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June 7, 2024

Via email: Natalie.Deduck@Boston.gov

Boston Planning and Development Agency
Attn: Natalie Deduck
One City Hall Square, Floor 9
Boston, MA 02201

Re: Pier 5 RFP Guidelines

Dear Ms. Deduck,

Boston Harbor Now respectfully submits the following comments on the Pier 5 RFP Guidelines put forth by the Boston Planning & Development Agency (BPDA). Our staff has followed this project since its inception and previously submitted a comment letter in February 2024. Most recently, staff reviewed the April 2024 Public Meeting.

As longtime stewards of the Boston Harborwalk, Boston Harbor Now is committed to ensuring that 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 waterfront 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 waterfront includes a variety of climate adaptation strategies to protect and serve Boston at a district scale. To center equity in waterfront 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.

Creating a Destination for the Public

From the BPDA’s presentation at the April 2024 Public Meeting, it is not clear to us the future RFP will allow buildings on the pier, or if the pier is contemplated solely as open space; a point we hope will be clarified in future meetings. Regardless, as the BPDA evaluates proposals, we hope they will prioritize proponents capable of turning this pier into a destination for not just local residents but the communities we hope to bring to the waterfront. We appreciate the BPDA’s thoughtful guidelines and believe the Waterfront Access and Education Opportunities and Public / Open Space criteria encourage opportunities to bring something new and exciting to this part of the waterfront. We believe the guidelines capture our desire for an activated space that encourages water access and acknowledges that both programs and infrastructure may be needed to activate the watersheet. We also



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commend the BPDA for emphasizing the important role the pier has and should continue to play in providing both visual connectivity to the water and physical connectivity to the Harborwalk. Pier 5 offers one of the best vantage points along the waterfront to view the Harbor and we hope to continue to encourage Harborwalk visitors to take advantage of this valuable public asset.

If other creative proposals suggest uses that will help further the idea of the waterfront as a destination but do not neatly fall into the criteria listed above, we hope they will still be considered. Relatedly should buildings be located on or along the pier we expect that the selected ground floor uses be ones that help activate the waterfront and welcome the public. In addition to having marquee destination features, Boston Harbor Now hopes the BPDA will also look for proposals that ensure the comfort of those who visit the site. As previously noted, we hope that the future Pier 5 has public amenities, like seating, shade structures, wayfinding signage and other community-identified amenities that enhance the space. The new space should be welcoming to all and remain open to the public.

Designing for Coastal Flooding

As noted previously, the pier will need to contemplate rising sea levels and be able to withstand coastal inundation. We appreciate that the Coastal Resilience design guideline highlights this. The design should be coordinated with the other resilience efforts in the Charlestown Navy Yard, including those of the National Park Service (NPS), to ensure decisions about the future of Pier 5 are coordinated with the NPS' resilience planning. Flood-resilient infrastructure must connect to provide a continuous line of defense, and as such, the BPDA and NPS need to coordinate their efforts and alignments. Coordination between the two agencies is necessary not only for effective district-level flood protection but may also impact the design of Pier 5. Understanding where Pier 5 falls in relation to the two agencies' flood alignments and the site's role in contributing to district flood protection will significantly impact its future design. As flood plans are elucidated, it will be necessary to design the pier to contribute to coastal resilience and maintain ADA access.

In conclusion we agree with the guidelines set forth in the RFP and are looking forward to seeing a more activated Pier 5 that invites the public down to the waterfront. We hope to see creative proposals set forth that allow for people to get on and take in the lovely views of the harbor. The redesign of Pier 5 comes at an apt time, aligning with recent and upcoming planning to address coastal flooding in the Charlestown Navy Yard. The selected proponent will need to coordinate the design of their pier with the work of the NPS and BPDA to ensure that their designs are elevated appropriately and their site is accessible to all abilities of potential users.



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We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this project and look forward to following its progress toward implementation. We would be happy to speak with you further if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,

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

Kathy Abbott
President and CEO
Boston Harbor Now