

# The Daily Item

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BY ALLYSHA DUNNIGAN | December 8, 2021

## COMMISSION WEIGHS INCREASED HANDICAPPED ACCESS AT LYNN AND NAHANT BEACHES

The Metropolitan Beaches Commission and Save the Harbor/Save the Bay held a virtual public hearing last week, focused on improving access for people with disabilities on public beaches in the state, including in Lynn, Nahant and Revere.

Co-chaired by state Sen. Brendan Crighton (D-Lynn) and Rep. Adrian Madaro of East Boston, the hearing included testimonies from local officials, people who work with others who are disabled, and people with disabilities or those speaking on behalf of someone they know who is disabled.

From his time spent working as a staffer, commissioner and now Chair of the Metropolitan Beaches Commission, Crighton, said beach access and looking at ways to improve this has always been a top priority.

“I’m so grateful to the folks who are working now to really highlight and prioritize this issue and come up with recommendations to hopefully improve access for everyone,” Crighton said. “Making sure that the physical aspect is there and that we are reaching every resident in the Commonwealth to highlight these important resources in areas of recreation is so important.”

Established in 2006, the Metropolitan Beaches Commission — which is led and managed by Save the Harbor/Save the Bay — works to make findings and recommendations to the legislature and the Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR) on ways to improve the metropolitan region’s public beaches.

The hopes of this public hearing, Executive Director of Save the Harbor/Save the Bay Chris Mancini said, is to help better understand the challenges facing people with disabilities on the metropolitan beaches.

“We are looking forward to working together with DCR — and all of you here today — to develop strategies to improve access to these spectacular urban natural resources for everyone,” Mancini said.

Andrea Gayle-Bennett, a Lynn resident and third junior vice commander of the Disabled American Veterans Department of Massachusetts, said that when accessibility to the beach is limited for those with physical disabilities, it turns them into spectators instead of participants.

“No one should ever be prevented from sitting on a public beach on a summer day, hearing the crash of the waves or the call of hungry seagulls, especially not because of a disability, much less someone who incurred that disability in service to our country,” Gayle-Bennett said. “Public beaches should be for everyone to enjoy.”

Boston’s Disabilities Commissioner Kristen McCosh uses a power wheelchair because of a disability she acquired as a teenager.

As someone who leads Boston’s overall effort to ensure accessibility and inclusion for persons with disabilities, McCosh highlighted the importance of going to the next step to make sure that people with disabilities are included in every aspect of life.

“We don’t all only strive for meeting bare minimum requirements. We strive for ideal accessibility, which really goes from accessibility to inclusion.” said McCosh.

This testimony, Crighton said, will help shape necessary improvements on the Commonwealth’s public beaches to ensure that these resources are always accessible for all.