



Metropolitan Beaches Commission
The State House
Boston, Massachusetts 02133

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Robert Tucker
Friends of Lynn and Nahant Beach

#

TO: Metropolitan Beaches Commissioners
FROM: Save the Harbor
RE: Monday's Hearing at the State House

At Monday's MBC hearing, which will be held from 1:00 – 3:00 in room 437 at the State House, we will be hearing from three panels: Commissioner Lambert and the Department of Conservation and Recreation; representatives of beaches friends groups and local officials from Revere, South Boston, and Quincy, and a panel of experts on water quality and beach posting/flagging. It should be an interesting and informative hearing, which we hope you will attend.

In 2007 the Commission reported that "Both the communities and DCR officials share a common understanding of the problems we face in taking full advantage of the beaches' potential."

On Monday we would like to give the DCR Commissioner the opportunity to embrace the findings and recommendations the Commission made in 2007 and renew the administration's commitment to our shared goals going forward.

Attached you will find the agenda for the hearing, a copy of the minutes from the Commission's first meeting on March 18th in the Member's at the State House, and an overview of the Commission's 2007 findings and recommendations which should be useful as you organize your thoughts and prepare your questions for the panels.

You may also find these links helpful:

You can find a complete copy of the Commission's 2007 report online at: <http://www.savetheharbor.org/index.php/en/publications/89-beaches-we-can-be-proud-of>

You can find a copy of the 2012 Beaches Report Card on water quality and flagging accuracy at: <http://www.blog.savetheharbor.org/2012/05/save-harbor-save-bay-grades-boston-area.html>

(more)

You can download a report on the 2012 Better Beaches Small Grants Program at:
<http://www.savetheharbor.org/2012beaches.pdf>

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at Save the Harbor / Save the Bay at 617-451-2860, or to call Bruce directly on his cell anytime at 617-293-6243.

See you on Monday.

All the best,

Patty Foley and Bruce Berman
Save the Harbor / Save the Bay

P.S. We have also attached an updated list of MBC Commissioners and staff for your records.



Metropolitan Beaches Commission
The State House
Boston, Massachusetts 02133

MBC Hearing 1, April 8, 2013
The State House
Room 437
1:00pm

Welcome and Introductions

1. DCR's Perspective – 50 minutes.

DCR's mission and vision for these beaches – Commissioner Lambert
Staffing and Budget - 2007 – 2013 and beyond – DCR Staff
Beach Management– Beach Managers and The Complex Model – DCR Staff
Capital Projects and Master Planning – DCR Staff

2. Programming and Friends Groups – 30 Minutes

Kathy Lafferty, South Boston Neighborhood House
Barry Welch, Quincy Parks and Recreation
Carol Haney, Revere Beach Partnership
Patty Foley, Save the Harbor / Save the Bay

3. Water Quality Challenges and Beach Posting/Flagging - 40 min

Dr. Andrea Rex, MWRA
Dr. Judy Pederson, MIT Sea Grant
Dr. Jim Shine, Harvard School of Public Health
Kelly Coughlin, MWRA
Gary Brier, DCR

Metropolitan Beaches Commission

2007 Key Findings and Recommendations:

Management and Accountability

Findings:

No one unit or individual in DCR has clear/sole responsibility for the metropolitan beaches. As a result, there is a lack of accountability—to local government, to elected officials or to the public—for the state of these beaches. Local officials have cited good working relationships with DCR on-site personnel who work diligently to respond to identified problems, but these officials have been frustrated by the inability of on-site staff to get consistent support within the agency for resolving identified problems.

Recommendations:

- Create a separate unit/division (or appoint a single person) within DCR to plan, manage, program and promote these beaches as a unit.
- Appoint a “beach manager” for each beach to serve as the primary local contact for issues of maintenance and operations.
- Establish a Metropolitan Beaches Advisory Board to work with DCR and the local communities to ensure sustained advocacy, sufficient resources, increased accountability, and the effective implementation of the Commission’s recommendations.

Staffing and Maintenance

Findings:

Inadequate state resources dedicated to beach maintenance and operations, including recreational and educational programming, have created conditions that keep the public away or diminish the quality of their experience when they visit.

DCR managers have estimated that approximately 63 full-time positions would be needed to adequately address maintenance and operations concerns on the beaches between Lynn and Nantasket, including approximately 40 maintenance positions. Additional equipment including sand sifters, trash packers, dump trucks and other vehicles would need to be purchased to facilitate improved maintenance. New staff will need to have the appropriate qualifications and certifications to enable them to operate such equipment.

Recommendations:

- The Commonwealth should allocate additional funds to adequately maintain and operate the metropolitan beaches. Based on the assessment of DCR managers, the annual cost of improved beach maintenance and operations would be approximately \$2.7 million for staffing and \$500,000 for the operating cost of new equipment. DCR managers estimate that \$1.44 million will also be needed to purchase necessary maintenance equipment.
- DCR should develop and make public its maintenance plans and standards for each beach. These standards/plans should provide the basis for formal agreements with each municipality on the level of maintenance to expect.
- DCR should appoint a “beach manager” for each beach to serve as the primary local contact for issues of maintenance and operations.
- DCR should address administrative impediments to hiring maintenance workers by streamlining its hiring process, and, if necessary, by adding human resource employees or consultants.
- Competitive impediments should also be addressed by evaluating salary disparities and advancement opportunities.

Capital Improvements and Planning

Findings:

The public beaches represent an extraordinary asset for the people of the Commonwealth, and have benefited from significant capital improvements over the last fifteen years. However, needed capital improvements have not yet been implemented on several beaches, so that amenities and conditions still vary greatly from one community to another.

Recommendations:

- Complete the program of capital improvements that is already approved and/or scheduled, including: Winthrop beach renourishment and rehabilitation; Nahant causeway and beach rehabilitation; Nantasket renourishment and repairs; and Savin Hill and Tenean bathouses.
- Secure funds to complete several additional capital projects and repairs critical to the public’s ability to use the beaches, including rehabilitation of the Ward Bathhouse serving Lynn and Nahant; creation of showers and changing areas at Spectacle Island; construction of an equipment shed in East Boston; and rehabilitation of the Sugar Bowl in South Boston.

- Create and implement a 10-year master plan for the metropolitan beaches, developed jointly by DCR and the proposed Metropolitan Beach Advisory Board.

Programming and Partnerships

Findings:

Some of the greatest success stories on the beaches over the last five years are the result of partnerships among the state, local government, and communities to develop programs and events that draw people to beaches and create memorable experiences that keep them coming back.

Though most of the beaches are easy and inexpensive to get to, there are very few programs or events—like concerts, festivals, fireworks displays, family fun days, educational programs, contests or even swimming and sailing lessons—to attract people to the beach during the swimming season, and even fewer during the spring, fall and winter.

What programming exists is popular, successful, much in demand, and the work of local “Friends” groups collaborating with local government and community groups.

Youth groups, in particular, have cited programming as an important element in making the beaches more appealing and have suggested swimming and sailing lessons, sports leagues, inter- and intra-beach competitions and other activities as ways to enliven the beaches and encourage interaction between beachfront communities.

Recommendations:

- Strengthen the capabilities of local friends groups and community-based partnerships to work with the state to provide beach programming, support beautification, and sponsor special events that bring the beaches to life. Funding to support these activities should be sought from multiple sources, including the Commonwealth, but also including local fundraising, foundations, and revenues generated at the beaches. DCR should designate at least \$1 for programming out of every \$20 spent on these beaches.
- Create or designate an independent, nonprofit corporation whose primary purpose is to secure and distribute resources to local or regional partnerships such as friends groups, local government, other public/private partnerships, or nonprofit organizations to expand beach programming, events and activities and otherwise enhance the beach going experience. The group will work with the Metropolitan Beaches Advisory Board and DCR to develop guidelines for allocating funds.
- Direct revenue from parking lots and other vendors at these beaches, which currently goes to the General Fund (largely) back to the beachfront community where it was generated to be used for programming and enhancements to the beach.

- Direct revenue generated from fines for littering, parking or dog violations (largely) back to the beachfront community where they were generated to be used for programming and enhancements of the beach.
- DCR should dedicate resources to supporting recreational and educational programs on the beaches—a minimum of \$1 for programming and activating the beaches for every \$20 it spends on maintenance and operations.
- Secure funds to support local partnerships willing to undertake programming and other enhancements on the region's beaches, as well as the region's youth sailing and boating programs.
- Based on the success of the Revere Beach Partnership in enhancing the experience on that beach, the Commission encourages The Boston Foundation, Save the Harbor/Save the Bay, local businesses and others to help provide and leverage additional resources and expertise to strengthen existing friends groups and partnerships in the beachfront communities, and to work with communities to create new groups where appropriate.
- New sources of revenue (such as a metropolitan beaches license plate) should be developed, with the revenue going to support programming and enhancements to the region's public beaches.

Water Quality and Flagging Accuracy

Findings:

After 20 years and more than \$4.5 billion, the Boston Harbor Cleanup is a remarkable success story, and has had a dramatic positive impact on water quality in the harbor and around the bay. Over the past months the Commission has examined nine years of water-quality data from the Boston Harbor beaches gathered by the MWRA, and it has assembled and analyzed one year of data (2005) for all the metropolitan beaches.

The data on water-quality testing in Table 3.1 show that several beaches—Nahant Beach, Winthrop Beach and Nantasket—are safe for swimming every day. Others, like Pleasure Bay and City Point, are nearly as clean. Other beaches—in Lynn, East Boston, South Boston, Dorchester and Quincy—have more work to do.

It is important to note that at some beaches, work is already underway to address the water-quality issues that remain. In South Boston, the MWRA and the Boston Water and Sewer Commission are in the middle of a major improvement program that will produce some of the cleanest urban beaches in America. The City of Quincy has invested nearly \$30 million in

ongoing improvements that have significantly reduced the amount of pollutants discharged into Quincy Bay.

Recommendations:

- At beaches where more than 9% of the samples (or 9% of the sample days) exceed the federal single-sample water quality standard in any given year (and where there is no comprehensive plan underway to address the situation as there is in South Boston/North Dorchester Bay), DCR should undertake a sanitary survey and such additional testing, modeling and water-quality monitoring as may be appropriate to identify both the problem and potential solutions before June 2007.
- DCR should work with the US Environmental Protection Agency, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, Massachusetts Department of Public Health, the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority, local officials, advocates and other stakeholders to develop and implement an effective method for informing the public about water quality on each of the metropolitan beaches, and issue a regular report on both water quality and the accuracy of the flagging system for each beach where more than 9% of the samples (or 9% of the sample days) exceed the federal single-sample water quality standard.
- The Commonwealth should expand its revolving loan program and look for other ways to help municipalities find the money they need to make necessary improvements in their sewage, wastewater, and stormwater treatment facilities.