



Are you on board?

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November 23, 2022

Via email: barbara.farina@mass.gov

Mr. Douglas Rice, Commissioner
Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation
251 Causeway Street, 9th Floor
Boston, MA 02114

Attn: Barbara Farina

Re: Castle Island Restroom Improvements Feasibility Study

Joseph Aiello
Grace Macomber Bird
Jamie M. Fay
Robert Golledge
Elizabeth Grob
Meaghan Hooper-Berdik
Bryan J. Koop
Ann Lagasse
Malia Lazu
Mary Kay Leonard
Shelagh Mahoney
Martin O'Neill
Elaine Richardson
Demetriouse Russell
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Dear Ms. Farina,

Boston Harbor Now respectfully submits the following comments on the *Castle Island Restroom Improvements Feasibility Study* presented by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). Our organization recently attended the November 11th, 2022 public meeting, and we are excited to see the bathroom facilities thoughtfully expanded at this site.

As longtime stewards of the Boston Harborwalk, Boston Harbor Now is committed to ensuring the waterfront we build today is designed for a more resilient and inclusive future. We use the term “Harborwalk 2.0” to capture the aspirations of this work to ensure the waterfront is accessible and welcoming, is prepared for the coastal impacts of climate change, and centers equity and inclusion in the development of its design, construction, and programming. An accessible Harborwalk should have both linear and lateral connections between the city and the water as well as numerous activation strategies to serve all Bostonians. A resilient Harborwalk includes a variety of climate adaptation strategies to protect and serve Boston at a district scale. To center equity in Harborwalk design is to focus on strategies that make the waterfront feel safe and inclusive through lighting, signage (preferably multi-lingual), full ADA accommodations, and the elimination of features that make users feel unwelcome or excluded.

Castle Island is notably one of the most diverse and welcoming parts of the waterfront with visitors who reflect the diversity of the Commonwealth across age, income, race, and ability. The restroom expansion at Castle Island will only build on this legacy and represents a model of Boston Harbor Now’s Harborwalk 2.0 vision by expanding a much needed amenity to make it an even more welcoming waterfront. Providing enhanced restroom facilities to support the park and its visitors will only make this vibrant and historic coastal park part of a more inclusive space. We believe that DCR has selected the correct sites for their expanded bathroom facilities and are impressed by the comprehensive study undertaken to make these selections. Boston Harbor Now is excited to see this process move forward and hope that future design considerations are just as thoughtful as this siting process has been.



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Creating a Welcoming Waterfront

To create a welcoming waterfront, it is not enough for public waterfront spaces to simply exist; there must be amenities to support visitors to the area. From our experience around the Harborwalk and out on the Boston Harbor Islands, we've consistently heard that the availability of public restrooms is a primary factor in determining whether families are able to visit a space for a meaningful amount of time. Bathrooms are particularly vital for those with certain medical conditions. Expanding restroom facilities from four portable toilets during the winter months to a year-round, permanent structured toilet building is an improvement that will help make Castle Island more equitable and accessible to visitors that rely on restrooms.

We are in agreement with the results of the feasibility study and believe that the most user-friendly locations for new and improved permanent structures are behind Sullivan's Restaurant and at the existing restroom location. Both locations already have some baseline infrastructure in place and are adjacent to already salient landmarks within the park that can provide for easy identification and navigation by new and experienced visitors. They are also helpfully sited in areas frequented by families and young children, who will benefit from their close proximity. The facilities behind Sullivan's Restaurant in particular should be prioritized for their ability to serve restaurant customers and park visitors year round with easy access from the parking lot. We also support the proposed locations of the portable restrooms.

Future Design Considerations

On the whole we believe that DCR's study was thoughtfully conducted and considered a variety of important factors. From flood resilience to accessibility to view corridors, we appreciate the comprehensive and clear evaluation criteria and analysis DCR has provided in this study. As the design phase of this restroom study progresses we hope to see equity and inclusivity continue to be prioritized. More specifically, we hope that there will be gender inclusive facilities, family restrooms that include changing stations, and clear signage leading to these new facilities.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this project and look forward to remaining engaged through future phases of design and construction. We would be happy to speak with you further, if there are additional questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katherine F. Abbott".

Katherine F. Abbott
President and CEO
Boston Harbor Now