

Harbor Education Task Force Meeting Minutes

April 27, 2010

12:00 to 2:00pm

**MWA Offices
Seaman Church Institute
241 Water Street
New York, NY 10038**

The Harbor Education Task Force Meeting worked to develop recommendations for the Comprehensive Waterfront Plan (CWP) on changes needed to better accommodate harbor education by addressing the following questions:

Educational Access

- What is needed in the Comprehensive Waterfront Plan to improve educational access to the harbor and to the water?
- What are the types of waterfront and water locations that best accommodate on or in the water education programs?
- Where is waterfront and water-based education taking place?
- What sites could be used for programs with minimal improvements?

Programmatic Changes

- What infrastructure do we need for education on the waterfront?
- What other aspects of the Comprehensive Waterfront Plan must be updated and in what ways related to education, natural areas, environmental quality, climate change or other areas?

These notes summarize the discussion that took place during the meeting to answer these questions. For more information on WAVES and the Comprehensive Waterfront Plan, please visit <http://www.waterfrontalliance.org/projects/cwp>

Meeting Summary

Murray Fisher, Founder of the Harbor School discussed how access to the water and to the harbor is fundamental for teaching and learning at the New York Harbor School (NYHS). Every year for the last 7 years, NYHS has 50 students get out on the water 3 days a week. However, there are 1.1 million public school students in the City who need to have this experience. That our kids don't have this opportunity is mostly an infrastructure failing because we physically can't get to the water.

Murray suggests dividing the recommendations into the following 3 categories:

1) Clean Water: The NY/NJ Harbor will be a terrific resource for education if it is clean. People and students can't be in the water if it is polluted by CSOs and other sources of contamination. To clean the water we must:

- Find solutions to combined sewer overflows (CSOs) and Stormwater
- Put into place the [Comprehensive Restoration Plan](#) (CRP) for habitat restoration that will clean the water and provide more habitat
- Make sure the Clean Water Act is enforced. NYS DEC and NJ DEP enforce water quality standards with federal US EPA oversight. Meeting the Clean Water Act the fishable and swimmable (meaning any primary contact recreation) classifications for the NY/NJ Harbor, need to be front and center. Long Island Sound is currently classified by NYDEC as §701.10 Class SA and SB saline surface waters meaning the best usages are primary and secondary contact recreation and fishing. These waters may likely be suitable for fish, shellfish, and wildlife propagation and survival.

2) Calmer Harbor: To have educational access to the water and have more people accessing the water, it must be calmer. The harbor is now affected by waves rebound off of the hard edges of our shoreline. With softer edges and design elements we can reduce wave action.

3) Creating and Improving Access to the water (not just to the edge): We need to increase the places where the water can be accessed, where people and boats can access the water and the shoreline. Many ideas were discussed about improving access.

Ideas for Improving Public Access

- Design guidelines for piers: As we rebuild piers or build piers, they must be accessible for maritime use and emergency response vessels. A new guide for pier design has been developed and should be the future of pier design. Zoning for piers “design specs for the waterfront” should address:
 - Depth of water at the pier and design of dock to ensure access for all boats
 - The fact that its much more expensive to retrofit a pier than to build it correctly the first time
 - Maintenance dredging
 - Waterfront amenities for visitors (bathrooms, picnic tables, water, shelter, ferry access etc)
- The Public Trust Doctrine holds the right to access and use tidal waterways and shorelines http://www.nyswaterfronts.com/waterfront_public_trust.asp. Even though everyone should have access, non-profits still get charged fees to dock which get transferred to schools and users. There is a high concern about the costs and fees imposed for the use of public waterfront infrastructure and concern that the money collected is not being returned to lower fees. The Comprehensive Waterfront Plan or Action Agenda should identify the ways that city agencies can reduce/eliminate fees for access.

NYC Parks and Recreation Department make it challenging for educational boats to book in advance. The City should consider reducing the emphasis on fee based access, so that educational organizations will not get bumped by private paying groups. The City should simplify booking and access to existing locations for non-private, commercial entities.

- There must be more willingness and creativity to foster better use of the existing waterfront parks, resources and locations for education and public access while we are also looking to build new parks and public access. Some ideas include:
 - Transportation: The City needs to recognize the need for improved transportation to waterfront locations. If no public transportation exists, a bus system to bring students to and from the water must be accommodated.
 - New York City agencies must communicate with their staff so City employees understand why educators are there and don't tell them to leave. Maybe there should be a card or hotline for officials to confirm that educators can in fact be on the water or waterfront.
 - Encouraging more schools, principals, and teachers that waterfront and water-based education is allowed. NYC DOE Chancellor's regulations do not prohibit getting on the water. DOE and Teachers Unions need to be educated about any misconceptions they have by offering:
 - Training opportunities
 - City of Water Day or Harbor Day for schools
 - Foster access by public schools through more outreach
 - Involve Department of Education with Comprehensive Waterfront Plan
- There is a great need for major funding for historic vessels to increase maritime education.
- Representatives from DEC, DOS, USACE are on the Waterfront Management Advisory Board will hopefully improve access by addressing permitting.

Types of Infrastructure Needed for Education

The group was asked what kind of infrastructure we need for better public access.

1. Docking, pier, and infrastructure for the access of large historic ships to the waterfront
2. Beaches
3. Docks
4. Docks with habitat for oysters and shellfish in one place (flupsy) with solar power.
5. Bathrooms and sinks for groups so schools can use the waterfront area
6. Picnic areas
7. Shelter
8. Places for follow-up educational areas such as classrooms or labs
9. Wetlands for wetlands education

- 10. Ferry access and public transportation to education locations
- 11. Swimming pools such as the natural membrane pools to create access for swimming
- 12. Human powered boat access infrastructure

Goals for Improving Educational Access on the Waterfront

- The goals in the Comprehensive Restoration Plan should be the same access goals for education in the Comprehensive Waterfront Plan
- We need to have specific goals for reducing # of CSO Events from 35 to x
- 1.1. Million children each year should have “Harbor Literacy”. We should establish baseline harbor literacy in one year. Maybe 50,000 kids by 5 years through a harbor literacy exam or something similar.
- All 4th graders must touch water, can institutionalize “all field trip” days (events going on in the harbor on one day or one week for 4th graders to touch the water). Expand on existing Harbor Day and develop it for all schools.
- Every school within 30 minutes (door to door) of an environmental education facility needs to provide a harbor education experience.
- 3 Water-based education centers in each borough to give users tools to understand the harbor.
- # of Events of groups being denied water access = zero. (Instituted with complaint website of hotline where this can be tracked)
- Maritime jobs: # of local graduates in the industry
- Number of mixed-use facilities for small maritime businesses such as marinas
- Information about water education opportunities or programming: NY Harbor Estuary Guide and MWA Directory
- There should be an access point and educational facility within a 10 minutes walk from many parts of the City. Dedicated harbor education facilities should be on public land and have a 5,000 sq foot classroom with access for boats. The classroom and equipment don’t need to be housed on the water but at least within a walkable distance.
- Funding: We need a value added tax for commercial uses that can fund improvements and waterfront education.

Next Steps

- We will use the results of this meeting to develop comments for the Comprehensive Waterfront Plan on changes needed to better accommodate educational access to the water so please give us your feedback.

- Send us any additional indicators or interesting figures for the Waterfront Scorecard
- Send us additional studies, plans, or reports that the City should use to consider updates to the Comprehensive Waterfront Plan
- Send us your ideas for MWA's 2010 Conference for panel sessions or speakers based on the discussions at this meeting?

Appendix A: Overview of WAVES

Waterfront Action Agenda and the Department of City Planning's Vision 2020: New York City Comprehensive Waterfront Plan will provide a blueprint for the future of the City's waterfront and will cover the following categories: natural waterfront habitats, the working waterfront, open space and recreation, housing and economic development, climate change adaptation, and waterborne transportation.

The Waterfront Vision and Enhancement Strategy is an interagency initiative that will create a new sustainable blueprint for the City's more than 500 miles of shoreline. The New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC) is leading the effort to create a Waterfront Action Agenda, which will complement the Department of City Planning's Vision 2020: New York City Comprehensive Waterfront Plan by identifying new approaches to key waterfront issues and establishing a set of high-priority initiatives that can be implemented over the next three years.

- **The Waterfront Vision and Enhancement Strategy, WAVES**, includes three core components:
 - Department of City Planning will be overseeing Vision 2020 otherwise known as **Comprehensive Waterfront Plan** by addressing natural waterfront habitats, the working waterfront, open space and recreation, housing and economic development, climate change adaptation, and waterborne transportation.
 - NYC Economic Development Corporation will be overseeing NYC **Waterfront Action Agenda** will set forth priority initiatives to be implemented within three years. The Action Agenda is a working document that will continue to be an implementation mechanism shaped by the cooperation and expertise of city, state and federal agencies, as well as members of the Waterfront Management Advisory Board to address:
 - Challenges and obstacles
 - Desired outcome
 - Set discrete measurable, high-priority initiatives
 - Steps to achieve implementation
 - Agency responsibility
 - Timeline for implementation
 - Funding Needs
 - Deliverable: 3- Year implementation strategy
 - **Waterfront Management Advisory Board** is a twelve member mayoral appointees representing the maritime industry, labor unions, transportation companies, and real estate and hospitality businesses.
 - Chaired by Deputy Mayor for Economic Development Bob Lieber

- NYCEDC President Seth Pinsky will serve as Vice-Chair
- Members include: Department of City Planning Director Amanda Burden, Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Cas Holloway, one City Council member and 12 Mayoral public appointees. Their role will be to shape and advocate for the Waterfront Agenda to Mayor, City Council & Policy makers
- 2 Working Groups:
 - Planning Group: Detailed feedback on CWP process
 - Maritime, Infrastructure and Permitting Group:
 - Effective Environmental and Permitting Regulation
 - Develop Guidelines for Waterfront Infrastructure
 - Expand tools available for mitigating wetland impacts