



# BOSTON CITY COUNCIL

Committee on Environmental Justice, Resiliency, and Parks  
Gabriela Coletta Zapata, Chair

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One City Hall Square 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Boston, MA 02201 ♦ Phone: (617) 635-3040 ♦ [city.council@boston.gov](mailto:city.council@boston.gov)

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## REPORT OF COMMITTEE CHAIR

August 14, 2025

Dear Councilors,

The Committee on Environmental Justice, Resiliency, and Parks was referred the following dockets for consideration:

***Docket #1258, Message and order authorizing the City of Boston to accept and expend a grant not to exceed One Million One Hundred Seventy Thousand Dollars (\$1,170,000.00) from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) Program. The grant is awarded to the City of Boston through the Parks and Recreation Department for renovations to Moakley Park located in the neighborhood of South Boston.***

***Docket #1345, Message and order authorizing the City of Boston to accept and expend the amount of Six Hundred Forty-Four Thousand Four Hundred Fifty-Eight Dollars (\$644,458.00) in the form of a grant, for the US Inflation Reduction Act, awarded by the USDA Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry to be administered by the Office of Workforce Development. The grant will fund to grow an accessible, inclusive, and resilient urban forest.***

***Docket #1347, Message and order authorizing the City of Boston to accept and expend the amount of Seventy-Five Thousand Dollars (\$75,000.00) in the form of a grant, for the MVP Planning 2.0 Grant, awarded by the Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs to be administered by the Office of Climate Resilience. The grant will fund the work climate resilience communities have done to date and support communities with new methods, tools, and resources for building climate resilience.***

These matters were sponsored by Mayor Michelle Wu and were referred to the Committee on June 25, 2025 (Docket #1258) and July 9, 2025 (Docket #1345 and #1347).

### ***Summary of Legislation***

**Docket #1258** is a message and order authorizing the City of Boston to accept and expend a grant in the amount of One Million One Hundred Seventy Thousand Dollars (\$1,170,000) from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program to be administered by the Parks and Recreation Department for renovations to Moakley Park in the neighborhood of South Boston. This is a match grant; federal contribution will be 70% of the \$1.1M total.

**Docket #1345** is a message and order authorizing the City of Boston to accept and expend the amount of Six Hundred Forty-Four Thousand Four Hundred Fifty-Eight Dollars (\$644,458) in the form of a grant, for the US Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), awarded by the USDA Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry to be administered by the Office of Workforce Development to grow an accessible, inclusive, and resilient urban forest. The USDA Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry is the only federal program dedicated to growing and maintaining urban and community trees, forests, and green spaces. It was authorized in 1978 under the Cooperative Forestry Assistance Act.



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**Docket #1347** is a message and order authorizing the City of Boston accept and expend the amount of Seventy-Five Thousand Dollars (\$75,000) in the form of a grant, for the MVP Planning Phase 2.0 Grant, awarded by the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs to be administered by the Office of Climate Resilience. The grant will fund the work climate resilience communities have done to date and support communities with new methods, tools, and resources for building climate resilience.

This grant will allow communities to revisit resilience priorities with a focus on equity and translate those priorities into action through project development and implementation. This is a multi-phase grant process; phase 1 requires developing a core team of approximately 10 people, made up of municipal employees and community liaisons, phase 2 involves revisiting resilience priorities identified in the MVP Planning Phase 1.0 grant process with an eye towards equity and uncovering social resilience – investigation of factors that contribute to vulnerability for people within a community, phase 3 identifies a seed project that will advance the community’s newly identified resilience priorities.

## ***Information Received at Hearing***

The Committee held a hearing on Thursday, August 14, 2025 to discuss Dockets #1258, #1345, and #1347. Christopher Osgood, Director, Office of Climate Resilience, Marin Braco, Senior Project Manager, Parks and Recreation Department, Joseph Le, Chief of Staff, Worker Empowerment Cabinet, Elizabeth Jameson, Director of Climate Advocacy and Planning, Environment Department, and Katherine Diaz, Director of Climate Action, Innovation, and Analytics, Environment Department testified on behalf of the Administration.

Director Jameson stated the \$75,000 MVP Planning 2.0 grant (Docket #1347) will be used as follows: \$25,000 will be used to supplement the City’s engagement with the Climate Action Plan to help identify community climate resilience priorities and the remaining \$50,000 will be used for a project that is borne out of those priorities. She stated both the tools mentioned in the description of the grant and possible community engagement processes would be determined after the new community conversations.

Director Osgood stated these three grants help the City take significant steps towards its efforts to protect the City’s residents and enhance its communities by helping mitigate climate risks from various causes such as extreme heat and coastal flooding. The Moakley Park grant will help the City create a design for a pivotal park within the City; a design that is both community-centered and resilient to coastal flooding.

Senior Project Manager (SPM) Braco stated the Moakley Park project has been an active City project for 8 years and provided an overview the Park’s location within the City, stating it is the largest waterfront park in the City, and accessible to large swathes of the City by public transit, walking, and biking. It is one of the largest active recreation fields in the City, particularly for ball fields, and is currently in a state of disrepair. She showed a map detailing the possible impacts of a large storm in South Boston, which include floodwaters from Morrissey Boulevard, Fort Point Channel, and Moakley Park combining to flood much of South Boston and into surrounding neighborhoods. Through the BRIC grant application project, the City went through a cost-benefit analysis that estimated \$615M and 200 building structures in damages from storms between today and 2070; given the cost of the barrier the City is proposing, every dollar spent on mitigation could recoup the City \$16 in benefits. If the park is left untouched, every year, flooding could render fields unusable for up to a month a year. She provided an overview of the schedule



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of the project, which began in 2018, and an overview of the BRIC application process. It began with a vision plan after the project was identified as a major flood pathway during Climate Ready Planning, and was followed by some technical analysis and ample community input which led to a schematic design (roughly 30% design); this design was used to apply for the BRIC grant. The grant was applied for in March of 2021 and was given the go-ahead by FEMA in March of 2025; during this process, the City submitted various technical analyses and cost-benefit analyses as FEMA requested them. During this process, the City went ahead with the first phase of the project and advanced the connectors, which is where the berm needs to go up outside of the park on the North and South sides of the park in order to close the flood pathways.

She stated throughout this process there has been copious community engagement, which took multiple forms: formal open houses, attending existing events in the neighborhood, online surveys – provided in 5 languages, and other forms, which include movie nights, monthly park clean ups, seasonal events, and one on one meetings. In 2025, the Park has had over 1,000 attendees at different events and participants have removed over 300 pounds of trash throughout the Park.

She provided an overview of feedback received from the community and illustrated how the design is addressing that feedback. Community members stated they need athletic fields that are dry; the design will move the fields behind the coastal flood barrier and improve the stormwater drainage while also addressing the groundwater issues. The fields will also have added lighting, shaded seating, dugouts, and underground storage tanks; in response to requests from the community, they will also have concessions and restrooms. Currently, many community members use the Park for informal activities, such as sport courts, walking, and jogging, so the new design will incorporate a multi-use path around the edge of the park; the berm itself will have a fully accessible multi-use 20 feet wide path with loops and connections to allow for shorter pathways. Families would like to bring kids to the park, so the new design will include more playgrounds, water play, senior spaces, and more park benches. The proposed design will also double the tree canopy, working to maintain current trees while also diversifying the tree types to increase the number of trees that are able to tolerate saltwater inundation and increased heat.

She provided an overview of the specifics of the BRIC grant. It will specifically fund the design and permitting of the berm and the coastal landscape; it is a match grant, meaning 70% of the grant will be federally funded. The City's capital budget will fund the construction and design of Phase A projects behind the berm, which includes a baseball field, a basketball court, and a community plaza. The City's capital budget will also fund the entirety of Phase B, which will include additional programming elements.

She provided an overview of the next phases of design and construction. The grant will provide momentum to complete community engagement and design work to have the park construction ready ideally between 2027 and 2029. There will be continued technical analysis and community engagement throughout this process. She gave an overview of the final design and stated the only changes that have not gone through the full community engagement process have been some changes in material to the playing fields to allow for longer playing hours, in response to conversations had with sports leaders in the community.



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Councilors and representatives discussed community engagement strategies, including Spanish led feedback groups, tabling at currently existing events, and creating connections with community groups within South Boston, including those living in the Boston Housing Authority (BHA) developments. They discussed the various sports teams that have been met with by the City and the collaboration happening between the City and the State's Department of Conservation and Recreation. They discussed the future of playing fields in the Park, safe accessibility to the Park, the Mary Ellen McCormick overpass, collaboration between various City Departments to ensure safe streets surrounding the Park, the possibilities of creating an arboretum at the Park through the species diversity, the history of the Park's creation from mudflats, and tree canopy strategies in Chinatown.

Representatives stated the original Moakley Park grant the City applied for was a \$24M grant; at the beginning of this year, the federal Administration cancelled the construction portion of this funding, which totalled a little over \$22M. They noted that 20 states, including the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, have sued for the restoration of the cancelled funding.

Representatives stated they will be working with community groups to make sure they have access to athletic fields throughout the construction process. Once this design phase is completed, the City will be able to determine which fields will be impacted when, and work with the relevant teams to ensure they are able to access athletic fields within South Boston, and in cases where other accommodations must be made, somewhere within the City.

Chief of Staff Le provided an overview of the US Forestry Service grant, stating the funds will go towards the City's PowerCorps program, which is a program run by the Office of Workforce Development that includes tracks for urban forestry and building operations. Participants range from 18 to 30 years of age; each receive a biweekly stipend of \$1,100 for their participation on top of certifications that can open up future job prospects. Over the last three years, there have been four cohorts and 125 graduates; of those 70% have had career lifting outcomes, which could include green jobs, quality non-green jobs, introduction to the trade unions, or furthering of training. Of that 70%, 87% have directly gone into the green industry, which could be in building operations, urban canopy, or within City Departments. Cohort 4, which graduated this past summer, planted 43 trees, enhanced 233 acres of public land through active conservation efforts, removed over 248 bags of abrasive materials, removed over 3,600 square feet of invasive species in the White Stadium area, and recycled over 62.8 pounds of waste. The Office has applied for and was granted a \$375,000 Mass Climate Service (MassCEC) Students and Young Adult Equity Workforce Climate Corps award, which will focus on clean energy and building efficiency.

The US Forestry Service grant will be focused on training for building and maintaining the tree canopy, and will hopefully hire an arborist to help train PowerCorps members on identifying invasive species, and understanding best practices. It will also partially fund equipment, such as wood chippers. This grant will fund between 10-15 members of a cohort and will build on other funding sources.



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## *Committee Chair Recommended Action*

As Chair of the Committee on Environmental Justice, Resiliency, and Parks I recommend moving the listed dockets from the Committee to the full Council for discussion and formal action. At this time, my recommendation to the full Council will be that these matters **OUGHT TO PASS**.

Gabriela Coletta Zapata, Chair  
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