

By Carol Britton Meyer | March 7, 2019

## Beach panel told of Nantasket's assets, shortcomings, and needs



Consultant Bruce Berman explained a 2014 set of findings and recommendations about the state-controlled portion of Nantasket Beach during Tuesday's Metropolitan Beaches Commission forum. After the presentations, participants worked in small groups to detail their own findings about the current state of the beach. [Skip Tull photo]

A much-improved Nantasket Beach can be enhanced even further, according to speakers at a forum earlier this week on what is working and what needs to be done on Hull's 1.3-mile, 26-acre stretch of sand and sea.

For the 45-plus participants at Tuesday's public hearing at the Nantasket Beach Resort, hosted by the Metropolitan Beaches Commission, the meeting proved to be a source of information and ideas.

After opening remarks by Bruce Berman, lead MBC consultant and director of strategy and communications for Save the Harbor/ Save the Bay, and by others, the audience split into group sessions to talk about what is working well, what needs improvement, and what is missing at Nantasket Beach. The meeting culminated with informal presentations by each group leader.

A 2014 set of findings and recommendations by the Metropolitan Beaches Commission indicated that the Nantasket Reservation – the owned portion of Nantasket beach – had improved substantially since 2007 and is now a year-round resource for the community, as is the Mary Jeanette Murray bathhouse.

The 2014 report also indicated that the “family-friendly” beach has “clean water, beautiful sand, and a view of the harbor” and features historic architecture and buildings.

The report, however,

did point to several key issues, including the need for seawall repairs, litter problems, the lack of capital maintenance on the bathhouse,

on nearby buildings, and at beach access points, and the need for improved public transportation opportunities – including trolley and ferry service and bicycle paths – and a greater police presence.

“This is all about the ability to work together for the common good,” Save the Harbor/Save the Bay President Tani Marinovich said when she joined one of the group discussions.

The “what's working at the beach” category included regular tides, a clean bathhouse and outdoor showers, the availability of late-afternoon parking, off-season events, yoga classes, bicycle racks, surfboard rentals, the Bernie King Pavilion, lifeguards, new businesses in the beach area, and some of the same plusses outlined in the MBC's 2014 findings.

“What's not working/needs improvement” remarks related to the high cost of parking, the current traffic flow, inconsistent parking fees, not enough equipment rentals (the addition of kayaks and paddle-boards was suggested), the need for improvements at the bathhouse, flooding on Nantasket Avenue, and pet droppings on the boardwalk.

“What's missing” comments related to the desire for charging stations for electric cars, the need for a long-range parking plan, and improved handicapped- access ramps; more shade trees, green space, trash cans, and easily accessible handicapped parking; and a bicycle path, a sandcastle contest, informational plaques detailing points of interest for visitors, and ferry service to Steamboat Wharf, which has been offered previously.

Berman pointed out that sea-level rise is an “important issue that

poses a threat to public safety and investment.”

On the lighter side, there was talk of bringing more free activities to Nantasket Beach, building on earlier Save the Harbor/Save the Bay-supported events, such as the “Life’s a Beach” event that was part of the annual Endless Summer festival last year; Art in the Sand; and the Hull Lifesaving Museum’s annual Harbor Illumination event.

“If you have a great idea for a beach activity or event, we want to hear about it,” Berman said. “Nantasket Beach is doing great. It’s blessed by being an open ocean beach with good infrastructure, so it’s no surprise that people come here to enjoy it.”

Save the Harbor/Save the Bay is a nonprofit harbor advocacy organization whose mission is to restore and protect Boston Harbor, Massachusetts Bay, and the marine environment and to share them with the public. The organization leads and manages the Metropolitan Beaches Commission for the state Legislature.

The MBC, created in 2006, is charged with making findings on metropolitan Boston’s 15 public beaches in eight coastal communities, all of which are managed by the state Department of Conservation and Recreation. The commission’s periodic public hearings are intended to help inform and influence state policy.

“All these beaches are extraordinary natural resources which the DCR holds in trust for the future,” Berman said.

Local MBC commissioners include state Sen. Patrick O’Connor,

state Rep. Joan Meschino, and Jason McCann, a member of Hull’s Planning Board and Community Preservation Committee. They attended the March 5 forum and addressed the audience. Several other town officials attended as well, including Town Manager Philip Lemnios and Board of Selectmen members Jennifer Constable and John Reilly.

Meschino, a Hull resident, called Nantasket Beach a “priceless gem” and Hull’s gateway.

“We need to continue to make direct investment in our beaches at a state level, including here in Hull,” O’Connor said.

McCann, who recently joined the commission, noted that Nantasket Beach “always has been and always will be a big part of our history.”

He spoke about the importance of the beach re-nourishment and master plans developed by the DCR, which require funding to move forward. “We want to be sure the beach remains a recreational asset for Hull families and out-of-town visitors,” he said.

The commission is holding hearings in the several communities where the beaches are located and will conduct a regional hearing May 18 from 10 a.m. to noon at UMass Boston. “At this meeting all the communities involved will have a chance to preview our latest report before it’s final to make sure we got it right,” Berman said. “It’s your beach.”

For further information, visit [savetheharbor.org/MBC](http://savetheharbor.org/MBC).