

Appendix A

Conference Evaluation Report

***25 Years of Construction: Challenges for the Next Post Sandy Era
A conference to address waterfront sustainability***

Sponsored by:

The Hudson River Waterfront Conservancy

and

The Davidson Laboratory/Center for Maritime Systems of Stevens Institute of Technology

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Summary and Conclusions

Based on Conference Evaluation Reports received from 54% of the Conference Attendees (48 of 90 day long attendance – total came to 116). The conference was highly informative, addressed the important challenges facing the Lower Hudson River Waterfront and reached a strong consensus on the fundamental issue of How to Manage and Finance future preventative and reconstructive actions to preserve the Waterfront infrastructure.

Specifically, the responders indicated the presentations expanded their knowledge and understanding of the threat facing the Waterfront, especially the frequency and likelihood of infrastructure damage that can occur from rapid storm surges, like those that occurred with Hurricane Sandy and long term sea level rise from changing weather patterns.

While no consensus emerged concerning the best solution(s) to the threat, responders generally supported a long term approach including preventative actions to protect the coastal population from the multidimensional threats described by the presenters.

Finally, there was an overwhelming consensus that a Regional Approach to managing and funding the Waterfront infrastructure, including the Waterfront Walkway, is required to avoid local initiatives harming neighboring communities and to reduce the short term financial burden on individual waterfront property owners.

Methodology

Prior to the Conference, a Conference Evaluation Form was designed to capture the thoughts and opinions of the Conference Attendees. The form (which follows this Evaluation as Appendix B), was a brief five questions, and emphasized free form responses to avoid oversimplifying the responses for a very complex subject.

As attendees arrived and registered, they were provided with a Conference Program, the Conference Evaluation form and a pencil. Demographic and contact information was gathered from each attendee and they were encouraged to use the evaluation form to record their notes and thoughts throughout the Conference. All evaluations were anonymous.

Evaluation Forms were collected as attendees left the conference and those not completing an Evaluation Form were asked to do so before they departed the Conference. A little persistence

went a long way as we were able to exceed 50% response rate which is extremely high for this type of Conference.

Evaluation forms were tabulated and the free form information was analyzed to look for trends and also capture creative thoughts and ideas. The results of this analysis form the basis for this report.

Evaluation Data

Question 1: What is your interest and involvement in the Hudson River Waterfront?

Responses showed a broad interest in the Conference among stakeholders and the general public. Overall attendees included: 17 Academic Professionals, 17 Representatives of Advocate Organizations not including 9 HRWC Board members, 16 Professionals from Engineering/Planning and Technical Commercial Organizations, 9 leaders of State and County Government, 8 leaders of Local Waterfront Community Government, 7 Members of Waterfront Condominium Property Managers and 16 members of the General Public. Evaluation Forms received were generally proportional to the overall audience.

Question 2: Mark the three (3) sessions that provided the most information concerning the threat to, and protection of, the Hudson River Waterfront.

As expected, responses were widely spread across all presentations. This indicated that all the presenters had relevant and interesting information to convey. It also likely reflects the broad interests of the attendees with Technical attendees favoring the technical presentations while the General Public were most interested in the presentations that described the threat to the Waterfront Infrastructure. Overall, the presentation on Hoboken Municipal Planning and the presentation by Mr. Henrik Ovick describing actions taken to manage water in The Netherlands received the most favorable responses.

Question 3: Describe what you learned about the THREAT to the Hudson River Waterfront posed by floods and extreme weather events like Hurricane Sandy.

Responses to this question were divided into two distinct groups. Technical and Academic responders said they learned little that they didn't already know about the threat. This, of course, was predictable as these responders work closely with the problem every day. On the other hand, the General Public and Condominium Property Managers expressed surprise and concern about the likelihood of more events like Sandy occurring frequently in the foreseeable future.

Question 4: Describe what you learned about POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS to the Hudson River Waterfront posed by floods and extreme weather events like Hurricane Sandy.

No single solution received a large endorsement with many opinions pro and con on each item presented (Flood gates, oyster beds, Higher sea walls, etc.). Surprisingly though, a majority of the responders indicated that preventative actions needed to be included in potential solutions to the threat even though many of these preventative solutions tend to very long term and very expensive(e.g. Flood gates).

Question 5a: Do you support a Regional Approach to Managing and Funding of the Waterfront Infrastructure in light of experiences from Hurricane Sandy?

There was an overwhelming agreement that a Regional Approach is the only way to address the Maintenance and Funding of the Waterfront infrastructure.

Question 5b: Your thoughts and opinions on a Regional Approach are solicited.

Most responses indicated that spreading the costs across the general public and avoiding spot initiatives that can harm neighboring communities could be achieved with a Regional Approach. Not surprisingly, Local Government Officials expressed hesitation about a Regional Approach.

Other Comments:

Most responses thanked the Conservancy and Stevens for a productive and informative Conference. Some asked that the Conference be repeated once a year.

It should also be noted that some responders said that unless actions are taken, conferences while interesting, do not actually solve anything.