Advisory Committee Meeting

Wednesday, March 11, 2015
Atlantic Wharf, 290 Congress Street

Attendees

Advisory Committee: Sydney Asbury, Tom Wooters, Susanne Lavoie, Greg Vasil, Vivien Li, Jesse Brackenbury, Bruce Berman, Nigella Hillgarth, Marianne Connolly, Jim Klocke, Joanne Hayes-Rines, Andrew Grace, Lois Siegelman, Louis Elisa

City of Boston: Richard McGuinness, BRA; Lauren Shurtleff, BRA; Chris Busch, BRA; Kara Nagle, Councilor Linehan's Office; Maria Puopolo, Senator Petrucci's Office;

Consultant Team: Matthew Littell, Utile; Tom Skinner, Durand & Anastas

Government Representatives: Ronald Killian, MassDOT

Members of the Public: Eric Geller, Judith Sugarman, Mary Holland, Steve Mitchell, Chris Fincham, Victor Brogna, Eli Sherman, WB Morrison, Al Raine, Nikita A., Kathay M., Charlie Fula, Karen Marcarelli, Jacqueline Lawless, Deborah Fung, Jim Cravens, Christine Colley, Sherry Grancey, Lisa Borgiani, Sorcha Rochford, Thomas Nally, Marcelle Willock, Richard Koch, Julie Mairano, Michael Yasutomi, Tom Walsh, Rob Stricker, Daniel Jones, Andrew Magee, Max Tanguay-Golucci, Tom Palmer, Jessica Seney, Jingwei Zhang, Sy Mintz, Charles Norris, Bill Zielinski, Will Adams, Valerie Burns, Erick Krauss

Meeting Summary

Chris Busch, BRA, introduced BRA staff and the consultant team and noted that the meeting would continue the round-table discussion with questions for the Advisory Committee related to the prioritization of public benefits and implementation of the public realm plan.

Sydney Asbury, Committee Chair, raised the first question for the Committee which related to the public realm around Long Wharf and Central Wharf. Bruce Berman, MHPAC Member, noted that it is the diversity of activities at Long Wharf that make it so attractive and contribute to the congestion in the area which some appreciate and others do not. Regarding new improvements to the area, he mentioned that it is important to ensure there is adequate funding and resources available to maintain benefits for as long as the Chapter 91 License is active. He indicated he has not seen many successful models in the city of management boards made up of property owners, however, good examples can be found at Fan Pier as well as with the Fort Point Channel Operations Board.

Vivien Li, MHPAC Member, stated that a primary issue at Long Wharf is water transportation and a need to better organize the watersheet activity to allow additional space for more vessels as there will be a need for a more robust water transportation system with the build-out proposed in the Downtown area along with plans for the casino and Boston 2024. Regarding open space she also referenced the end of Long Wharf and the Compass Rose location as an area that has not been looked at in 30 to 40 years, and the need to rethink hardscape and consider ADA requirements and climate resilient materials and design options, as well as how to better integrate all open space resources including the Chart House

parking lot and Frog Pond Park. Public and private partnerships were also raised and the Norman B. Leventhal Walk to the Sea referenced as an example of the types of opportunities that exist. Rich McGuinness, BRA, noted that the Sasaki Long Wharf plan represents Long Wharf as a very public space, however, there has been some privatization of the area with the parking lot behind the Chart House, the marina which is for long term boat rentals, and asked if there were ways to make the area more open and accessible to the public on the landside and waterside with more areas for the public, transient berthing.

Lois Siegelman, MHPAC Member, also referenced water transportation and the need for better connections and coordination among routes and facilities as well as public amenities such as shade shelters. Marianne Connolly, MHPAC Member, mentioned concerns with idling vehicles and Suzanne Lavoie, MHPAC Member, expressed concern regarding the number and staging of tour buses and trolleys and referenced the need for a comprehensive plan to manage those vehicles.

Vivien Li, referenced the Aquarium and the educational exhibits and activating elements around the facility and noted that new development in the area should have educational exhibits available for public free of charge as baseline requirements. Nigella Hillgarth, MHPAC Member, referenced the importance of public access around the Aquarium and indicated the Aquarium would have a new strategic plan out by the end of the summer.

Bruce Berman asked about the schedule for the completion of the Municipal Harbor Plan. Rich McGuinness stated that initially the intent was to have the plan submitted to the state later this spring, however, there is additional analysis the BRA and City needs to conduct and there will likely be a few months delay.

Sydney Asbury, opened the meeting up to public comment on issues discussed. Valerie Burns, Fort Point Resident, noted that the MHP should recognize Long Wharf's significance and opportunity for the public to connect to the inner harbor and the need for the MHP to capture and provide guidance for future development that advances the interest of sustainability and public access. Chris Fincham, Harbor Towers Resident, referenced the inundation of Long Wharf at high-high tides and expressed concern with the length of time it has taken to develop the MHP. Sy Mintz, Broad Street Resident, mentioned the need to reconfiguring and consolidating taxi and vehicular space and access along Long Wharf. Victor Brogna, Atlantic Avenue Resident, stated that the National Park Service should be involved early on in the planning process as they have concerns and restrictions with what can be done with Long Wharf and noted that there are short term tie ups at Waterboat Marina. Marcelle Willock, Harbor Towers Resident, asked whether a skate park was part under consideration and the need to include age specific amenities and cater to different populations. Jesse Brackenbury, MHPAC Member, noted that the Charles River Conservancy is constructing a skate park at North Point in Cambridge. Bruce Berman echoed the importance of benefits, improvements and programming that covers a variety of age groups and abilities.

Sydney Asbury then raised the question of whether there is support for formalizing Long Wharf as a public space with a priority on public use. Bruce Berman stated that he did not see as great a great distinction between public and private dockage and there is a more important need for public landings and expanded water transit berthing, but it doesn't have to come at the expense of marinas. Jim Klocke, MHPAC Member, asked if the question was focused on current land owners and uses or the future. Rich McGuinness, noted that in looking at what is public along the waterfront there is Long Wharf and most

of Central Wharf that is accessible, and everything else is private with public easements, so Long Wharf allows for more flexibility and raises the issue of whether we want Long Wharf in the future to be prioritized for the public without conflicts without private ownership.

Vivien Li asked for further clarifications on limitations on residential uses. Rich noted current zoning allows for residential uses on Long Wharf, so there is the question of whether through the MHP there should be limitations or prohibitions on such uses and assurances for facilities of public accommodations such as hotels to prevent conflicts associated with privatization. Vivien Li noted that she did not support any initiative to limit residential uses as part of new projects. Matthew Littell, Utile, mentioned that the MHP process would develop new zoning and residential uses on upper floors do have the effect of changing the nature of activity on the surrounding area. Bruce Berman noted that he did not anticipate through the process of there being any major change with the mix of uses on Long Wharf.

Sy Mintz, mentioned that when the urban renewal plan was being developed for Long Wharf there was an intent in making it a public place and keeping residential uses off of the wharf. Andrew Grace, MHPAC Member, observed that Long Wharf is a public space and because residential uses are currently not present there is an opportunity through the plan to formalize the existing use mix and maintain public attributes to ensure that residential uses do not have the effect of limiting public use and the public experience. Vivien Li, recognized that the ground floors of the Custom House Block and Chart House have been privatized with office use and that there is through the plan an option to require that this ground floor space become FPA space in the future. Jim Klocke, noted that it is important to not push existing uses and business out of these locations under existing lease terms. Max Tanguay-Golucci, Tufts University Student, noted that Boston is in need of additional housing and if affordable housing could be incorporated into new development at Long Wharf it would serve to activate the area more than a hotel use.

The next question for the Committee related to the concept of a shared street and tabling areas around Old Atlantic Avenue and State Street. Bruce Berman inquired as to what constitutes a shared street and tabling of roads. Matthew Littell, stated that a shared street accommodates all modes of travel, where surfaces for cars and pedestrians are coplanar and there are other visual cues and design elements which integrate different modes of travel and function to slow vehicular speeds. Tabling is an elevation of a surface to make the pedestrian and vehicular realm one and the same. Jessie Brackenbury noted that these topics appear to be design details and that the MHP should focus more goals and leave the design elements to be determined by the BRA and design consultants at a later time. Louis Elisa, MHPAC Member, mentioned that these interventions allow for a more accessible area. Suzanne Lavoie, inquired as to how all the traffic and buses will be accommodated if areas are made pedestrian only and expressed concern with implications for traffic and more vehicular problems in the area. Bud Ris, stated that there has been much discussion and agreement that pedestrians should have primacy throughout the whole of the planning area however that is accomplished. Sy Mintz, mentioned the substantial pedestrian and vehicular conflicts along State Street and Old Atlantic Avenue between Long Wharf and Central Wharf.

Chris Busch, raised the question of the development of district-wide design guidelines early on in advance of project permitting to address the design of public realm and street-scape improvements. Bud Ris, noted that the Committee is in agreement that such guidelines should be developed.

Jesse Brackenbury mentioned the importance of public restrooms and there are not currently enough in the area. Vivien Li referenced the Long Wharf Marriott which has recently installed new bathrooms with external access, and she noted bathrooms and associated signage should be a baseline requirement and available regardless of patronage.

Bud Ris also referenced the duration of the planning effort and asked what is left to be done and how long that will take and the need to assign remaining work items to actual dates to allow for more structure to the process. Rich McGuinness stated the purpose of the last few meetings has been to wrap up public realm improvement discussions and determine if what has been reviewed to date will make for a better waterfront. Next steps will involve developing cost assumptions associated with those benefits, as well as working on a formula to relate the benefits to appropriate offset and benefits where applicable. There will be a review of all the properties and recommendations on appropriate substitute provisions and then an involved discussion on an offsetting strategy for height, density, shadow and related development impacts.

Sydney Asbury noted that there may be meetings cancelled in the future until there are recommendations in writing for the Committee to respond to. Tom Palmer, Harbor Towers, asked if the source of the costs would be provided. Rich said that costs would be determined and implementation formulas developed but they would not be associated with a specific projects.

Meeting adjourned at 4:30 PM.