HEP CAC Minutes
October 26, 2004
Future City, Inc.
Elizabeth, NJ

Present: Bob Alpern, Joel Banslaben (HEP), Laura Bartovics NY Sea Grant/HEP), David Burg (Wild Metro), Mayor Chris Bollwage (Elizabeth), Carter Craft (MWA), Teresa Crimmens Bronx River Alliance), John Dobosiewkz (Kean University), Bill Fidurski (Rahway River Assoc.), Porter-Ann Gaines (MWA), Jackeline Gonzalez (Future City), Jane Jackson (New York Restoration Project), Debbie Mans (NY/NJ Baykeeper), Anthony Marraccini (Turnaround Friends, Inc.), Michele Doran McBean (Future City), Dennis Miranda (Rahway River Assoc.), Bob Nyman (HEP/EPA), Bill Sheehan (Hackensack Riverkeeper), Ken Ward (Elizabeth Historical Society)

The meeting was called to order around 10:10 AM and M. McBean introduced Mayor Christian Bollwage, who mentioned his membership on the NY-NJ Harbor Estuary Policy Committee.

***Welcome and Introductions**:* Mayor Bollwage began by articulating his appreciation for HEP, especially because some of the technicalities worked on can be daunting but the benefit is inherent and essential. He also voiced his appreciation and the necessity for estuarine rehabilitation. One of the most important components to rehabilitation is having a strong educational component; introducing today's youth to the concept of an estuary - its important function in water quality and habitat growth and health – is essential if we are to continue a legacy of environmental stewardship into the future. In Elizabeth, its waterfronts have received special attention through funding provided from Federal sources, the State of New Jersey's Green Acres program, and local city bonds. Through all of these avenues, waterfront amenities like a bike/pedestrian path, marina, passive park, soccer fields and future housing have all been made possible. One thing the Mayor is particularly concerned about is the proposed reconstruction of the Goethels Bridge. Specifically, the habitat underneath the bridge and improvements to the transportation network that need to happen to make the bridge truly beneficial. There need to be comprehensive infrastructure investments on both sides of the bridge (which terminates in Elizabeth).

+ B. Alpern asked if there is a continuing coordination or dialogue between local governments in the area based on estuarine issues.
+ Mayor Bollwage replied that the "treaty" on Shooters Island between himself and Mayor Dinkins is a good example of local governments working together but on a regular basis there is not a focus on estuarine issues.
+ Many thanks to the Mayor for spending some time with us this morning!

Host Site Introduction: Future City, Inc.

+ K. Ward discussed the various roles of Future City in Elizabeth.
+ Elizabeth is currently 70% Latino, making it a majority immigrant town

+ Future City is 8 years old and was formed to serve as a local voice on sustainable design and development but not to address historic preservation. Major topics they cover include the harbor estuary and clean water issues and everything they do is bilingual (website, publications, etc.)
+ One of the greatest problems they've had is educating the public about the dangers of eating fish they catch in local waters. This is exacerbated by the conflicting state policies: NY allows for fish caught in the Kills to be eaten (so off of Staten Island), but it is not allowed for fish caught in NJ waters. But they are the same fish, with the same contaminants, posing the same health risks. They have struggled with the question of how to get a singular message on fishing advisories in terms of social/subsistence fishing (not sport fishing)?
+ They have also been active in the train station re-use and development and a tree-planting project.
+ Future City (as the name implies) looks at their work with a 30-year outlook, not a 3-year outlook

Committee Reports

Management Committee: The MC's last meeting was August 19 and the next will be November 18, 2004. All meetings are open to the public. C. Craft encouraged everyone to help increase the CAC involvement at the various HEP Working Groups by attending the meetings.

Habitat Work Group: Next meeting is Oct. 27, 2004. B. Alpern pointed out that there used to be a close relationship between the Habitat WG and the USACE and wondered why this was not the case anymore. B. Nyman relayed that there have been a lot of funding problems, however, the Regional Plan Association has recently produced a "needs and opportunities" document. C. Craft suggested that perhaps the "needs and opportunities" document could be the start of a good collaboration between the CAC and HWG. B. Alpern also expressed his desire for the Harbor Estuary Program to look at the Long Island Sound Study's focus on habitat and access issues as a model.

Dredged Material Management Work Group (DMMIWG): There was some discussion on the status of this workgroup and their current reorganization plans.

Harbor Herons Subcommittee (of the HWG): J. Banslaben attended their most recent meeting where they discussed plans to implement a program for some of their acquisition and other priorities. Their long-term goal is to delineate current heron data. They are looking for some money for satellite monitoring and tagging.

HEP CAC Subcommittees

National Estuaries Day: L. Bartovics reported that the National Estuaries Day events were a great success, even though the first day had bad weather so most events were cancelled or occurred on the rain-date. There was lots of outreach to schools and other youth.
+ 17 events total were held (the Hazlet, NJ event had to be cancelled) and there were also some events held for NED but that did not receive/request HEP funding, like the

activities at the South Street Seaport Museum and Liberty State Park Interpretive Center. Perhaps these venues could serve as a source of collaboration for next year.
+ There has been a request for a comparison of the National Estuaries Day events from 2003 to 2004 participation.
+ Additionally, there is no federal funding specifically provided for Nat'l Estuaries Day 2005 but HEP members could use the mini-grants program for these events in 2005.
+ B. Alpern asked is the collaboration between the beach clean-up days and Nat'l. Estuaries Day happened this year as had been discussed. L. Bartovics said that HEP promoted and supported the clean-up days and there's potential for collaboration next year. They would like to try linking events across dates (e.g., doing a clean-up one weekend and then having an event at the same location the next weekend). C. Craft suggested following-up with this collaboration idea at the next CAC meeting.
+ J. Jackson reported on the NYRP small-scale clean-up on Sept. 2 followed by the first Swindler's Cove Park Festival on Oct. 2 (200 – 300 people). The event had numerous educational functions (water quality testing, seining, boat rides, etc.). Usually they have a big problem with wakes thrown off from other boats (including recreational ones) but State Parks had requested an increased Police presence so it was not an issue
+ M. Doran McBean asked about the potential for events in conjunction with the Army Corps of Engineers. J. Dobosiewicz offered that some youth events with the USACE have incorporated the history of the ACE, their presence in the harbor, water quality demonstrations, and a live aquarium. Also, the ACE has reached out to local schools to volunteer as water quality monitors.
+ B. Fidurski reported that the Clark Environmental Center's river clean-up had 150 participants.
+ B. Sheehan reported on the Hackensack Riverkeeper's activities which included canoe and kayak trips, fishing (with poles provided by NJ Fish and Wildlife), live music and the Center for Modern Dance Entertainment performed the interpretive dance "River of Many Bends."
+ J. Banslaben suggested that if HEP doesn't have money to fund Estuaries Day events next year, perhaps they could provide planning/coordination services instead. C. Craft agreed that this is a good potential solution and perhaps this idea should be included in follow-up materials with the 2004 participants
+ D. Miranda pointed out that Essex, Bergen and Union Counties all have stable funds for "open space" events; could be a potential monetary source, as well as the County Parks Departments.
+ L. Bartovics added that there are a wide range of events always occurring around this time; perhaps we should reach-out to some of these and get them onboard for Estuaries Day.
+ A. Marraccini reported on two Staten Island events: "It's My Park" Day in conjunction with a park clean-up and the September 11 memorial at Seaside Nature Park that drew around 100 people.
+ B. Alpern brought back an earlier idea of C. Craft to place someone on the various ferries in the harbor and have them serve as "estuary guides."

Waterfront Access: C. Craft outlined the waterfront access subcommittee meeting that happened on October 22. Over 30 people attended and OASIS presented the technology they used for collecting street-trees data and the potential to adapt this software for waterfront access points data collection. This was followed by a presentation by Rosemary Suh and Shawn Watts who have been working on the master design plan for

the new Sebago Canoe Club and walked us through the various considerations and pitfalls they faced while trying to create an environmentally-friendly, functional public access and launch point.

Presentation: Meadowlands (B. Sheehan, Hackensack Riverkeeper)

+ The presentation began with a viewing of the NJ Channel 12's "double-feature" that highlighted the Meadowlands on two consecutive nights titled "Resource in Recovery". The news coverage included a brief history of the Meadowlands, the major pollutants and toxics in the area and the potential for ecotourism in the area.
+ B. Sheehan made an excellent point that what the CAC struggles with is the same thing as the Hackensack Riverkeeper: both organizations need to connect with the everyday community to make their work as effective as possible
+ B. Sheehan spoke of the history of some of the dealings in the Meadowlands to highlight the complicated nature of this resource.
+ The new master plan with the NJ Meadowlands Commission has rezoned the remaining 8,400 acres of wetlands as protected land. Today though, there are still a few thousand acres of "meadowlands" that are under layers of garbage.
+ Current development in the Meadowlands includes a gold course development by Encap. One of the things that many people were worried about was trading one set of problems (landfill) for another set (golf courses are notorious for their non-point source pollution). In order to address this, the plans include wastewater re-use programs; gray water recycling; organic fertilizers; additionally, 1150 – 1200 acres will have permanent conservation easements. B. Sheehan also gave the group an update on the Xanadu proposal and the preservation of the Empire Tract.

Discussion Items*:*

a. *Association of National Estuary Programs (ANEP) Annual Meeting:* L. Bartovics reported that the theme for this year's meeting was national priorities, however, a great deal of the discussion was given over to recent changes at the ANEP level. B. Nyman reported that the reauthorization bill for the Program is sitting on President Bush's desk, but the appropriation was not yet set. There was discussion of how HEP should begin to look at other sources of funding. Note: A recent meeting of the Harbor Roundtable discussed this issue.
b. *CAC Priorities*:
   + M. Doran McBean asked that the CAC consider looking at the issue of inconsistent fish advisories in shared waters of New Jersey and New York.
   + B. Alpern suggested that there be a HEP review of the Administrative Consent Order between NYC and NYDEC on NYC's Combined Sewer Overflows.
   + D. Burg suggested figuring out how to support the protection of HEP Priority Acquisition and Restoration sites.

Other Business

+ B. Fidurski gave an update on an age-restricted housing development proposal in Clark, NJ that is threatening a farm.
+ J. Banslaben mentioned a recent television special on the Harbor on Channel 4. He would try to get a copy.