



Are you on board?

15 State Street, Suite 1100
Boston, MA 02109
617.223.8671
bostonharbornow.org

June 10, 2020

Via email: susan.you@state.ma.us

MassDEP Waterways Regulation Program
Attention: Susan You
One Winter Street, 5th floor
Boston, MA 02108

Re: Pier 1 - Tallship Caledonia at Eastie Landing
Chapter 91 Permit Application, W20-5775-N

Dear Ms. You,

On behalf of Boston Harbor Now, thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Chapter 91 permit application for the Tallship Caledonia at Eastie Landing. The application seeks a temporary permit (May 2020 – October 2020) for a floating restaurant on the Tallship Caledonia and adjacent Eastie Landing, which includes an exterior food court and entertainment space for public use. A member of our staff participated in the public hearing on this project on May 21st, and we submit these comments based on the application and the information shared during that hearing.

Project Site

The Project Site is on Pier 1 in East Boston, which is owned by the Massachusetts Port Authority and is currently leased to the Roseland Residential Trust. The existing pier projects into Boston Harbor and abuts the "Portside at East Pier" residential development. The Project Site is located within the 100-year flood zone, AE 12 according to the most recent FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Map.

Public Access

This project will repurpose 25,000 square feet of Pier 1 into an active seasonal use to allow the public to dine, shop, and explore this waterfront space. It will entail no construction except for very limited upgrades to the utility infrastructure on the pier and the installation of temporary

lighting and other amenities to enhance the use of the pier by the public. The Tallship Caledonia will be docked at the pier and provide outdoor dining to the public. By creating new seasonal commercial uses like a restaurant, café, and retail space, the project will activate Commonwealth tidelands consistent with 310 CMR 9.53. This is an excellent use of this space and is fully consistent with the goals of Chapter 91.

Among the categorical inclusions pursuant to 310 CMR 9.32(1)(a) for tidelands outside of DPAs or ACECs are “stationary vessels located below the high water mark and proposed for conversion to accessory use or to nonwater-dependent facilities of public accomodation...” (310 CMR 9.32(1)(a)(6)). Clearly this is a use that is anticipated by, and permissible under, the regulations. We are supportive of providing such a “floating amenity” to the community. We would caution, however, that this use be implemented in a way that will create truly equitable access for the diverse citizens of East Boston and beyond. Any such public amenity must not create a sense of a “walled-off” waterfront or in any way diminish the capacity of residents to enjoy their harbor.

In addition, the proponent of the project intends to expand its existing water taxi service that currently runs between the Charlestown Navy Yard and the dock at the base of Lewis Street. This service brought approximately 30,000 people to and from the East Boston waterfront last year. As active supporters of water transportation, we support this effort to bring people to the East Boston waterfront on the water rather than increase the burden on the MBTA’s Blue Line service. This, too, is consistent with activating the area for public use.

We would only caution that, during this time of concern over the Corona virus, the use of these facilities (including the expanded water taxi service) be subject to a detailed management plan, which will, consistent with the state’s guidance on opening up the economy, sufficiently protect the public as they enjoy these amenities.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Aaron Toffler', written in a cursive style.

Aaron Toffler
Policy Director
Boston Harbor Now