



**Downtown Waterfront Municipal Harbor Planning
Advisory Committee Meeting No. 40**
Wednesday, October 19, 2016
Boston City Hall, Piemonte Room

Attendees

Advisory Committee (“Committee”): Bruce Berman, Joanne Hayes-Rines, Nigella Hillgarth, Jill Valdes Horwood, Lee Kozol, Suzanne Lavoie, Marc Margulies, State Rep. Aaron Michlewitz, Bud Ris, Meredith Rosenberg, Lois Siegelman, Greg Vasil, Robert Venuti

City of Boston (“City”): Sara Myerson, Boston Planning & Development Agency (BPDA); Richard McGuinness, BPDA; Chris Busch, BPDA; Erik Hokenson, BPDA; Lauren Shurtleff, BPDA

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

Government Representatives: Lisa Berry Engler, Office of Coastal Zone Management (CZM); David O’Connell, United States Coast Guard (USCG)

Members of the Public: Will Adams, Kana Alhussani, Amy B., M. Barron, Jerome Berman, T. Bernstein, Victor Brogna, Richard Cane, Catherine Carlock, Don Chiofaro, Steve Dahill, Andrew Dankwerth, Lois Dargo, Chris Fincham, Elizabeth Gillis, Fred Goodman, Donna Hazard, Mary Holland, Grace Holley, Lejla Huskic, Laura Jasinski, C. Johnson, Julia Jones, Dorothy Keville, Michael Kineavey, Gabor Korodi, Eric Krauss, Tony LaCasse, Julie Mairaw, Sara McCammond, Arlene Meisner, Norman Meisner, Deanna Moran, Tom Nally, Bob P., Tom Palmer, Rachael Rosselli, Diane Rubin, Matt Rubino, Shelley Stenstrom, Wes Stimpson, Dan Thurler, Ginny Thurler, Bob Uhlig, Joe Walters, Wen He, Marcelle Willock, Steven Wilstein, Heidi Wolf, Julie Wormser, Barbara Yanke, Parnia Zahedi, Bill Zielinski

Meeting Summary

Mr. Richard McGuinness, Boston Planning & Development Agency (BPDA), opened the meeting at 6:05 PM by introducing BPDA staff and the consultant team. He continued that instead of submitting the Downtown Waterfront Municipal Harbor Plan (DTWMHP) to the BPDA Board at their November meeting, the comment period on the draft DTWMHP would be extended and the document instead submitted to the BPDA Board for their consideration at the December meeting. Further, BPDA staff and state officials from the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA), including the Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management (CZM) and Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), were continuing to meet, which could result in changes to the draft DTWMHP. Mr. McGuinness asked that if members of the DTWMHP Advisory Committee (MHPAC) were interested in further public meetings to advise him at their earliest convenience.

Mr. McGuinness stated that the meeting would include a presentation of the Wharf District Council's (WDC) Public Realm Plan and a review of the Downtown Waterfront Public Realm and Watersheet Activation Plan for comparison.

Mr. Marc Marguilies, MHPAC Member, introduced himself and Mr. Bob Uhlig, Halvorson Design Partnership, to begin his presentation of the WDC's Public Realm Plan. He stated that the purpose of the plan is to embellish the draft DTWMHP with additional ideas to transform and activate the waterfront. Mr. Uhlig explained the bounds of the study area and the objectives of the plan, including improved wayfinding and experiences, enhanced views, and better pedestrian and vehicular circulation. He highlighted opportunities for wayfinding from the Financial District and Downtown Boston across the Rose Kennedy Greenway to the waterfront and along the waterfront. Similar to the DTWMHP, the WDC Public Realm Plan focuses on three development opportunities: the Hook Lobster, Harbor Garage, and Marriott Long Wharf sites. Mr. Uhlig detailed a number of site-specific recommendations for each of these sites, such as enhanced wayfinding, chamfered corners for views, continuity of materials, etc. More specifically, the WDC Public Realm Plan calls for 50% lot coverage at the Harbor Garage site with a future building positioned to maximize views of the watersheet from key points on and across the Greenway. For the Hook Lobster site, the WDC Public Realm Plan similarly calls for 50% lot coverage for a future development to create a wider space for pedestrians on both the Harborwalk and leading to the future Northern Avenue Bridge. Mr. Uhlig continued that the Wharf District Council would also like the installation of an overwater Harborwalk connection under the Moakley Bridge on Seaport Boulevard, while the future Northern Avenue Bridge could also incorporate amenities such as a beach, pool, and others. To further activate the end of Long Wharf, Mr. Uhlig presented inspirational precedents. To conclude, Mr. Uhlig recapped potential capital improvements and design interventions for the district and shared estimated prices for these. Mr. Marguilies add that the WDC Public Realm Plan is available on the WDC's website, www.wharfdistrictcouncil.org, for those interested.

Mr. Matthew Littell, Utile, provided a brief summary of the MHP process to-date, including the development of the Downtown Waterfront Public Realm and Watersheet Activation Plan, and the drafting of the DTWMHP, which is a regulatory document as opposed to a typical urban planning document. Upon approval by the state, the MHP would be translated into the City of Boston's zoning code, after which development projects would be reviewed through the City's Article 80 Development Review process and the state's Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) Review.

To provide more planning context in addition to the New England Aquarium's Blueway and the WDC Public Realm Plan, Mr. Littell recapped past planning initiatives related to the Downtown Waterfront, including Boston 2000, the Crossroads Initiative (2004), Connect Historic Boston, the Norman B. Leventhal Walk to the Sea, the Fort Point Channel Watersheet Activation Plan, the Long Wharf Master Plan, the Artery Edges Study: Wharf District, and the Long Wharf Interpretive Plan. Moving onto the Downtown Waterfront Public Realm and Watersheet

Activation Plan, Mr. Littell explained its division into four subdistricts (Northern Avenue, Rowes Wharf/India Row, Long and Central Wharves, and the Watersheet), each with identified public realm improvements in specific locations, which are categorized into elements that improve connectivity, legibility, and activation and programming. To easily compare the Downtown Waterfront Public Realm Plan and the WDC Public Realm Plan, each of the WDC's recommendations were categorized as consistent, inconsistent, something to be addressed through Article 80, something to be addressed in a planned urban design study (which is an offset within the DTWMHP), or an enhancement to the Downtown Waterfront Public Realm Plan. For the most part, the two plans are largely consistent. Mr. Littell added that the Blueway presented by the New England Aquarium (NEAq) is also consistent with the spirit of both of the plans, though all of them depend on the open space available at the Harbor Garage site. Mr. McGuinness closed the presentation with a draft schedule moving forward: public comment on the draft between today and December 2; submission to the BPDA Board for authorization to submit the plan to the state on December 15; submission to the state on December 30; the notice of the DTWMHP in the MEPA Environmental Monitor in January 2017 and a state-administered public hearing; and a consultation session between the city and state in February and March 2017.

Ms. Joanne Hayes-Rines, MHPAC Member, asked how many changes the BPDA expects to make to the current draft prior to submitting it to the BPDA Board. Mr. McGuinness answered that the current draft has the maximum entitlements for each of the development sites, but that the offsets require further refinement.

Ms. Jill Valdes Horwood, MHPAC Member, inquired how the public's comments would be incorporated into the draft prior to submission to the BPDA Board. Mr. McGuinness replied that there is a period between the end of the comment period and submission to the BPDA Board to review and incorporate these comments as appropriate. He reiterated that there would be another comment period after submission of the DTWMHP to the state.

Ms. Hayes-Rines commented that a water transportation ticketing kiosk at the Chart House Parking Lot would be beneficial, but was reluctant to require it as an offset for Marriott Long Wharf in case their expansion did not proceed. Mr. McGuinness agreed that a contingency for it could ensure its realization.

Mr. Bud Ris, MHPAC Member, seconded Ms. Hayes-Rines comments, adding that a space in the Marriott Long Wharf's interior would be insufficient. He suggested being more specific in the requirement for a ticketing kiosk and waiting area, such as requiring the space be able to accommodate a certain number of passengers at certain times.

Ms. Suzanne Lavoie, MHPAC Member, asked why Marriott Long Wharf would expand for a waiting area for water transportation passengers. Mr. McGuinness explained that it is part of the trade-off between the additional revenue generated by an expanded footprint.

Mr. Ris suggested that the Blueway and WDC Public Realm Plan are harmonious and represent a starting point for the formulation of the dimensional standards of the Harbor Garage site, as opposed to vice versa. Mr. Littell agreed, but caveated that the DTWMHP should be flexible enough to allow for future public realm improvements not yet considered.

Mr. Bruce Berman, MHPAC Member, thanked the BPDA, MHPAC, and public for an extensive and engaging process, NEAq for a bold vision, and the WDC for their vision. He opined that not enough focus had been spent on Harbor Towers and encouraged the buildings' Trustees to similarly think boldly about the future of their property. Ms. Marcelle Willock, member of the public, responded that they have begun a strategic planning process. Mr. McGuinness explained that the BPDA has been reluctant to propose transformative elements on private property because of past experiences, but has instead proposed transformative elements in the public realm and encouraged private property owners to do the same on their property.

Mr. Lee Kozol, MHPAC Member, stated that a rationale for the substitute provisions for Harbor Garage has not been provided to the Advisory Committee and the public. Mr. McGuinness answered that the justification is within the plan.

Mr. Ris asked what the current status of the replacement of the Northern Avenue Bridge is. Mr. McGuinness responded that an RFP is pending. Mr. Ris suggested that this presents an excellent opportunity to improve the area.

Mr. Robert Venuti, MHPAC Member, cautioned that the DTWMHP could result in a choke point at the corner of Marriott Long Wharf where it meets the Chart House Parking Lot.

Ms. Lois Siegelman, MHPAC Member, suggested that not only should there be better connections and wayfinding to the water, but also from the water for water transportation passengers.

Ms. Horwood thought the water-based elements of the Downtown Waterfront Public Realm Plan could be more robust.

Ms. Nigella Hillgarth, MHPAC Member, expressed her appreciation for the public's support of the Blueway and added that NEAq would be submitting additional comments on the DTWMHP. She stated that absent more specifics on the redevelopment of the Harbor Garage, NEAq would be unable to assess the implications of the DTWMHP, but looks forward to working with the City to protect NEAq as a water-dependent use in the Downtown Waterfront.

Ms. Diane Rubin, representing Harbor Towers, requested that the WDC Public Realm Plan and Blueway be incorporated into the DTWMHP, especially the provision limiting the lot coverage on the Harbor Garage site to 50%.

Mr. Victor Brogna, member of the public, asked what the Chapter 91-compliant height for the Harbor Garage site currently is. Mr. McGuinness answered that it is within the draft DTWMHP on page 37. Mr. Brogna wondered how both the Downtown Waterfront Public Realm and Watersheet Activation and WDC Public Realm Plans could include a restaurant at the end of Long Wharf given the recent court rulings that disallow this. Mr. McGuinness explained that the City learned through discussions with the National Park Service that a restaurant could be placed there, following a conversion process, but added that other active uses may be pursued at the end of the Long Wharf instead.

A member of the public suggested that the Harbor Garage be setback from East India Row and Atlantic Avenue to avoid crowding the streets.

Mr. Tom Nally, member of the public, expressed support for the majority of the elements of the WDC Public Realm Plan, but argued for lot coverage of up to 70% for Harbor Garage to maximize flexibility for a design to be refined through the Article 80 process.

Mr. Tom Palmer, representing Harbor Towers, stated that he is aware of five studies regarding the economic feasibility of redeveloping Harbor Garage, all of which suggested less than 900,000 SF was necessary to be profitable.

Mr. Chris Fincham, suggested that the DTWMHP use the Greenway Design Guidelines instead of the proposed maximums for the Harbor Garage site.

A member of the public encourage the BPDA to incorporate the public's comments into the DTWMHP.

A member of the public wondered why there wasn't a greater focus on the Northern Avenue Bridge.

Ms. Mary Holland, member of the public, agreed with Mr. Ris's earlier comments about prioritizing the public realm ahead of the development proposals. Mr. McGuinness answered that the goal is to redevelop the Harbor Garage site and promote access to the waterfront.

Mr. Ris asked how the Downtown Waterfront Public Realm and Watersheet Activation Plan is incorporated into the DTWMHP. Mr. McGuinness explained that is a part of the DTWMHP, with the specific public realm improvements identified in the Plan listed in the DTWMHP.

Ms. Rubin wondered why the BPDA would propose the maximum entitlements for the Harbor Garage site. Mr. McGuinness answered that there is no proposal for the site and that the DTWMHP allows for flexibility for when a development proposal is filed, at which point the project would be further refined through Article 80 and the Ch. 91 licensing process.

A member of the public opined that replacing the existing garage with another building wouldn't promote access or create views of the waterfront.

Mr. Don Chiofaro, member of the public, thanked the Advisory Committee and the public for their commitment to the MHP process and expressed his excitement for realizing the vision of the Downtown Waterfront Public Realm and Watersheet Activation Plan.

Mr. McGuinness thanked the Advisory Committee and the public for their dedication and time. There being no further questions or comments, Mr. McGuinness ended the meeting at 7:35 PM.