

## MINUTES

<b>Subject:</b>	Community Open House - Virtual Hampton Beach State Park Accessibility Feasibility Study GEI Project No. 2403202
<b>Date/Time:</b>	Wednesday, May 29, 2024; 5:30pm to 7:30pm
<b>Location:</b>	Microsoft Teams Videoconference
<b>Attendees:</b>	<i>Alison Brady, EI – GEI Consultants, Inc.</i> <i>Consultant Nicole Rogers, P.E. – Greenman-Pedersen, Inc.</i> <i>Team Robert White, R.L.A. – Greenman-Pedersen, Inc., Senior Landscape Architect</i>
<i>Committee / HBSP Staff</i>	<i>Johanna Lyons – NH DNCR, State Park Planning &amp; Development Specialist</i> <i>Meredith Collins – NH DNCR, State Park Seacoast Regional Supervisor</i> <i>Pat Bushway – Hampton Beach Area Commission</i> <i>Bob Preston – Hampton Beach Area Commission</i> <i>Jen Kennedy – Blue Ocean Society, Executive Director</i>
<i>Public</i>	<i>Gordon Whicher</i> <i>Susan Whicher</i> <i>Jennifer Crowell – Granite State Independent Living</i> <i>Melinda Simms – United Spinal Association – NH Chapter, Advocacy</i> <i>Katherine Harake – ACLU-NH</i> <i>Rebecca Geekie – Birdability</i>

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*\* Italicized text denotes minutes recorded*

### Presentation

*GPI gave a project overview presentation including:*

- Project team*
- Study background*
- Existing conditions review*
- What we are seeing?*
- What we are hearing?*

## Community Open House - Virtual

**General Discussion**

*GPI noted the purpose of this meeting is to introduce the project to the public and hear from the public about what accessibility improvements they would like to see at HBSP. The following general discussion items were noted:*

- *Important to understand who isn't coming to HBSP and why they aren't. What barriers exist?*
- *Main Beach is so crowded during the summer that some people with accessibility needs avoid it.*
- *General desire to have ramped access points instead of staircases.*
- *General need / desire to make accessibility features / services more well known and communicated.*
- *General need / desire to consider storm impacts for future accessibility improvements.*
- *General need / desire for enhanced lifeguard / other HBSP staff training.*
- *If accessibility improvements are implemented at HBSP and more people with special needs come to the beach it will be important to add lifeguard training on Autonomic Dysreflexia, a form of shock that individuals with spinal cord injury / disorders typically go through.*
- *There's a natural grade at the first shore access point at North Beach and there is access at low tide which is used by the Whicher's (residents of Boars Head - Susan has accessibility needs). They also use the fourth access point. A railing on the third access point has come loose.*
- *A second access point like the 18<sup>th</sup> Street platform elsewhere at North Beach would be beneficial. This area is very crowded and difficult to access on nice weather days.*
- *Has Dave Cropper with Cinnamon Rainbows been contacted as part of this study? He has an event for "handicapped" veterans where he provides surfing lessons, etc.*
- *There are issues with division of facility maintenance responsibilities between the State and the Town of Hampton, within the NH DOT right-of-way along Route 1A. Some portions of the sidewalks have large cracks that prevent access via wheelchair. Some can be navigated by pulling the wheelchair backwards over them vs pushing forward. Not ideal.*
- *How is public outreach to residents vs visitors being handled?*
- *Parking designated as "handicap" parking spaces are the only accessible for some users needs. It is challenging to leave when you are blocked in by others illegally parking. This can take hours to get a response from the Town's police department and then to get the illegally parked car towed out of the way.*
- *Having accessible spaces where a van can be backed into the space is important.*
- *Van Accessible spaces are not wide enough.*

## Community Open House - Virtual

- *First come / first serve equipment and parking spaces make it challenging to plan for a visit to the beach which requires accessibility accommodations.*
- *There is no transfer equipment provided.*
- *The accessible mats at the Seashell building only provide accessibility needs about halfway across the beach. Views of the water from the mats are limited or blocked by other visitors sitting on the beach between the mats and the water. The water is not accessible to some and having lifeguards sitting at the end of the mats who can't help give access to the water is frustrating. This can make people with accessibility needs feel like an inconvenience ("sore thumb") sitting at the end of the mats in the middle of the beach.*
- *It was noted by HBSP staff that a second mat has been added in front of the Seashell Building so that it may feel like you are not stuck in the middle of the lifeguard lane.*
- *The family "handicap" accessible restroom is used by everyone and has long lines. Need for social awareness.*
- *Beach wheelchairs are available on a first-come, first-serve basis and are difficult to use, including getting down to the water. It is also a long distance from designated accessible parking spaces to where an able bodied person goes to pickup the beach wheelchairs. This all makes it seem like they are not worth using.*
- *Without public educational information on accessibility features at HBSP, it is like having a store that has an accessible back entrance while the front entrance has stairs. More accessibility information, readily available to the public would be helpful. Not just through signage or correspondence with HBSP staff on-site, but also on-line / through social media.*
- *Consider opportunities to add more shade structures.*
- *Moms with kids and others needing a place to change clothes often use the "handicap" restroom stalls. Need for social awareness.*
- *Some people with accessibility equipment are not interested in leaving their personal equipment unattended where it might be used by the public.*
- *It was noted by HBSP staff that personal wheelchairs can be stored in the HBSP garage where the State's beach wheelchairs are stored.*
- *New accessible picnic tables are easy to provide and should be considered.*
- *Accessible equipment should consider walkers as well as wheelchairs.*
- *Lots of people from Canada come to HBSP and they would like to see a public input survey available in French.*
- *It is important when identifying accessibility improvements to note where they will go and who will be responsible for maintaining them. (State or Town?) There has been lots of discussion about maintaining the sidewalks, including after prior recent storm damage, and these debates might be alleviated if it was more clearly understood who is responsible for maintaining them.*

**Next Steps / Action Items**

- *Johanna is available to talk or meet with interested people going forward.*
- *Pop-Up presentations on the boardwalk will be held this summer.*
- *There is a Committee meeting on June 5<sup>th</sup> to review the findings of the Existing Conditions Assessment.*

*The foregoing reflects the writer's understanding of items discussed and conclusions reached. Any discrepancies or misunderstandings should be brought to the attention of the writer immediately. Please forward any comments, errors, or omissions to these meeting notes to Travis Pryor at [tpryor@geiconsultants.com](mailto:tpryor@geiconsultants.com).*

*ACB (GEI)*

*Nicole Rogers (GPI)*