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August 11, 2023

Via email: zwyer@savetheharbor.org

Metropolitan Beaches Commission
C/O: Save The Harbor/Save The Bay
Boston Fish Pier,
212 Northern Avenue,
Suite 304 West,
Boston, MA. 02210

Re: Metropolitan Beaches Commission Public Hearing on Climate Resiliency

Dear Metropolitan Beaches Commission

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Climate Resiliency public hearing held on July 11, 2023.

As longtime stewards of the Boston Harborwalk, Boston Harbor Now is committed to ensuring that the waterfront we shape today is designed for a more resilient and inclusive future. Significant parts of the Massachusetts coastline are beaches, and Boston and the surrounding communities are fortunate to offer urban beaches that provide valuable recreational assets and tourism amenities. As we consider climate preparedness strategies for the region's shorelines, these unique resources require special coastal flood interventions that differ from urban coastlines. However, like other waterfront development, beaches need landside amenities to support waterfront visitation and foster social resilience.

Beaches in the city, like Constitution or Carson, are a treasured asset, providing community members with recreational opportunities, a respite from the heat, and a chance to touch the water within walking distance of thousands of residents and proximate to MBTA train stations. Boston Harbor Now has seen firsthand the value beaches provide to the community through our work at Moakley Park and Carson Beach, attracting community members from nearby affordable housing developments and all over greater Boston—offering a place to swim, paddle, play, relax, and more. Unfortunately, these same beaches are also vulnerable to myriad climate impacts, notably erosion caused by sea level rise and storm surge, and the ability to provide respite to many on hot days is muted by the lack of shade and public spaces out of the sun. The loss of these beaches would mean a loss of valuable wildlife habitat in addition to beloved third space within the community.

Climate resilient infrastructure at beaches has several factors that must be considered. In addition to ensuring the beach itself is protected from erosion, the chosen interventions should be able to contribute to district-wide flood protection while preserving the functionality of the beach for both people and ecosystems. Whether through the restoration of dunes, the creation of berms, or other creative wave-attenuating solutions, modifications to the beach should protect inland areas



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from coastal flood pathways, which may necessitate additional with elevated protection placed further from the water's edge. While infrastructure will need to respond to the needs of each specific site, the interventions should maintain recreational opportunities and coastal habitat beaches provide. Flood infrastructure strategies should seek to minimize the impacts on native flora and fauna balanced with the preservation of recreational activities intrinsic to beaches like swimming.

Coastal flood infrastructure is not the only infrastructure investment needed to ensure that beaches continue to serve the community. Of particular importance are restrooms, which Boston Harbor Now has found to be one of the most significant factors for families making decisions about where they feel comfortable visiting and want to stay for an extended period of time. This need for restrooms was echoed in the recent community workshops for the Dorchester Resilient Waterfront Project at Tenean Beach and is being addressed by DCR at Castle Island. Where permanent public restrooms are not possible, portable toilets may be an alternative solution, especially if they are partially enclosed to protect from damage and heat. Other landside amenities that support the community are nearby affordable food options, drinking fountains, and the availability of shade, which is especially important as we anticipate increasing numbers of extremely hot days. As beaches are redesigned to adapt to rising sea levels and coastal flooding, we hope that amenities that support social resilience are also incorporated into the plans.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. We look forward to remaining engaged and appreciate your commitment to the waterfront.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathy Abbott".

Kathy Abbott
President and CEO
Boston Harbor Now