



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

Wednesday, February 25, 2015  
Atlantic Wharf, 290 Congress Street

### **Attendees**

**Advisory Committee:** Sydney Asbury, Tom Wooters, Susanne Lavoie, Greg Vasil, Vivien Li, Meredith Rosenberg, Jesse Brackenbury, Bruce Berman, Nigella Hillgarth, Phil Griffiths, Rick Dimino, Marianne Connolly, Jim Klocke, John Gambino, Joanne Hayes-Rines, Andrew Grace

**City of Boston:** Richard McGuinness, BRA; Lauren Shurtleff, BRA; Chris Busch, BRA; Charlotte Moffatt, Boston Environment Department

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

**Government Representatives:** Brad Washburn, CZM; Ben Lynch, MassDEP; Ronald Killian, MassDOT

**Members of the Public:** Steve Mitchell, Mark Warren, Max Tanguay-Colucci, Deborah Fung, Shawn Ford, Chris Fincham, Rita Advani, Anne Conard, Marie Peters, Victor Brogna, Daniel Jones, Diane Rubin, SORCHA ROCHFORD, Andrew Magee, Sara McCammond, Rachel Bogatti, Tom Palmer, Marlee Meyer, Robert M ViDaver, Jacqueline Lawless, Alex Blake, Jessica Seney, Michael Yasutomi, David Weaver, Mary Holland, Jingwei Zhang, Richard Koch, Todd Lee, Rick Moore, Sy Mintz, Charles Norris, Bill Zielinski, Will Adams, Thomas Nally, Valerie Burns, Erick Krauss, Al Raine, Beatrice Nessen

### **Meeting Summary**

Chris Busch, BRA, introduced BRA staff and the consultant team and noted that the meeting would follow a round-table discussion format with specific questions for the Advisory Committee to provide the City with guidance related to the prioritization of public benefits and implementation of the public realm plan. He also indicated that Vivien Li would be serving as Acting Chair as Sydney Asbury would be late in attending the meeting.

Rich McGuinness, BRA, provided an update on the Northern Avenue Bridge and mentioned that new pilings are to be installed to help support the bridge structurally. He indicated that the bridge rehabilitation plan has been to raise the bridge and fix it in place to provide pedestrian, bike and vehicular access, which would cost \$60 to \$70 million and require federal assistance. Since the bridge's closure the Mayor has asked a group of stakeholders to review options that could be funded by the city and have the replacement or rehabilitation occur sooner rather than later. The alternatives that have been discussed include a new bridge, or a restoration of some component of the existing bridge, and the Mayor expects a preferred alternative to be determined by the end of March.

Chris Fincham, Harbor Towers Resident, asked how long the bridge could remain in the open position. Rich stated that it is unclear and the bridge was not designed to remain in the open position. Bruce Berman, MHPAC Member, asked if there was a short term option to support the structure. Rich responded that there are bridge engineers evaluating temporary measures to support the bridge. Vivien Li, MHPAC Member, noted that the City's Conservation Commission has issued a permit for repair and

support work on the bridge. Sean Ford, Tea Party Museum, asked which lanes would accommodate vehicles and pedestrians. Rich noted that the long-term intend is to have the bridge serve all modes of travel, however, it is unclear as to how the design will develop and the design will be reviewed with the Committee so that feedback can be provided to the City's Public Works Department. Beatrice Nessen, asked about the role of the Massachusetts Historic Commission with the review process. Rich noted that the Fort Point Channel is on National Register and the bridge is part of that designation, and the Commission would have oversight during the bridge permitting process.

Matthew Littell, Utile, provided an overview of the public realm planning process to date its framework. He reviewed the Public Realm Plan and the lists of benefits that were developed through that process and the need to now prioritize those items and implementation strategies. Tom Palmer, Harbor Towers, asked if the benefits are to be considered offsets within the context of the municipal harbor plan. Matthew noted that the discussion is not being framed that way, but some of the items could develop into offsets and mitigation. Matthew further noted that the improvements should be viewed as enhancement that could improve the condition of the waterfront regardless of new development projects. Rich McGuinness noted that the discussion should look at the whole of the waterfront and what can make it a better waterfront, as well as how to prioritize the elements of the public realm plan and whether there things that the public realm plan may have missed. Vivien Li, noted there may be improvements that should be specified as baseline requirements.

The first question asked was what public realm improvements should be implemented immediately. Joanne Hayes-Rines, MHPAC Member, stated that signage and wayfinding needs to be improved. Jesse Brackenbury, MHPAC Member, seconded Joanne's comments and emphasized the need to improve means and methods of getting people to the opens space resources in the planning area and how to bring people to the water. Nigella Hillgarth, MHPAC Member, also agreed on the signage issue. Bruce Berman, noted the need for stronger connections to the rest of the City by water transportation, bike and walking, with structural improvements as well as innovative means such as lighting. He also referenced the importance of providing access for people to get down to the harbor and touch the water, as well as four season programming for the waterfront that is comprehensive and relates to the surrounding area and Greenway. Rick Dimino, MHPAC Member, prioritized the enhancement and maintenance of existing open and civic spaces. Phil Griffiths, MHPAC Member, noted the need for a formal recognition of Long Wharf as a formal gateway to the Harbor Islands. Suzanne Lavoie, referenced amenities and services that focus on the needs of residents in the area, as well as the children that reside in the waterfront district.

The next question related to specific improvements that could function to improve the entire waterfront area. Bruce Berman noted the Northern Avenue Bridge as key to resolving access issues along and around the bridge which is crucial to improving the area and the planning process should look to unlock resources to make it happen. Vivien Li raised Long Wharf and the need to rethink the end of the wharf and ways to improve activation and programming of the area, as well as Sargents Wharf in the North End and means to improve it beyond its current use as a parking lot. Marianne Connolly, MHPAC Member, seconded the prior comments on the Northern Avenue Bridge, and keeping in mind the conceptual plans for the 2024 Olympics. Jesse Brackenbury, indicated that traffic in general is a problem throughout the planning area for all that live, work and visit the area, and it is a current problem that will only get worse and it needs to be addressed now to improve multi-modal access. Joanne Hayes-Rines mentioned the need for the police to enforce traffic laws. Rick Dimino, referenced needed improvements to Parcel 16 along the Greenway. Jesse Brackenbury noted the need for improvements

to have open space areas in the planning area and the Greenway to relate to one another and draw the public to the waterfront.

The question of additional strategies that have not been discussed or those mentioned that should be reinforced was then posed for the Committee. Phil Griffiths, mentioned the need for a permanent, protected ticketing area that is a public space that is not dependent on a private developer and the need to organize queuing areas that do not interfere Harborwalk. Rick Dimino, added the need to look at resilient strategies that relate to existing and future transportation systems, as well as a shuttle system to connect North and South Stations. Bruce Berman, referenced investments in water transportation infrastructure such as boats. Jesse Brackenbury noted the importance of recognizing what costs we currently have to maintain the public realm and future maintenance costs that will need to be obligated to new public spaces and amenities. Rick Dimino, expressed interest in opportunities for new public moorings and areas for public dockage.

The issue of strengthening lateral connections from the Harborwalk to the Greenway and improving view corridors was then raised for Committee discussion. Jim Klocke, MHPAC Member, emphasized the importance of view corridors and referenced the open space and views at the Aquarium Plaza and Rowes Wharf, however, there are few opportunities to see the water in between and the plan should enhance views in the future. Jesse Brackenbury, mentioned the need of making those spaces that are opened for view corridors inviting and active, and not vacant public spaces.

The question of area-wide design guidelines as an inclusive tool to capture the issues of wayfinding, view corridors and touching the water was posed for the audience to comment on. Beatrice Nessen, noted that a master paving plan makes sense and is being done currently in the Back Bay, and also referenced development to the west of the Greenway and the need for connections to those areas, and need to improve general Harborwalk legibility. Sean Ford, Boston Tea Party Museum, mentioned that with improved wayfinding, signage and public amenities that the area's history should be integrated into those improvements and new infrastructure. Beatrice Nessen, spoke of a master lighting plan and that much can be done with creative lighting technology to make the area an artistic destination that can be viewed from land and water and have several dimensions. Marlee Meyer, noted the importance of pedestrian connections and facilities for residents and relating all the historic resources in the larger area.

Vivien Li raised the issue of commercial signage in the area and whether a plan is need to manage new signage. Rich McGuinness, stated that signage design guidelines are imbedded in zoning and reviewed by the BRA's Urban Design staff. Jesse Brackenbury, mentioned the Greenway wayfinding signage which is insufficient and the need for effective and innovative public signage such as the Freedom Trail surficial inlay which functions well to direct people, and the need for better and more consistent signage. Andrew Grace, MHPAC Member, referenced the importance of identifying important view corridors in the plan. Joanne Hayes-Rines, mentioned the opportunity of using existing public infrastructure such as trash cans that could also function to provide information and improve wayfinding. Bruce Berman, referenced lighting as a public art opportunity in the planning area and could also be integrated into street lighting and street signs.

Matthew Littell noted that many of the comments have been linked to wayfinding and identity and connections between the two. Sy Mintz, Broad Street Resident, spoke of the need to improve the

pedestrian experience along many of the crossroads that connect the Downtown to the waterfront, and lack of inconsistency of surface materials and conditions of those streets.

The discussion then focused on the Northern Avenue and Hook Lobster portion of the planning area and prioritization of improvements. Matthew Littell, reviewed some of the enhancements discussed to date including the Harborwalk connection beneath the Moakley Bridge. Jesse Brackenbury, noted that the connection from the Greenway to the waterfront in that location is problematic due to the highway ramps, road configuration and vehicular traffic, making it confusing and unsafe for pedestrians. He also referenced the current MassDOT ramp parcel study which is looking at opportunities for improving the condition of the parcels and covering the ramps, and the need for innovative thinking on ways to improve the pedestrian experience through the area. Lauren Shurtleff, BRA, stated that MassDOT, the City, the BRA and public have been engaged in a process to review options for the ramp parcels and comments are currently being received with a follow-on meeting scheduled for this spring. Matthew Littell, noted that Utile is also working on the study and that there are a number of factors that will play in to options to improve the area such as how the Hook site will be developed, sidewalk and roadway configurations and the redevelopment of the Northern Avenue Bridge.

Suzanne Lavoie, stated that she didn't see the Harborwalk connector beneath the Moakley Bridge as a viable connection due to safety issues and the fact it is a longer connections. Meredith Rosenberg, MHPAC Member, indicated there are too many questions that need to be answered before discussion of prioritizing improvements. Sydney Asbury asked Rich McGuinness to the background and rationale for the Harborwalk connector. Rich responded that it is modeled after the connections underneath the North Washington Street Bridge which are popular with pedestrians, as well as the Fort Point Channel Activation Plan channel walk which was a primary component of that plan. He also referenced the prior discussion of a pedestrian bridge over the Moakley and City's lack of interest in such connections as it interrupts visual connections. Andrew Grace, also referenced the under bridge walkways in Providence Rhode Island which were designed thoughtfully and are very successful with the public. Bruce Berman, mentioned that the connector would get people down to the water and could serve as a destination and should not be ruled out and make the place interesting.

Valerie Burns, raised issue with the stairway behind the Coast Guard Building up to the bridge and the need to capitalize on the opportunity with this planning effort and the redevelopment of the Northern Avenue Bridge to create an accessible connection through that reach of Harborwalk. Sy Mintz, mentioned the applicability of lifts and a pedestrian bridge connection through the Northern Avenue, Hook Lobster and Moakley Bridge to improve pedestrian access. Rick Moore, Harbor Towers Resident, suggested a Harborwalk arc around the bridges and intersections as a possible preferred route. Bruce Berman, noted the important opportunity for kayak and boat rentals on the Fort Point Channel.

Vivien Li, asked Ronald Killian, MassDOT, to provide an update on the proposed ferry terminal at 500 Atlantic Avenue. Ron noted there were some contractual issues with the first bid and it will be re-bid this year. He stated the facility will be ADA accessible and connect in to the docks at Atlantic Wharf and the facility will accommodate both bow loading and side loading vessels.

The discussion then focused on the Rowes Wharf and India Wharf area, with the question of how to prioritize physical improvements with particular emphasis on management and programming in an area that is largely developed. Vivien Li, stated that Rowes Wharf does exemplary public programming, however, the Harborwalk signage is not clear enough and the water transportation terminal is not fully

utilized and the gazebo is used primarily by private functions and we need to look at how to make it more public, and the new visitors center that will be developed at the ground level which should be referenced in the plan. Bruce Berman, seconded Vivien's statements and noted that programming is key and getting the word out to the public on the programming. Jesse Brackenbury also referenced programming and associated costs and the need to recognize expenses. Tom Wooters, MHPAC Member, mentioned opportunities for improving transportation access such as buses and car share options and being more flexible.

Valerie Burns, referenced public art that uses wind, tide, and shadow that are interactive and engaging and the need for the plan to recognize public art more broadly.

Meeting adjourned at 5:00 PM.