



Downtown Waterfront Municipal Harbor Planning Advisory Committee Meeting

Wednesday, December 18, 2013
Atlantic Wharf, 290 Congress Street

Attendees

Advisory Group:

Jack Hart, Bob Venuti, Janeen Hansen, Bud Ris, Phil Griffiths, Lorraine Downey, Vivien Li, Lois Siegelman, John Gambino, Marianne Connolly, Joanne Hayes-Rines

City of Boston:

Lauren Shurtleff, BRA; Chris Busch, BRA

Consultant Team:

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

Government Representatives:

Valerie Gingrich, CZM; Ronald Killian, MassDOT

Members of the Public:

Will Adams, Chris Fincham, Caroline Johns, Rane Stricker, Rob Stricker, M. Holland, Victor Brogna, Barb Boylan, Thomas Nally, James Hook, Wes Stimpson, Mathew Keeley, Matt Conti, Maria Popolo, Mark Older, Albert Lynch, Peter Nichols, Andrew Runido, Jim Cravens, Steve Mitchell, Don Chiofaro Jr., Al Raine, Danielle Pillion, Hugh Hawthorne, Tom Wooters, Bill Zielinski, Pam McDermott, Yanni Tsipis

Meeting Summary

Chris Busch, BRA, opened the meeting and noted that VHB has been selected as the consultant to lead the new transportation plan for the South Boston Waterfront and that they had started their inventory analysis and would be developing a public engagement plan; public meeting dates and website information to be forwarded when available. He also noted there is a revised MHP schedule for 2014 which will be posted on the project website and indicated that the January meeting may be postponed as BRA staff will need to review the planning effort with the new mayoral administration. He mentioned that representatives from the property at 400 Atlantic Avenue were unable to make the meeting and would present at a MHPAC meeting early in the New Year, and proceeded to introduce staff from Utile, the BRA's consultant, to provide an update on the Waterfront Activation and Public Realm Plan.

Matthew Littell, Utile, stated that a draft of the plan would be made available in the next month or two and discussed the process to date in developing the plan, including the public charrette in March of this year, the Onein3 charrette in May and the Water Dependent Use and Waterfront Activation Subcommittee meetings, which provided an extensive inventory of public realm enhancements, programming ideas and infrastructure improvements. He noted that the plan is the first phase of the MHP process as the activation plan will inform the MHP and provide a menu of public benefits to develop offsets and substitutions for the MHP. He mentioned the property owner presentations since July which have also provided some background and context for the plan, and all of the information gathered up to this point will be prioritized and categorized into the draft final plan. He provided a summary of pedestrian studies conducted over the summer to track the density, paths and locations of

pedestrian traffic through the planning area to better assess how the area is utilized and those areas where further activation may need to occur and areas that may need to be modified to better facilitate foot traffic; the study was conducted during July and August and further analysis will be conducted during the offseason months of January and February. He also mentioned the primary topics that guided the charrette discussion, those of connectivity, open space resources, means of getting in and out of the planning area, and year-round programming.

Regarding the organization scheme for the plan he referenced scale as one of the frameworks for the plan and discussed ordering the activation and programming concepts into small, medium and large interventions. He noted another categorical mechanism of how and when the concepts will be implemented, ranging from interventions that can be implemented now to those that will require more substantial funding and resources to realize. He then provided some examples of zones, such as the Long Wharf and Central Wharf area and Northern Avenue Bridge location, where there has been more targeted and detailed analysis of existing conditions, areas where activation and programming would improve conditions and locations for further activation to better utilize space and edges and create greater connectivity to adjacent areas and open space resources. He then provided a visual preview of what the plan will look like from an organizational, thematic and graphical stand point. He noted the next steps will involve refinement of the programming and activation concepts, providing more detail on locations and connections within the planning area for implementation, and further review of development plans and scenarios presented to date.

Linda Jonash, MHPAC Member, asked if the zoning effort would extend beyond the waterfront area. Matthew Littell responded that a Greenway Overlay District was recently established as part of the zoning code which involves the whole of the Greenway including the Downtown Waterfront, however, the zoning that develops from the MHP process will be specific to the waterfront. He further noted that the public realm plan would reference and relate to the Greenway and other open space resources such as Christopher Columbus Park.

Bud Ris, MHPAC Member, referenced the pedestrian studies and the lack of foot traffic out and around the end of Long Wharf and Central Wharf and the need for something to attract and draw the public out these areas which serve as great open space resources and provide significant views of the harbor and City. Matthew Littell, noted that during the ONEin3 charrette a topic of discussion was the need for more landmarks and objects that serve as destinations, visual cues and meeting locations along the waterfront. Vivien Li, MHPAC Member, noted the need for better signage to advertise the exceptional exhibits at the end of Central Wharf such as the New England Aquarium's Marine Mammal Center and interpretive signage.

A member of the public inquired about the connections between water transportation and landside transit. Matthew Littell noted that land-water transit connections had been identified as issues where improvements could be made and will be addressed in the public realm plan. Bud Ris noted that the whole of the planning area is one big water transit-excursion facility and is a big component of this area of the waterfront and indicated it would be helpful to outline what is working, as well as not working and discuss options for improving vessel coordination and traffic in the terminal areas as well as on the watersheet. Matthew Littell noted that the watersheet itself may be a discrete component of the plan.

Linda Jonash, referenced the two open space areas of the Greenway and waterfront and inquired as to how they can be distinct and not duplicative. Matthew Littell noted that there were many activation

and programming concepts from the public charrettes that focused on water and the waterfront as distinct from the Greenway and more green-space specific programming and mentioned that wayfinding signage could help in distinguishing the two resources. Linda Jonash also inquired about the concept of shared streets and public realm areas as part of the public realm plan. Chris Busch noted that the Complete Streets guidelines are now being followed by all City departments so as new developments come on line those standards and frameworks are the directives being followed for new street and sidewalk enhancements and construction. Matthew Littell, noted that legibility through the planning area does not have to be a function of just signage but designing spaces to give pedestrians a sense of ownership through integrated paving solutions and other public realm design concepts.

Vivien Li, MHPAC Member, expressed concern over the lack of representation from 400 Atlantic Avenue ownership entity at today's meeting and asked BRA staff to reach out to the owners to express the Committee's interest in having representation at the next MHPAC meeting. Chris Busch noted that he would contact Synergy Investments this week to schedule them for the next meeting.

Bud Ris, referenced the presentation from the Chiofaro Company in September and inquired as to whether any of those concepts would be included in the public realm plan. Chris Busch noted that the plan is going to be largely framed upon the findings and suggestions from the public charrettes and forums held to date.

A member of the public inquired as to when the plan would be made available. Matthew Littell noted that the plan would be completed in the next few months. Chris Busch stated that the plan would first be made available for comment from the Advisory Committee and then opened for public comment.

A member of the public inquired as to public access through the Harbor Towers property and how public access is represented in the public realm plan. Chris Busch and Matthew Littell noted that much of the access indicators in the presentation materials represent desire lines and what has been suggested through the public forums and an interest in making access clearer, and existing public access easements and Chapter 91 Waterways licenses could be reviewed to determine formal access requirements and locations.

David Manfredi, Principal with Elkus Manfredi Architects, provided a summary of the Hook Lobster property, focusing on the site constraints and opportunities and noting that a development design has not been prepared as of yet. He read a statement from the Hook family which noted that they intend on maintain lobster wholesale and retail operation on the site, as well as a new restaurant, within the ground floor of a yet to be determined development project; reference was also made to an outdoor seating area associated with the restaurant and a potential boat docking area. He noted that Elkus Manfredi has been retained to look at development feasibility for the property. The unique conditions surrounding the property were discussed including its location as a gateway to the Greenway/Financial District and the South Boston Waterfront/Innovation District, adjacency to the Northern Avenue and Moakley Bridges, vehicular access around the site, its current use and temporary structures, the small size of the site and pier deck constraints, as well as potential for use and activation of all four sides of the property to activate the ground plane and develop connections along the water with Harborwalk and an on the water channel-walk beneath the bridges.

Vivien Li, inquired about the size of the parcel and the size and number of structures on the property. James Hook noted that the site is approximately 20,000 s.f. David Manfredi stated that they do not

have dimensions for the existing buildings and the structures on the landside of the property will be replaced, where those on pilings will be repurposed. Chris Busch noted that the Greenway Guidelines had suggested a building height for the property of 175-feet. Tom Palmer asked about the schedule for the redevelopment of the site. David Manfredi responded that they have only been engaged for the past month and substantial work needs to be done to determine what uses would be viable at the location and make economic-development sense.

Vivien Li noted the need for temporary measures, such as landscaping and signage for the property in advance of future development to improve conditions in and around the site and asked when the Advisory Committee could expect to see development scenarios for the property. David Manfredi noted they would look into interim improvement measures and indicated they could be back within three to six months to review some potential development options.

A member of the public inquired about how long the Northern Avenue Bridge rehabilitation project will take. Chris Busch responded that it will take two years of design and a minimum of two years beyond that for construction and restoration of the bridge.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 4:35 p.m.