

APPROVED June 19, 2013

City of Boston Conservation Commission
Public Hearing Meeting Minutes
Boston City Hall, Hearing Room 801
Boston, Massachusetts, 02201

April 18, 2012

Commissioners Present: Charles Button- Chairman, John Lewis, Vivien Li, Antonia Pollak,

Commissioners Not Present: Stephen Kunian, Jeanne McHallam, John Sullivan

Staff Present: Chris Busch, Executive Director

6:00 PM

Presentation by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council on the Boston Hazard Mitigation Plan update which provides a strategy for reducing the City's vulnerability to the impacts of natural hazard events.

Representatives: James Freas, Regional Planner, MAPC; Elaine Sudanowicz, Office of Emergency Preparedness
Documents: Powerpoint, Brochures, Maps

C. Busch explained that every 5 years the City's Hazard Mitigation Plan must be updated. This is the first public forum as part of that update.

J. Freas described the long range strategic actions that are to be taken to reduce the City's vulnerability to natural hazards including flooding, coastal storms, snow storms, earthquakes and extreme temperature events. This differs from emergency preparedness plans, which provide a course of action to follow during and immediately following emergencies. This plan looks explicitly at the future impacts of climate change, including potential sea level rise (SLR) of 2-3 feet, rather than planning based on past events. The Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 passed by Congress requires plans to be developed in order to be eligible for FEMA funding. Mr. Freas discussed the process by which the plan is being developed, including the approval process. MAPC is working closely with the City and has created a steering committee representing various City departments as well as four working groups composed of City staff.

V. Li confirmed that MAPC is working on a regional level with individual municipalities. She wondered how the organization manages to get all the players to agree on priorities. Mr. Freas explained that they rely on the working groups as well as two regional meetings during the process to promote cooperation and set priorities.

Ms. Li noted the City's recent successes in emergency situations. She hopes that MAPC can bring agencies together as well as the City has.

A. Pollak asked how modeling for SLR was being done. MAPC is not engaging in climate change modeling, but rather is relying on work already done by the City's Environment Department as well as other studies, particularly those done by local universities. The Environment Department will be hosting these studies on their website to provide easy access to the information.

C. Button mentioned a recent presentation at the Boston Public Library related to climate change, and noted the relatively recent (geologically speaking) accumulation of data used to identify trends and make predictions.

An audience member asked what role non-governmental & non-university stakeholders are playing in plan development. Mr. Freas replied that there are opportunities for participation.

Another audience member asked about the relevancy of the document on which the planning level of 2-3 feet of SLR is based. Based on newer data, climatologists are expecting a 3-5 foot SLR, or even a 16.5 foot rise in the 21st century.

E. Sudanowicz is interested in receiving information about more recent studies and wants to remain as current as possible.

Glenn Field, a meteorologist from the National Weather Service in Taunton, noted that Boston is a Storm Ready City.

Mr. Button asked about soil liquefaction and earthquakes. Ms. Sudanowicz does utilize soil liquefaction maps in their planning. Weekly earthquakes are monitored by the Office of Emergency Management. In Boston there is a low probability of a high-impact seismic event.

Ken Ward from Jamaica Plain asked when a draft report would be available to the public, and what sea levels are planned for and who makes that decision. The proponent responded that draft is expected in May/June, and the City decides on the SLR planning levels. The plan is updated every five years which gives the City an opportunity to make revisions and plan accordingly. Through the Sustainable Communities program MAPC will be looking at regional climate change adaptation strategies among 101 cities and towns.

An audience member asked about consideration of point source pollution potentially related to natural hazards. FEMA is directing MAPC to look at natural hazards, rather than man made hazards, so pollution is outside of their scope.

Mr. Button related the story of Spaulding Hospital's freeboard and raised mechanicals design, and Deer Island hazard mitigation design.

Mr. Freas asked all audience members to sign in on the FEMA sign in sheet.

6:35 PM

Update from the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation on Order of **Conditions DEP File No. 006-1285**, issued for pier and seawall repairs and the installation of new floats, gangways and ramps at Georges Island, Boston Harbor.

Representatives: Jack Murray & Mike Driscoll, DCR

Documents: Project description handout

V. Li stated that DCR is a dues paying member of her employer, The Boston Harbor Association.

C. Busch noted that this update is a requirement of the permit issued in October 2011.

Mr. Murray described how work began in December during this very mild winter. The project is on budget and on schedule and should be completed by May 31, 2012. M. Driscoll, the lead project engineer, drew the Commissioners' attention to the handout depicting the ongoing work, including erosion and sediment control activities.

C. Busch is in receipt of an NOI for pier & dock replacement and wave screen installation. The proponent confirmed that the work described in the NOI is new design work and is not part of this rehabilitation work.

Ms. Li inquired as to the amenities that will be supplied. Wayfinding signage and ADA accessibility facilities will be provided.

Ms. Li asked for an update on Lovejoy Wharf. The proponent previously made a commitment to the Commission to provide a water transportation facility at Lovejoy. The float that was relocated to George's Island, or a comparable float, will be installed at Lovejoy Wharf as part of the Chapter 91 license

requirement. Ms. Li asked for an additional update on Lovejoy Wharf and work on the pier & sea wall in the Fall of 2012.

Ms. Pollak asked if the proponent found any surprises related to the sea wall. Mr. Driscoll replied that the sea wall went further back than he had thought. An environmental remediation specialist was on-site during excavation. The cost of the project is \$1.5M for the dock and \$275K for the seawall.

6:55 PM

Update from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation on Order of Conditions **DEP File No. 006-0647**, issued for the construction of a water transportation docking facility adjacent to 500 Atlantic Avenue and Atlantic Wharf, Boston, Fort Point Channel. *Continued from the December 21, 2011 Public Hearing*

Representative: Ron Killian, MassDot Highway District 6

C. Busch noted that previously the Commission had asked that a letter be sent to Secretary Davey requesting a senior staff member be present for a February update. DEP has yet to schedule that meeting.

V. Li received a notice that Mayor Menino would be attending a dedication ceremony for new docks in the Fort Point Channel. Also, Public Works may be allowing scheduled summer openings of the Northern Avenue Bridge. Mr. Busch confirmed that there will be staff at the bridge to open it. Ms. Li noted that everything seems to be coming together in the Fort Point Channel.

R. Killian explained that they will soon be meeting with abutters to work out the details as part of the DEP Chapter 91 license & the Central Artery Tunnel mitigation requirements. Ms. Li noted that abutters in other parts of the Harbor have coordinated dock proposals, and she does not understand why it has taken ten years for this dock proposal to get underway.

Mr. Button wondered if too many docks were being built in the Fort Point Channel. Ms. Li responded that it is commensurate with development. The 500 Atlantic Ave is the only one required to be ADA compliant, which is why it is so important.

Mr. Killian claimed that DEP was controlling the meeting schedule. A. Pollak confirmed the schedule.

Ms. Li suggested the proponent return in 2 months to provide an update to allow time for the DEP meeting to occur.

7:10 PM

Update from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation on Order of Condition **DEP File No. 006-0738**, issued for the Millers River wetland mitigation planting and monitoring program, Charlestown.

Representatives: Ron Killian, MassDot Highway District 6; Representative, Weston & Sampson
Documents: Area photos

V. Li stated that Weston & Sampson and DCR are dues paying members of her employer, The Boston Harbor Association.

C. Busch noted that in 1997 the Commission issued a permit for the I-93 viaduct and ramps. As part of mitigation for this, 12,000 sf of wetland plantings in six areas along the Millers and Charles Rivers were required, along with dredging of the Millers and opening of the Millers to the Charles. Planting commenced in 2004 and 2006. Mr. Busch requested MassDot present to the Commission on the outcome, and noted that DCR will be maintaining the wetland planting areas.

Ms. Li clarified that the order permitting the work was issued 15 years ago, and mitigation in the form of a pilot planting program began upon construction completion in 2004. Phased restoration planting began afterward. The final report was issued in Fall 2011.

Mr. Killian noted that more area was planted than required. In December the proponent found that two areas totaling 600 sf were not growing vegetation mainly due to insufficient light and water (this result was predicted at the time of application).

Ms. Pollak asked about the soil used in the initial planting. It was clean, tested soil brought in. The higher salt content caused by downspouts likely degraded the soil.

Ms. Li asked about the barren, littered area depicted in photo #8. Mr. Killian noted that it was periodically utilized by the homeless and is cleaned up periodically and would be open to public use in the summer.

Ms. Li asked how long mitigation in areas 2 and 3 had not been working. Mr. Killian recalled that since planting commenced in 2007, it had not been working, despite several discreet efforts. The area will be planted one more time utilizing different plants and planting methods. The soils may be fertilized, but will not be amended. The runoff was redirected in 2009.

DCR is in the midst of completing the final mitigation measure known as the North Bank Bridge contract. It begins at North Point Park on the Cambridge side where the duck boats come in; goes over the MBT tracks; and connects to the south bank under the Zakim Bridge.

Ms. Pollak asked what would happen if the latest planting effort fails. Mr. Killian replied that they have met the requirements in terms of square feet of wetlands mitigation- there is no requirement that this last planting even be performed. Ms. Pollak noted that if there is no solution, a long-term erosion problem would be created. Mr. Killian expects that eventually something will grow in the area if it isn't continually being trampled.

Ms. Li believes there must be a solution to the homeless problem in this location. Increased usage and lighting may be part of the solution. Ms. Pollak is more concerned about the soil and potential for erosion than the trash.

Mr. Killian reiterated that all mitigation requirements have already been met. Ms. Li thought that although the letter of the law may have been met, the spirit has not.

Ms. Li asked for an update in one year.

Mr. Killian noted that DCR will take control of the park area whether or not anything grows there. The bridge should be complete in June/July 2012.

7:40 PM General Business

- **Motion made by A. Pollak and seconded by V. Li to adopt the meeting minute from October 19, 2011 as amended (4/0/0 7:40 PM)**
- **Motion made by V. Li and seconded by A. Pollak to adjourn the meeting (4/0/0 7:40pm)**

Respectfully submitted,

Stephanie Krueel

Executive Secretary