

A RETROSPECTIVE and PROSPECTIVE LOOK at PIER 5

Recently, the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA) held a Zoom meeting regarding the future of Pier 5.

The Pier 5 Association, founded in 2021, evolved directly from earlier Community groups formed since 2002 to respond to the BRA / BPDA's consideration of various private development proposals for the two-acre Pier 5 site in the Charlestown Navy Yard, such as a mid-rise building, marina for luxury yachts and more recently to include houseboats.

The Pier 5 Association's mission is to advocate for a fully public blue and green waterfront, iconic open space that serves the entire Charlestown community—including the nearly two million annual visitors to the Navy Yard. Through extensive community outreach, education, and a petition campaign that garnered over 3,000 signatures, the Pier 5 Association successfully rallied public support to preserve this historic waterfront for public use. With support from other civic allies, the community's unified voice led to the elimination of all three private proposals. The Conservation Law Foundation expressed concern that the BPDA allowed the private proposals to advance as far as they did, stating they sidestepped public-access protections required under Massachusetts Chapter 91.

Today, the Pier 5 Association continues to work toward the permanent transformation of Pier 5 into an open, resilient, and inclusive blue and green space—honoring the site's maritime heritage and ensuring public access for generations to come.

At the most recent BPDA Zoom meeting, two new proposals were presented: one to demolish the pier and expand the Charlestown Marina to accommodate more private yachts and mega-yachts enclosed behind locked gates, and another by Courageous Sailing, which proposes

a massive \$85 million building—far exceeding the needs of its program. That proposal includes a partnership with ASM Global, the world's largest private equity-backed event venue operator, as if there were no other way to fund their programming. The Courageous proposal lacks transparency and omits negative impacts that are the hallmark of private, for-profit entertainment: access, traffic, parking, trash, noise, rats, congestion, post event behavior - the list is long.

The BPDA claims it extensively advertised the Zoom meeting, yet only 200 people attended—a low turnout in our neighborhood of over 15,000 adults. This level of engagement is unacceptable for a once-in-a-generation decision. Despite repeated community requests for a hybrid or in-person format, the BPDA proceeded with Zoom-only access, excluding residents who prefer or need other formats. In response to a community request for an open chat feature during the presentations, somehow the BPDA disabled the chat entirely. No in-person access, no hybrid, no meeting scheduled for when residents are not on vacation, and no chat—this is a pattern.

It is time to move beyond pandemic-era limitations. Public, in-person meetings foster deeper understanding, broader participation, and real-time discourse. Other cities resumed hybrid engagement meetings; the BPDA should do the same.

Since the U.S. Navy decommissioned Pier 5 in 1975, under the BPDA stewardship, public assets in the Navy Yard have decayed. Pier 5, along with Pier 4, the Harborwalk, Shipway, and the Dry Dock, all suffer from "blight by neglect."

During this time, a 2% transfer tax was levied on designated property sales in the Navy Yard, generating over \$51 million in the past decade alone. Where did this money go? Why wasn't it used to maintain or rehabilitate Pier 5? When asked, the BPDA offers no answers—except: "We can invest where we want." Pier 4 was renovated, due to an

emergency caused by neglect - potential failure of the pier by potential "lateral collapse"- and the BPDA paid \$10M. Pier 5 is blighted by neglect by the BPDA, by willfulness to monetize it for their coffers.

Charlestown Sailing (Courageous Sailing) enjoyed a reputation for offering sailing programs to youth and adults. Many in the community were proud to support it. While the desire to expand youth access to sailing is admirable, Pier 5 is not the appropriate location for a massive new \$85M Harbor-blocking building and a private equity partnership, Courageous ignores and silences valid community concerns about obvious issues: snarled traffic, increased noise, pollution, trash, rats, and congestion—and other negative impacts from for-profit entertainment.

The lack of transparency by Courageous Sailing—failing to disclose its collaboration with ASM Global—has severely damaged public trust. ASM Global, a private equity behemoth, the largest on the planet, stands to profit from privatizing Pier 5, a public asset. This omission appears to be a self-serving move at the community's expense.

In a community of over 15,000 adults and 5,000 children, would an expanded sailing center really serve the broader public? Or would it restrict access to Charlestown's waterfront and exclude those who simply wish to fly a kite, play chess, walk along the harbor, read, paint, think, picnic, fish, enjoy natural views, breathe?

We all should be concerned that Boston continues to allow the destruction of its limited blue and green open space. The physical and mental health benefits of such spaces are well documented. Charlestown residents suffer high rates of asthma, heart disease, and lung disease. With a healthcare system already in crisis, the BPDA's disregard for environmental and public health impacts is reckless.

It is harmful to build housing on toxic land and in toxic air and in flood zones, as proposed at the Austin Street lots. It is harmful to cut down mature trees, such as the 288 century-old trees at Bunker Hill Housing. It is harmful to give away public waterfront to private equity developers. It is harmful to ignore the community.

We urge you to get involved. Your family and our community deserve a healthier, more just, and more sustainable Charlestown. It is on our watch.

Pier 5—iconic and open, accessible and inspiring—offers fresh air, clean water, and sacred ground for the public enjoyment of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Here—where it all began.

Stand with us, at The Head of the Harbor for and with our history: Tall Ships, the view of the Old North Church, the city skyline, and the outer Harbor. Stand under the sky, at the water, upon historic land. Live, learn, experience, grow - that is what is not for sale at a ticketed, private event and/or not by looking at the massive hulls of private yachts and mega yachts.

Thank you.

The Pier 5 Organization