



Metropolitan Beaches Commission
The State House
Boston, Massachusetts 02133

January 30, 2017

**Meeting of the Metropolitan Beaches Commissioners Meeting Minutes
1:00pm-2:30pm, State House Room 222**

I. Welcome/Introduction to new Metropolitan Beaches Commissioners

MBC Co-Chairs Sen. Tom McGee & Rep. Roselee Vincent

Sen. McGee, Intro

- We have a lot to discuss today as we head into February-- It's timely that we're here, as the beaches will be filling up soon. The governor's budget is out, and we will continue to ensure we continue to make the great progress and ensure that we retain the resources that we've worked hard to. We definitely don't want to see backsliding on where we were eight or nine or ten years ago. We're an important part of being a voice for our districts, being a voice for these beautiful resources. So again I want to thank you all for being a part of this and the work you do.

Rep. Vincent

- Welcome new commissioners Rep. Joan Meschino, Sen. Joe Boncore, Sen. Patrick O'Connor. Susan Hamilton
- **Roll Call:**
 - o **Barbara Bishop**
 - o **Rep. Crighton**
 - o **Sen. Linda Dorcena Forry**
 - o **Susan Hamilton**
 - o **Carol Haney**
 - o **Sen. Keenan**
 - o **Manny Lopes**
 - o **Rep. Madaro**
 - o **Sen. Mcgee**
 - o **Rep. Meschino**
 - o **Paul Nutting**
 - o **Sen. O'Connor**
 - o **Kathi-Anne Reinstein**
 - o **Robert Tucker**
 - o **Rep. Vincent**
 - o **Rep. Wong**
- **Staff in Attendance:**
 - o **AJ Alves, Office of Sen. Keenan**
 - o **David Biele, Office of Rep. Collins**
 - o **Greg Denton, Office of Sen. O'Connor**
 - o **Ryan Heffernan, Office of Rep. Meschino**
 - o **Keith Mahoney, Boston Foundation**
 - o **Patrick O'Brien, Office of Sen. Dorcena-Forry**



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- David Spillane, Goody Clancy
- Erin Walsh, Office of Rep. Hunt
- Sheri Warrington, Office of Sen. McGee

II. Report on Better Beaches Program 2016

Bruce Berman

Bruce Berman: We have said with increasing frequency over the years that if DCR does not have sufficient staff and resources to do their job, that it may be difficult and then impossible to continue to strengthen the agency and improve our beaches. We may be at that point now. That's something that we'll have to see. There have been significant cuts in the past few years, and more cuts this year, and this is proposed to continue.

That said we have to decide how we want to proceed. In addition, I would be remiss if I didn't mention that since July fourth, a number of things that had happened that have been reported at DCR have made it difficult for us to persuade folks who may otherwise be inclined to support the agency that the funds that they might invest would be well spent. We do not share these views. We have leveraged our modest investments, and these funds made a huge difference.

- a. In 2016, Save the Harbor/Save the Bay and DCR's Better Beaches Program gave away 219,000 in small grants that leveraged almost half a million dollars in free events and programs. We were given \$190,000, and the rest came from the Harpoon Shamrock Splash.
 - i. We also put our own funds alongside DCR's and other's to run the program at Carson beach, which we had hoped to expand to Revere and other places in 216. We may not be able to do it this year.
 - ii. Save the Harbor and our partners have spent quite a bit trying to take care of these beaches because we recognize that even in the best of times, early in the season, and late in the season, DCR does and will always need our help to get the job done. We have leveraged more than half a million dollars' worth of economic activities, a direct investment on the beaches -- the direct investment in cash and in-kind is \$459,000.
 - iii. Not this fiscal year but the previous fiscal year there were buyouts and staff reductions at DCR which affected the size of their workforce. We asked Commissioner Roy about those and what their implications were, and in response to a letter from Chairman Vincent, indicated to us that as of June 2016, the number of short term seasonals, although the number of long-term seasonals had gone up somewhat, was reduced by 2/3.
 - iv. In the 2017 budget we secured \$50,000 to support the work of this Commission, as it holds 8 hearings in 9 communities – that has been cut. We also secured funds to remove the pilayella algae in Lynn, Nahant, and Swampscott, and those funds were cut as well. In FY16 we were given \$190,000, and then in FY17



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\$100,000 to be distributed to support the Better Beaches Program – that has been cut. In addition to those cuts, which directly affect the work of this Commission and this program that we run at Save the Harbor/Save the Bay on behalf of and in partnership with DCR, there were cuts of \$434,000 and an additional cut of \$5,383,500.88 from DCRs seasonal staffing and from state parks and recreation operation.

- a. The budget summary in the provided packet projected spending for DCR at 800,000 -- and the 100,000 is still listed in the projected spending for FY2017 and FY2018, although we were told this 100,000 was cut. **Susan Hamilton will check in on this budget line item.**
 - b. Save the Harbor/Save the Bay is going to take grants, and then we're going to have to say yes or no depending on available funds. If in fact, the dollars are in the budget, I urge the Commissioner and DCR's leadership to find a way to get them out. We promise they'll be well spent.
- v. **Patty Foley:** Keith Mahoney, Vice President of Boston Foundation is here representing Paul Grogan, President of the Boston Foundation. We have enlisted the Boston Foundation's willingness to support the advocacy campaign that we will roll out over these next couple of months, and I think the Commission is very fortunate to have the service of the Boston Foundation and they have great experience working on advocacy. So we thank you for joining us and for the Foundation's support for this Commission.

III. **Discussion: FY2017 9c cuts to DCR's beaches line items**

Sen. Tom McGee & Rep. RoseLee Vincent

A.) **MBC Accomplishments, where the Metropolitan Beaches have come since 2006**

Sen. McGee:

- a.) After getting sworn in in May of 2002, I was getting call after call—on the beaches the grass was three or four feet high, the algae was loaded up, people were outraged and disgusted about the state of the Nahant beach reservation, and we had to address that immediately and try to get that resolved. Over time, by putting these modest earmarks in over the years-- for the algae removal as well as landscaping-- it has really transformed that area into what we wanted it to always be and it's been a great resource. We cannot go back to where we were in 2006, and what the initial report reflected. It was in disarray across the region, there were all kinds of issues-- understaffing, a lack of equipment, and a lack of focus on the great resource that over a million people every year use.
- b.) The MBC was able to focus and create an increase in staffing, obtain the equipment that was needed to upgrade these beaches, and get substantial capital



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improvements across the region to enhance the beaches to bring them up to a level where, by the time we had the second Commission report, the concerns and the challenges we faced were not what we had seen in 2007. By the second report, many of the challenges and the state of the beaches we saw in 2007 had been addressed and we were making great progress towards what we want to see these beaches year after year.

- c.) Over the last couple of years we have seen a substantial stepping back from that progress, and I would hope we realize that we can't go back to where we were. The investments and improvements were made happened during a time when we were in the greatest recession since the Great Depression, but we still were able to focus on the importance of these beaches-- not only for the quality of life, but the economic vitality of the region, the importance of these beaches to the people that live there and the people that can use them every summer. These are year-round opportunities; people are down there even when it's snowing out enjoying a beautiful natural resource. We've reached out to the administration, individually and collectively, to voice our disappointment and objection to the cuts that have been made, and hopefully we're going to be able to recognize that the investments that we made two or three years ago can be put back in.
- d.) All of us recognize that this isn't just about DCR beaches, this is about making sure that the agency itself has the resources to be a quality agency--every facility around the commonwealth that is a DCR facility.

Rep. Vincent: It is a shame we've come so far and now we seem to be going backwards. Revere beach, the beach I represent and the beach I love, was in such disarray prior all the work that this Commission had done from finding hypodermic needles in the sand to the filthiness and the total disarray and now our beach has become one of the most pristine on the North Shore. I've seen a steady decline last couple years-- less staffing, less cleanliness, less raking, I see less lifeguards. I'd like to hear your ideas on how we can get those cuts back.

Kathi Reinstein: Not one of us here thinks it's the fault of the employees of DCR- it's always tough when we call these out. This Commission set the groundwork and we were to take advantage and actually give the employees the equipment they need to do what they were hired to do. I think part of this Commission is to be very supportive of all the rank and file people at DCR who work so hard and share the passions that we all share and everyone's constituents and neighbors share.

Doug Gutro: Back in the late 90s I was the president of a neighborhood association, and water quality was a big issue on Wollaston Beach as was the overall cleanliness of the beach. As a city and with the help of DCR and this Commission, that stigma is gone. There is now a sense of stewardship and ownership, and the affinity for the beach is back. I fear that any substantial cuts could return us back to those days 20 years ago, so I hope that we can find a way to sustain a wise investment across all of the harbor beaches that doesn't make us take a step back.



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Carol Haney: We also have a safety factor depending on the severity of these cuts—safety on the beach. I don't think people realize how much impact this will have on everyday life, and I think that's the thing we have to get across...how clean it is here now, in contrast to how filthy it was when we first started the Commission.

B.) Metropolitan Beaches as an Economic Driver

Rep. Meschino: As far as I and Senator O'Connor stand, it's actually a gateway to town, and it is an enormous economic driver- so while I am here at the table very much about supporting the agency and their excellent public purpose for open space and natural resources, and public enjoyment, it also has dual purpose as an economic driver, not just for the town of Hull, but also for the region. There's something like a half a million people who visit that beach every year so it's absolutely imperative that the appropriate kinds of investments are made into the beaches and into the staffing but into the seawalls so that small business flourish, and that is absolutely critical to be connected for our region.

Sen. O'Connor: We might be leaving money on the table. These cuts are, in my opinion, very significant to the operation of these beaches and the Metropolitan Beaches Commission, and unfortunately, this is sort of a sign of the times, as we see senators and representatives and community leaders of individual organizations and programs suffering consequences of the many built-in drivers of our budget, the biggest one being health insurance. It's a continuation of seeing all of the other built-in, fixed revenue costs that we have inside of our budget suffering the programs that are meaningful and beneficial. I will fight and continue to work with the Metropolitan Beaches Commission to do as much as we can to restore these funds, but we do have to look outside of the box into other ways to generate revenue inside of the current structures that we have there.

Manny Lopes: As many of you know, we moved 100 employees to Revere Beach, we're there now as members of community not just enjoying the beach but also the businesses in surrounding area, spending money during lunch hour, paying payroll taxes. These are an additional hundred people that are bringing valuable resources not only to the area but also back to the state. Quite frankly, if the beach wasn't in the condition it was in we maybe would've thought twice about whether that was a safe environment to house these folks. It brings value back to the state- from an employer perspective- for employees to enjoy the natural resources like Revere Beach.

Sen. McGee: The economic piece is key, and to recognize that, when you think about the larger budget, the substantial impact is going to be felt because of these cuts. A great point was made about what's going on Revere Beach—the major investment we made over the years with MWRA and cleaning up the Harbor etc., has lead us all down to the beaches and allowed us to re-focus on quality of beaches and we were able to make some great progress on that. You cannot calculate the dollars of economic quality or improved quality of life or things like that, but they are tremendous. I think that's an important part of the discussion.



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We are challenged by the budget, but these investments bring much more dollars back to commonwealth in terms of those private investments across the region.

Sen. Keenan: In my district of Wollaston we have a number of businesses along the beach who rely on foot traffic and the location, and they've become real contributors in the community. I've also noticed is that over last 5-7 years as the water quality has improved and sand quality and all of that, and because of programs, in Quincy, there are two places where people of every nationality, race, you name it, come together: one is the YMCA and it costs to join the YMCA, and the other is Wollaston beach. You go down there in the summer and you walk along that beach, you see people of every sort. It's become a place where, maybe there's not a ton of interaction, but people walk past each other, they say hello, they may stop for a moment, and you say hello or pat whoever's dog, it really brings people together. And as much as an economic impact is very important, in this day and age when people can go to a place, feel safe and interact with other people of every other nationality, race, color, creed and really enjoy that is something you can't measure by dollars. Then you throw in the programs that are being offered and bringing more people in and it's difficult to measure the equivalence of that.

C.) Programming

Sen. McGee: The other important piece is the cuts related to the programming-- and those are where rubber meets the road in terms of people's ability to come down and have an experience that they remember, as a family and as children, whether it be the concerts at Lynn, the Revere Beach sandcastle, the other programming that's going in the region...those are key pieces of this as well. Those are what all of our constituents and people from our areas expect and appreciated during the summer, so, again, in the spectrum of a \$40,000 budget, these dollars are dollars well spent that really put more dollars back into the commonwealth.

Barbara Bishop: So many of the people who use our beaches don't have back yards or front yards; we're not Manchester by the Sea. So for a lot of the kids who grow up in the neighborhoods of East Boston or Revere, all the communities actually, along the beaches, it serves such an important recreational purpose, such an important social purpose. We need to work hard to preserve beaches for those reasons. Kids need safe places to play and learn about nature so they become future stewards of nature, parks, and public spaces.

D.) Advocacy Plan

Bruce Berman: [In the handout] is the timeline of building support to focus on what we need to do as a Commission and highlight where we need to be. We're putting a letter to the administration and asking the Commission members to sign on asking that the funds be restored for both 2017 and FY 2018, copies will also go to the Legislature. So, we hope to get all the Commission members to support that, so we can speak as one voice on



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what I think we all share, and support the beaches and the Metropolitan Beaches Commission and the work we do.

- vi. That will be February 1st, so that is coming up in the next couple of days, and as Brendon said we don't want to be behind the 8 ball. We will then do a follow up letter with signatures our community partners, friends groups, Better Beaches Program partners, and others.
- vii. On February 16th we will have a hearing at the state house, and I know Commissioner Roy indicated he will be there, so we'll have a chance to talk directly to a Commissioner on what's going on.
- viii. Then, we're going to hand deliver all of those signatures that we received to all members offices, and also to the executive branch. We will then be working with all of you to get postcards from the Metropolitan Beaches into email blasts showing the beaches at their highest points, the programing that went on and all the different things that we know are so special about them. That will be coming from Save the Harbor, and sent out by all of our partners as well. We're also going to be working on a communications strategy with all of you, so we're going to get the message out of the importance of beaches, I know we've been able to have great success in the past with local media and regional media, including a number of writers at 'The Globe' and 'The Herald.'

Sen. McGee: This is probably coming after the 16th meeting, so we're going to build up to that, and we'll start weekly. Trying to build up so we'll be going into March and April, we'll be getting ready for really high season of the beaches. So we're going to work together—all of us as Commission members—engaging our connections to write letters to the editor, OpEds, etc.

Bruce Berman: It is important to strike the right tone. We are doing a traditional advocacy campaign first through the Commission, and then through our network of supporters in a form of signing the letter, but then it will be a little bit different. We want to take strong images of the beaches at their worst and best, and present them in a positive way to underscore the importance of the opportunity; the economic opportunity, the recreational opportunity, for kids, for families, and for everyone.

- ix. There are two ways that every Commissioner and everybody else in the room can help.
- x. One, no one knows your beaches better than you do, and no one's got a better knowledge of what's out there that could be the postcard from the beach like you do. We have more than 40 organizations running events on the beaches just this year. If you have ideas for great photos for this, please let us know. First we're going to send them to the administration, while we're asking them to restore FY17 because they're the ones that cut it. We're then going to CC the Legislature to let them know we're doing our job trying to get them restored, and then we'll probably be sending post cards to the legislator AND the administration, and we'll be sending them all to you. We hope that you'll be sending them out to all of your friends, asking them to send them back to you and to all the other Legislators, and we hope that we'll be sending so many emails that we crash the servers in the House and Senate.



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- xi. We've heard from our elected officials that rather than whiny letters that yell at them, that if people like make their case in a positive way and there's a great photograph that they want to share, that it has huge impact and at the end of the day, that's what we want.
- xii. We also understand that this isn't the only budget cut people are wrestling with-- and that whether it's human services or education, transportation, you can pick it, everybody's wrestling, but we would argue that the dollars that are invested here, have been wisely spent in the past and are well leveraged, and have an incredible impact and are very important to our constituents.

Kathi Reinstein: On the advocacy side-- there's something called American Craft Beer Week, so on a national level, the national organization of craft brewers does something that you encourage your congressman to come to brewery, and there's a hashtag— can we do something in that kind of idea in developing a hashtag for beaches? And not just electives, but everybody and then we got like a twitter thing going on.

Bruce Berman: Save the Harbor mainly runs our advocacy on email, on our blog, and on Facebook. We would like to expand to Twitter if it is the right platform. I also think it's appropriate to point out that the Boston Foundation, brings a lot of credit and credibility- and is very useful with this, and has agreed to speak publicly.

Keith Mahoney: Twitter is very effective—It is low cost, high impact. There are ways of doing it creatively to enhance the message. And I think if the point is a positive message of reinforcing that it can be done.

Bruce Berman: Postcards will also be on Instagram. This is probably a good point out Maddie Clair. Maddie will be helping to coordinate our advocacy, and will be paying attention to Twitter.

IV. **Discussion: Finalized plans for MBC Public Hearing on Feb. 16, State House Room 222, 10am-12pm**

Sen. Tom McGee, Rep. RoseLee Vincent, and Commissioners

Patty Foley: I'd like to hear from the Commissioners who they think would be best to testify at the Hearing on Feb. 16.

Sen. McGee: I can speak for myself, I'm a legislator—and speak to this is what government's role is, investing and making a difference in people's lives, and you're right, there's a lot of things that we're cutting, but I think this is part of larger discussion of what's governments role is and how we get the resources in, and make sure that we get the dollars to make sure that we make a difference in the lives of the people that we represent.

Bruce Berman: Just one suggestion that I was thinking of was the Secretary of Administration and Dinance. Do you think that would be appropriate?



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Kathi Reinstein: Can we invite someone to speak on the economic development piece?

Sen. Dorcena-Forry: We should invite the Secretary himself, I think that's a great idea, in terms of having Secretary Ash come to talk about economic development. In terms of jobs there's so much opportunity to run on the beaches.

Sen. McGee: These are not technically hearings, these are Commission meetings. So this is a different dynamic, were in discussion about what we need to do -- although, we can highlight the importance of it obviously. So we should invite all three Secretaries—Ash, Beaton, and Lepore.

Patty Foley: We'd also like to have a panel of two or three people from waterfront communities who can talk about the beaches- what the the work that the Commission and increased resources and what it's meant for them.

Bruce Berman: One other thought was that we could ask prior DCR Commissioners, all of whom I've spoken to, and all of whom have said that if they are off the record, these cuts are devastating.

V. **Next steps regarding MBC efforts on behalf of FY17/ FY18 beaches line items**

Bruce Berman & All

- Save the Harbor/Save the Bay and Co-Chairs Sen. McGee and Rep. Vincent will be in contact on any follow up leading up to the **February 16 Hearing**