



Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance

Meeting Summary
MWA Working Waterfront Task Force Meeting
November 15, 2011; 10am-12pm
Hudson River Foundation's Offices

1. Welcome and Introductions

- Greetings from *Roland Lewis, President and CEO, MWA*
- The purpose of this task force meeting was to discuss:
 - (1) A One Stop Shop for Permitting Assistance
 - (2) Maritime retention in New York City
 - (3) An update on dredge material management discussion
 - (4) Implementation of the NYC Comprehensive Waterfront Plan (CWP) and the NYC Waterfront Action Agenda
 - (5) Short update about the Harbor Coalition.

2. One Stop Shop for Permitting Assistance:

Katie Axt with NYC Economic Development Corporation gave a presentation on the work EDC has done to explore a One-Stop-Shop for Permitting Assistance. She described the current thinking of how such a program would be structured. The major components of the program could be: a website, a central location for accessing multi-agency permitting and regulatory information, new guidance documents for application preparation, a person who picks up the phone, an advocate, and/or an online portal for submission and live review of applications.

The presentation is available here:

http://www.waterfrontalliance.org/sites/default/files/katie_axt_one_stop_shop_presentation.pdf

Questions and suggestions were as follows:

- City agencies have seminars or classes where you can go to understand permitting. Could NYSDEC or another agency have a permitting class or clinic to give feedback to help with the permitting process? (Karen Lee, Lee & Associates Architects PLLC).

- What are they doing in the Baltimore, Boston harbor? What can we learn from other cities with large waterfronts about streamlining the permitting process? (Joe Hartigan, citizen).
- NYSDEC had a permitting guide that has been used since the 70's. It seems it's not being used now. It needs to be updated. But now regulators are out of touch with the harbor and permitting decisions are inconsistent. We should take the program from the NYSDEC and refine it. Additionally, face-to-face meetings with regulators should be incorporated and prioritized. Meeting on-the-spot helps nip a lot of problems in the bud. You can save a lot of paperwork by doing an onsite meeting (Dan Mundy Sr., Jamaica Bay Eco Watchers).
- The total number of permitters working has gone down over the years. Accordingly, a psychology of despair has set in with permitters because they are overwhelmed. NYSDEC is working with their current permitters to manage their work through planning and prioritization. However, there needs to be more funds for permitters. The permitting process could be modeled on the DMV, which has impressively improved their process over the years. Permitting cannot always be perfectly objective: there is always going to be a certain amount of subjectivity when it comes to issues such as wetland impacts. The importance of creating a culture of accountability cannot be overstated. We have a responsibility to both protect natural environments and promote economic development (Venetia Lannon, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation).
- A participant from the commercial community explained that they 'already have internal processes that help accelerate permitting. We should have agencies put part of their web budget towards building a single one stop website.' Presenter *Katie Axt, EDC* explained that EDC and others have already made steps in that direction. But it is going to cost \$500,000 to \$550,000 to incorporate the interactive features which would improve the process the most. Also, it would be ideal to have staff to answer the phone as well as maintain the website.
- Another participant replied that \$500,000-550,000 is really not that much money. I think some organizations would be willing to invest in this. If this small amount of investment in permitting is holding up development in a whole region, then this investment should be negligible. Additionally we need to mandate the ability to go to an administrative law judge, ombudsman or go to a better mediation route.'

- A participant suggested that a ‘Regulator of the Day’ should be designated to answer the phone each day to address questions about permitting. This strategy, he noted, has had remarkable success in other parts of the country.
- The following issues were also discussed:
 - Holding seminars or clinics in addition to the website where individuals can walk in or have questions answered over the phone.
 - Updating tidal wetlands info from DEC and including this information on a website or part of a One-Stop-Shop.
 - Onsite answering of questions in a uniform manner.
 - A checklist and list of resource materials should be created.
 - Cross referencing is necessary because each agency needs the update.
 - Fees from permits may be a source of funds for a One-Stop-Shop.

3. Maritime Retention

A presentation on maritime retention in New York City was given by the Andrew Genn of the EDC.

Follow the link to view the pdf of the presentation:

http://www.waterfrontalliance.org/sites/default/files/working_waterfront_tf_mtg_presentation_a_genn.pdf

- The following issues were discussed:
 - Promoting NYC as a welcoming harbor for tall ships.
 - Look to Greenport, NY’s advertising as an example of what might be done to attract ships.
 - Upland amenities from ferry stops need to be evaluated in order to make sure ridership is maintained in the winter months and during inclement weather.
 - Connections can be made to great public spaces if ferry stops are incorporated.

4. Dredging

A presentation was provided by John Tavoraro, US Army Corps of Engineers.

Follow the link to view the pdf of the presentation:

http://www.waterfrontalliance.org/sites/default/files/mwa_workshop_15_nov_dmspg_john_tavoraro.pdf

- A speaker representing Jamaica Bay stated: All the representatives in Jamaica Bay are against putting dredged material in borrow pits in Jamaica Bay. Put an environmental fee on major corporations in order to process dredged materials in a responsible way.
- In response, Mr. Tavolaro stated: There is no push or advocacy to dispose material at Jamaica Bay.
- An EDC representative added: upland disposal is prohibitively expensive. How do we make it easier to do things on the waterfront? How do you lower the cost of dredging? There is too much dredge for us to handle it all through upland placement.
- Mr. Tavolaro: Sustainability is a priority at Army Corps.

5. Implementation of the NYC Comprehensive Waterfront Plan and the NYC Waterfront Action Agenda

After a brief discussion of the NYC Comprehensive Waterfront Plan and NYC Waterfront Management Advisory Board by Roland Lewis, MWA, there was an opportunity for the task force to have questions answered by Michael Marrella, NYC Department of City Planning (DCP):

- An individual stated that bringing someone from NYC Planning to community meetings to explain projects underway in area would be a good idea.
- Mr. Marrella responded that DCP is in the process of updating the Waterfront Revitalization Plan (WRP) and will be visiting all NYC community boards in a process similar to the approvals needed for 197a plans.
- Another speaker: We should look at upland amenities. Connecting great public spaces with ferries. Connecting upland amenities with ferries could have a great impact on ridership. Sheltered/ticketing opportunity at upland destinations could protect people from the weather. Waiting areas could improve ridership.
- *Dan Mundy, Jamaica Bay Eco Watchers:* Opportunities for ferries exist in the Rockaways. If you build it they will come. Dredging material could even be used in this effort.

6. Harbor Coalition

MWA provided an update on the Harbor Coalition's work and announced that its conference will be held May 18, 2012.