

METROPOLITAN BEACHES COMMISSION

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Summary

There were many similarities and some surprising differences within the body of comments collected by the Metropolitan Beaches Commission at the seven community hearings held so far. Participants at those hearings were asked to write down their comments on post-it notes in two charrette groups. Those notes were then collected and organized for future reference.

In very general terms, positive comments praised natural assets of the beaches and supported work that had been done as a part of state- or locally-funded improvement projects. At the same time, there were many comments critical of incomplete or insufficient improvement projects, inadequate maintenance of those improvements, and minimal police presence. Several communities also had concerns unique to their regions.

Almost every community had several positive comments about water quality improvements, and many reflected favorably on recently built or upgraded bathhouses. Community involvement, the ability to walk to the beach, and spectacular views were also brought up at most locations. Unique features such as the breakers in Winthrop or sand castle events in Revere were also mentioned frequently.

Problem areas listed in comments were often very specific to the area, but from these specific problems emerge several general trends. Every community had complaints about insufficient maintenance, especially trash removal, all but two beaches requested increased police presence, and many comments were directed at repairs needed at bathhouse and bathroom facilities. Sidewalk repair, revenue generated at the beach being lost to the state general fund, and lack of programming such as swimming lessons were also common among the seven communities. In several areas, many comments were devoted to unique problems such as the algae buildup in Lynn and Nahant, siltation in Dorchester or the seawall in Hull.

Trash removal, littering, and dog control were some of the most commonly raised issues. Several comments addressed the issues specifically, suggesting the addition of more trash barrels, or the use of smaller barrels to prevent residents from using them instead of the city collection service. In the case of littering, several people requested that police enforce fines. Dog control introduced debate both during the hearings and in the comments, with comments from people asking for better dog control and enforcement, and other comments from people respecting the rules but wanting to bring their dogs to the beach. One group suggested that a dog park area be created as a compromise.

Issues unique to specific towns were almost always geographically local issues. For example, the siltation problem at Malibu Beach in Dorchester is a result of the bottleneck created by a Morrissey Boulevard bridge. Algae in Lynn and Nahant seem to be restricted to that area only, and the Hull seawall issues are also unique to Hull's ocean-facing location.

The comments from each meeting are explored more specifically below, in North to South order.

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Lynn and Nahant

In Lynn and Nahant, many comments lauded the strong police presence, although it was unclear whether the police presence was supplied by the State Police or the Nahant Police. Several comments did mention a problem with trash pickup, and various other comments form a laundry-list of necessary repairs, from lamp posts to broken barriers on the causeway. A number of notes also mentioned a need for repairs at the bathhouse, and regular maintenance of bathroom facilities. Many comments did laud the landscaping efforts being made including weekly mowing.

In context with all of the other beaches, beachgoers in Lynn and Nahant also left many comments asking for more educational and community programming, and were hoping for a vision or plan for the area. Also, although there were no problems with police presence, several comments referenced a large traffic problem, especially during rush hour. Some comments did mention a problem with dogs on the beach, although there were relatively few comments about that relative to other areas.

Many comments were concerned with the algae buildup, which is unique to the area. The algae build up on the beach and rot quickly in the sun, producing an unpleasant odor. Most comments simply mentioned algae as a problem, while one comment suggested that algae could be sold for fertilizer.

With the exception of algae and positive feedback for police presence, comments in Lynn and Nahant fit into the general trend neatly.

Revere

Like in Lynn and Nahant, several comments lauded local beautification along the beach, including hanging flowers. Also, as in most other communities, comments from Revere praised the easy access to the beach. Comments also referred to well-designed parking restrictions, and events like a Sand Castle contest which are unique to Revere Beach.

In context of larger trends across the region, Revere comments also included a list of repairs to building around the beach, not enough trash barrels, and insufficient police presence. Problems with speed of traffic in the area were also mentioned. There were few requests for capital improvement projects, although a few comments mentioned that a pier or a playground should be added to the area. Several comments also mentioned poor water quality, one mentioning Lynn as a source.

The unique feature at Revere, similar to algae in Lynn and Nahant, was the sand. A significant number of comments said that the sand needed to be cleaned, dredged, or outright removed.

Winthrop

Comments from Winthrop did not fit as well into all parts of the general trends because the beach does not have much sand left due to erosion and is inaccessible at high tide. Positive comments focused upon the beautiful view and clean water, as well as the breakers and the American flag flying from one, and the easy accessibility of the beach.

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Negative comments were generally consistent with general trends, mentioning the need for a bathhouse, sidewalk repairs, more weeding, and increased police presence. Other comments requested a return of swimming lessons and better accessibility for the elderly and disabled.

One significant, if humorous, unique comment was a call for more sharks, referring to an incident where two sharks were spotted near the beach and drew large public attention to the area.

East Boston

Comments from East Boston nearly perfectly represent the general trends in public comments. Residents were very appreciative of improved water quality, the new bathhouse, easy neighborhood access, and families returning to the beach. A few comments also mentioned easy access for the disabled and elderly, which is a common objective at many beaches, but rarely an established asset. Unlike some other beaches, the view was not mentioned, probably because Logan Airport is directly across the water from the beach.

Also fitting in with general trends, there were comments about poor trash removal, general maintenance, many comments about rules concerning dogs on the beach both for and against, and concerns about a lack of security and police presence and subsequent vandalism from neighborhood kids. Several comments also addressed the local issue of Logan Airport, which may be having a negative environmental impact.

South Boston

Comments at South Boston also followed the general trends for the most part, with a few additional comments regarding reputation and access. A significant number of comments were enthusiastic about the newly refurbished bathhouse, improved water quality, easy community access and great views of both the islands and the city.

Many comments were concerned with the trash problem on the South Boston Beaches, including insufficient barrels and badly scheduled pickups. Facilities maintenance was another significant concern, especially with the recent bathhouse upgrade. Additionally, several comments requested that the boardwalk be extended and additional access points be added, including stroller-friendly ramps.

A few other comments also mentioned insufficient parking and difficult pedestrian access, while others said that there were too few lifeguards on duty. One unique but important comment described the bad reputation of water quality in South Boston, which prevents people from wanting to come back to the beaches. A small number of comments (relative to other communities) also mentioned that more beach patrols and police enforcement are necessary.

Dorchester

As with other communities, several comments in Dorchester praised the improved water quality, the recent addition of a playground, the boardwalk, and the easy accessibility of the beach for the neighborhood. However, as in other areas, comments gave the general impression that while the current conditions have their good points, improvements are still necessary.

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Despite some positive comments about the water quality, other comments claimed that the water quality was poor, with one comment citing contaminated storm water runoff. Some comments called for additional trash bins, but trash was less commonly mentioned than at other locations. Just like most other beaches, a general lack of basic maintenance was described, including invasive vegetation and staff who don't understand their work. Poor police enforcement was also mentioned.

Although poor maintenance was brought up in other areas, many comments in Dorchester focused on the staff, saying that the maintenance staff were spread too thin, poorly supervised and uninformed. The geographically unique problem of siltation at Malibu and Savin Hill Beaches was also mentioned in relation to water quality and a need for dredging.

Quincy

In Quincy, most of the comments focused on negative aspects of beach maintenance, and concerns about the ongoing capital improvement project on the beach and Quincy Shore Drive. The comments did show that Quincy seems to have strong community involvement and good programming, as positive comments outweighed the negative in that category.

Positive comments focused on the improvements to access to the beach, the success of businesses in the area, the role of the beach as a public space and the natural beauty of the beach as well as the view of Boston Harbor and landscaping efforts. Negative concerns focused in four main areas: traffic and pedestrian safety along Quincy Shore Drive, trash pickup, water quality, and a desire to place the management of Wollaston Beach firmly under the control of the City of Quincy.

On the whole, the comments at Quincy seemed to be in line with comments from the other regions, with perhaps more specific understanding of the issues, likely due to concern with the ongoing capital improvements.

Hull

In Hull, a larger number portion of the comments focused on positive aspects of the beach, suggesting that Hull has some of the improvements that need to be made already. Many of those comments were phrased as "preserve this," suggesting that although beneficial aspects of the beach may be available now, they aren't receiving the upkeep they need.

Positive comments ranged from appreciation of the clean water and bathhouse to the easy beach access, and included comments about the beautiful view, long open beach, and historic nature of the area. Many of the comments mentioned a specific favorite building or area of the beach.

Other comments showed concern about the ongoing plans for rebuilding the seawall, which is a major local issue unique to Hull.

Similar to other beaches, there were large problems with trash, and comments regarding low parking capacity. A number of comments described public bathhouses or bathrooms inaccessible at key hours, and many others requested increase police patrols and general presence.