



Saturday November 7, 2015

**Metropolitan Beaches Commission Lynn & Nahant Public Meeting
Lynn Housing Authority & Neighborhood Development**

Minutes:

The first community hearing of the 2015-2016 round of MBC hearings took place on November 7th in Lynn and Nahant. Sixty people total attended the meeting at the Lynn Housing Authority & Neighborhood Development. To begin the morning, Senator McGee welcomed attendees, and thanked them for coming out to participate in the process. He remarked that so much progress has been made since the first hearings in 2007, and that the Commission looks forward to hearing from the community and working together to continue to do a good job and to make things better on the local beaches.

Rep. RoseLee Vincent then thanked Save the Harbor/Save the Bay and all of the attendees for coming out, saying that she looks forward to working with everyone.

Commissioners in attendance then quickly introduced themselves, including Kathi Reinstein, Rep. Brendan Crighton, Jeff Chelgren, Paul Nutting, Bob Tucker, Rep. Donald Wong, and Sam Overton. Arriving just a few minutes later were Doug Gutro and Carol Haney.

Senator McGee acknowledged Dan Cahill, Lynn City Councilor-at-Large, who was in attendance.

Bruce Berman of Save the Harbor/Save the Bay then welcomed and thanked everyone, and said a special thank you to Sam Overton, Beaches Commissioner from DCR, and asked her to introduce the members of her team who were also in attendance.

Sam Overton thanked everyone for coming out on a Saturday morning, and acknowledged that beaches are a year-round resource. She introduced Susan Hamilton, Regional Director for the North Region, Christina Doctoroff of the Coastal Resource Management Team, Brian Kelly, Field Operations Team Leader for Revere, and Mike Tomaiolo, Field Operations Team Leader for Nahant.

Berman then outlined the agenda for the morning, which would begin with a brief history of the Commission, the accomplishments, and recommendations particularly concerning Lynn and Nahant. Next would be the breakout group portion of the morning, with sticky notes used to capture thoughts

from attendees—“what’s working well” on green stickies, “what needs improvement” on red stickies, and “what’s missing/things we’d like to see added” on yellow stickies. Berman noted that in this way we will collect ideas and look for patterns which will be high priority for everyone, and that the Commission has a track record for making those things happen.

David Spillane mentioned that the stickies were very important both in 2007 and in 2013 and they have in this way gathered hundreds of comments which DCR and others have been able to act on afterwards, and it’s an efficient way to get everyone’s thoughts recorded.

Berman noted that after hearings in the other beachfront communities, the summary report will reflect the comments made by the public at each hearing.

David Spillane and Bruce Berman then gave the PowerPoint presentation which is available online at www.savetheharbor.org/MBC

The PowerPoint reviews the Commission’s purpose and brief history and leadership, as well as highlights from the findings and recommendations of both the 2007 and 2013 hearings and reports. Spillane highlighted that there was a fairly dramatic difference in comments from the public in 2013 versus 2007—many of the problems most commonly reported in 2007 had been addressed and improved greatly by 2013. Spillane also noted that the Commission’s new status as a permanent commission will allow it to continue to address problems and ensure that there is no backsliding.

Spillane highlighted the five main takeaways from the 2013 report, those being DCR improvements, programming opportunities, connections to the beaches and islands, water quality, and the importance of the commission’s role in maintaining and continuing the progress that has been made.

After the PowerPoint and a brief video slideshow showcasing photos from the summer’s free events and programs, Spillane and Berman instructed attendees on how to separate into breakout groups and proceed with the sticky public comment portion of the meeting.

Six breakout groups discussed amongst themselves and filled out green, red, and yellow sticky notes reflecting things that are working well, things that need work, and new ideas or things to be added, respectively.

After about 45 minutes of breakout group work, a representative from each group presented her group’s common themes and thoughts to the room.

The first group to present highlighted the Nahant Causeway renovation benefits including great design and landscaping, aesthetically pleasing and effective protective fencing for endangered bird and plant habitat, and improved maintenance and trash removal. Also enjoyed are the Ward Bath House renovations as well as its hours of operation and cleanliness, the sidewalk maintenance and snow clearing during winter as well as general efforts by the local DCR staff, free summer concerts, historical signage at the beach, and parking for Nahant residents. This group noted that needing improvement is the policing of dog owners regarding leash and waste pickup rules, a lack of recycling receptacles, and

pedestrian and bike connections to the beach—related to which, there is a need for clearer “rules of the road” regarding mixed-use pathways for bicycles and pedestrians.

The second group counted DCR maintenance, sand raking and algae cleanup, the restoration projects, dunes and landscaping, Red Rock concerts, and an increase in numbers of people enjoying the beach as positive points. This group would like to see improvements in policing the truck ban on Lynn Shore Drive as well as a greater police presence near the Bath House, more signs regarding dog rules due to numbers of dogs off-leash, and replaced railings on Lynn Shore Drive as well as some sidewalk and street repaving. The group also noted that vendors and more lifeguards would be welcome additions to the beaches.

The third group noted similar positives to previous groups’, including causeway improvements, dune restoration, public programming, and the season pass. Needing improvement was water quality, lighting on Lynn Shore Drive, the reduction in parking spaces in Nahant, and the long walk from parking to the sand due to dune protection (a potential remedy being a drop-off area closer to the cut-throughs). Additional ideas on yellow stickies included increasing parking opportunities for kiteboarders during the winter (closer to the halfway house noted as a good location), as well as adding a weather cam or surf cam, vendors, wind turbines to power the lighting on Lynn Shore Drive, and activating the network of beachgoers and interested parties to help with policing of the beach.

The fourth group listed causeway improvements, beach improvements, beach maintenance in summer and winter (snow removal), historical reader boards, summer concerts, the Swampscott/Lynn fireworks, and swimming and lifeguards as positives on Lynn and Nahant beaches. For improvements, the group noted that the fences along Long Beach need repair, and parking along Long Beach needs work. Additional ideas for improvements were to apply the rules of the road to pathways via signage and crosswalks, etc., to help better direct pedestrian and bicycle traffic, a shuttle to drop people off at the beach, accommodations for the surfing community including parking, showers, and storage opportunities, increased services such as food vendors and equipment rentals, increased signage about available facilities, increased partnership with more organizations, and potential leasing of space for weddings and other private events to bring in new revenue.

The fifth group noted improved pathways and roadways as well as improved algae removal on the positive side. Needing improvement is dog policing and dog waste removal, off-season parking, walkways, cigarettes on the beach, and water quality along Stacey Brook. Additional ideas included food near the Ward Bath House, an online weather station or surf cam, off-season water quality testing, a permanent sign cautioning the likelihood of pollution after rain, and applications for rentals on the beach.

The sixth and final group praised upkeep of sand and algae removal along Nahant Beach, water quality on Nahant Beach, the renovated causeway, improved bike paths, fences and limited access protecting dunes and beach grass, and the halfway house. Needing improvement is water quality at Kings Beach, enforcement of dog rules on the beach, parking, access for emergency vehicles to the beach area, the fence and playground equipment, traffic flow, and snow removal in terms of damage caused to

infrastructure during the snow removal process. Additional ideas included more educational signage, better use of the Ward Bath House as a community place, mobile vendors at the Bath House, and more educational opportunities for children.

Following the around-the-room sharing exercise, there was a bit of time for discussion and to hear once more from the Commissioners.

Sam Overton responded to several of the common themes brought up by the groups, noting that reflectors would be posted near benches and other smaller infrastructure that was damaged last winter during snow removal processes, to increase their visibility to plow drivers—she also noted that new benches, fences, and guardrails, had been ordered and would be delivered within the week, so those things would be replaced very soon. Overton also mentioned that they are working with a vendor to get interpretative signage replaced. Overton encouraged everyone to complete RFPs this winter for new programming ideas. In general a goal this time around will be to begin addressing concerns as well as new ideas immediately rather than waiting for the release of the report.

There was discussion about increasing renewable energy use in the parks as a whole, from powering lighting via wind turbines or solar panels, to adding electric car charging stations in DCR parking lots.

Berman remarked on hearing the call for solar, carbon-neutral, wind-driven, energy-efficient parks, and that that is a sensible thing, and that we may be unsure on how to get there every step of the way, but that it's good to know that the appetite is there.

There was some final discussion about the need for increased accessibility to and on the beaches, and that input from the community would be the best way to identify points where increased accessibility measures would be most beneficial.

Karyl Stoia from Bike to the Sea then spoke briefly about needing support in Lynn and Nahant to connect a bike trail from Revere and Saugus.

Another attendee suggested green options for a shuttle to the beach from a satellite parking lot, such as pedi-cabs, which would provide an employment opportunity as well.

Lastly, an attendee commented that, as an owner of a surf shop in Swampscott, she received a donated surf-cam from Tim Kelly at NECN, and that it has been used by local police and the weather channel, so it could be a low- or no-cost possibility for Lynn and Nahant.

Sam Overton said that they would like to have more connections with the groups representing surfers and kiteboarders and the other new sports that have become more popular in recent years. It would be beneficial to get to know everyone involved in a more informal way in order to build those connections.

Senator McGee then closed the meeting by thanking everyone for coming and mentioning how powerful the original report was, including its list of everyone involved in the public process. He asked that everyone stay engaged and involved, and noted that the process continues to grow to include more people that want to be a part of the discussion. He also mentioned that water transportation was not

discussed much at this meeting, but that it was an important piece, and that Winthrop would have its own ferry to access Boston and bringing people to Winthrop Beach as well, and that water transportation is an important piece since it provides opportunities to access our waterfront. McGee then thanked everyone for making the process successful, and for helping to continue to make the beaches the best that we can hope for.

You can download a copy of the “Sticky Summary” of comments at www.savetheharbor.org/MBC