

Watertown Conservation Commission

Lower Hearing Room

Wednesday, October 1, 2008

7:30p.m.

Conservation Commission Members Present: Pallotta-McDermott, Martin, Bering, Fairbairn, Hammett, Rose, Taverna

Staff Present: Magoon, Hayward, Collins

Members of the Public Present: See Sign-In Form

Steve Magoon, Director of Community Development and Planning for the Town of Watertown, was introduced and welcomed by the Conservation Commission.

1. Public Hearing – NOI – Watertown Riverside Park Restoration Project, Department of Conservation and Recreation, owner and applicant

Pallotta- McDermott recognized and expressed appreciation to all the stakeholders and participants in the Watertown Riverside Park Restoration Project.

Dan Driscoll, DCR, informed that the project to connect Waltham, Watertown, Newton, Cambridge and Boston along the Charles River has taken a decade. He highlighted the overwhelming support for the project. He described the proposed area as the property along the Charles River from Galen Street to the Watertown Yacht Club. He indicated that the project was developed with an aggressive design so that there will be a high level of implementation success. He noted that he is trying to identify monies through EOEA to fund the project as a high priority, new initiative, and that that throughout the life of the project continued support is needed. Driscoll informed that Sasaki Architects was hired to design the project and that they charged a lower fee.

Amy Houghton, Project Manager for Sasaki, presented the goals of the Watertown Riverside Park Restoration design which were to restore the ecological functions, increase usage of the park, improve the design, reconnect the community to the park, educate and be accessible to all populations.

She presented the following proposed solutions:

Path Restoration: all the asphalt pathways will be replaced with stone aggregate. Paths will be pulled away from the rivers' edge for multiple uses. The hiking paths will be made narrower.

Erosion Controls: There are five strategies to stabilize the bank at 21 locations – fishing stones, rip-wrap steps, overlooks, stabilizing boulders and vegetative jute logs. Only 10 locations will allow access to people.

Park Access: An ADA access path will be created at Irving Street. There will be a 5% grade for access. Trees will be taken down to allow for regrade. Ten trees are proposed for take down, 30 will be planted.

Sensory Trail: In response to the needs of the Perkins School a sensory trail is proposed where you can experience an area with different sensory receptors. A quarter mile loop of the riparian corridor will have 12 stations which will highlight sounds, and lighting. Details will evolve as they work with Perkins. The existing *cow paths* will be used which will have minimal impact. The basket ball area is proposed to be removed increasing the impervious area. A courtyard will be created as a sitting, gathering place.

Maintenance: The maintenance plan will comply with the DCR's Vegetative Maintenance Plan which details invasive controls, and the planting of native species.

Houghton explained that the next steps in the process are to obtain all the necessary permitting for this project to be ready for implementation.

Pallotta McDermott inquired what the demolition controls proposed for the project were. Houghton responded that silt fences and straw bales would be used for the pathways, straw bales with silt booms at overlooks and lookouts, and fabric and straw bales at catchbasins.

Houghton reported that the asphalt will be ground in place and used as base for the paths. Pallotta McDermott expressed concern for safety. Houghton responded that a good location for the grinder in an informal field had been identified. Driscoll added that the North Beacon to Arsenal project was planning to use this approach. However, it was too costly. It was more cost effective to remove and dispose off site.

Driscoll noted that overall the project was designed to be less formal since it needed to transition from the more urban park in Cambridge to the more wooded, natural parts of the Upper Charles.

Houghton informed that large scale granite boulders will be used to identify the entry points. The traditional DCR granite columns will be used at the beginning and end of the path.

Driscoll reported that the monument restoration was vandalized and the consultant is using paraffin instead of sanding to clean it.

Driscoll expected the Watertown Landing project to start in spring of '09. He indicated that the funding was secure and available. The bid cost came in at \$200,000, the amount available. He reported that the north side of North Beacon will be restriped for bike lanes.

Herb Nolan, of the Solomon Fund, expressed appreciation to all the participants. He hoped the project will be funded. Driscoll reported that in the Open Space Bond, \$850,000 was budgeted for the project.

Pallotta McDermott inquired why there were Zelkovas proposed for this project. Houghton responded that it was proposed to match the one that was already there.

Rose requested clarification on 'silt boom.'" Houghton responded that it was a filter fiber fence used in the water with a flotation; she will provide detail to the documents.

Rose inquired about the core log. Houghton responded that it was the standard jute mat used by DCR.

Driscoll insured that DCR would work with the CC on new erosion controls that are more effective financially and ecologically. He wanted to improve on the costly traditional hay bale silt fence erosion controls. Pallotta McDermott suggested they talk to Dave Barnett at Mt. Auburn Cemetery for implemented new approaches.

Hammett inquired about the design use of the paths. Houghton responded that the upper paths would be for bikes and pedestrian and strollers would be for pedestrians.

Hammett inquired why Chapter 91 was needed. Houghton responded that two docks were proposed.

Hammett requested that ongoing conversations be continued with the Conservation Agent for details.

Martin inquired about the conditions of the outfalls. Houghton responded that all but one had been repaired. Hayward added that at the end of Irving Street the outfall had not been repaired and that identified fluoride indicates there is a crack in a water pipe on Charles River Road. Martin requested that it be repaired before the start of the project.

Taverna inquired about the recycle/reconstituted asphalt for the path. Driscoll noted that it does not make a good base for stone aggregate. For the project, he thinks that other organic natural materials will be superior choice.

Fairbairn requested that the proposed Zelkova be replaced with a native cultivar. Driscoll concurred that the aim for the long term is that replacements be made with native species.

Fairbairn inquired about the Wetland Wildlife Evaluations form details. Mark Reaves, ecologist/biologist with Sasaki identified that he had completed the forms and had similar questions about the form choices.

Hammett identified that the top priority of the project be the erosion controls on the bank edges. Houghton agreed and indicated that the banks will be upgraded with the jute logs to vegetate and revegetate the areas and make them denser. Reaves concurred that the priority is to regrade and revegetate the bank.

Michael Case, 348 Charles River Road, reported that the bike behavior along the path is deplorable. He believe that mix use won't work with handicapped and cyclists, and that mix use will not be fair since it is not patrolled. He questioned what was being done to address the mix use. Driscoll responded that cyclist will not be allowed in the lower paths and that the different users will be separated. He believed that once the area is improved it will be easier to self police. Nolan added that enhanced bike features were included in the Perkins area. Driscoll noted that when the parking is eliminated cyclist will prefer the faster asphalted street for commuting.

Joan Blaustein, 8 River Street, inquired about handicapped access at the Watertown Landing. Houghton explained that it was not part of this project. Driscoll affirmed that it was part of the design provided by the Cecil Group for the Landing.

Allison Raffaele, 354 Charles River Road, asked what the maintenance needs for the proposed paths was. Driscoll responded that they were easier to maintain than asphalt. Raffaele also inquired about pedestrian access. She was concerned about the non-signalized crosswalk at the monument. Houghton responded that there will be a light at Paul and Irving Street entrances. Raffaele also inquired about the status of the meadow. Houghton indicated that it will be preserved. Peter Del Tredici, 104 Riverside Street, said that the difference between a meadow and lawn was the frequency of the cutting. According to Del Tredici if the area is cut once in the fall native grass will be encouraged to grow. Houghton indicated that present guardrail prevents access for mowing.

Joe Raffaele, 354 Charles River Road, was disappointed in the meadow design since he was a ½ mile to the closest lawn for his dog. He felt a lawn areas would be more usable in his area. Houghton reported that the area was mowed twice. Richard Scott, DCR District Manager, informed that the maintenance schedule was posted on the DCR's website. He offered to meet with the residents to see what could be done in the interim.

Susan Boozer, 390 Charles River Road, asked about the lighting to allow safe night usage. Houghton responded that none was proposed. Driscoll concurred and indicated that the DCR park access is dawn to dusk usage for safety. He did note that if there is an increase in commuter cycling then there might be lighting in the future. However, he was concerned about the lighting on wildlife.

Larry Cannon, 20 Riverside Street, asked if there would be a crosswalk with lighting and auditory component at Irving Street. Houghton said yes.

Yasmina Spector, 16 Whites Avenue, wanted to know the incline at Irvine Street. Houghton responded that it was 5% without a lip.

Scott reported that the path is easily maintained by his staff and that usage helps maintain it. He invited the community to learn about the path materials to be used and their maintenance.

Beth Zwick, 14 Oak Street, requested that the plan be posted on the Town website. Houghton and Hayward concurred.

Leslie Tovis, 15 Bays Street, informed that there is an informal network site called Gocatch about the river who would be interested in this issue.

Evan Moss, Charles River Conservancy, expressed appreciation for effort of all the parties involved in the project.

Vote: Hammett moved to close the public hearing portion of this item. Taverna seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.

2. Informational –Administration of Avitrol with Potential Contact into Stormwater

Pallotta McDermott informed that the agenda item should read as: *Informational - Administration of Avitrol with Potential to get into Stormwater.*

Pallotta McDermott informed that pigeon management is outside the jurisdiction of the CC and that this matter was brought to her attention by Town Council Cournelis. She reported that the salt pile at DPW was of concern and that the usage of Avitrol must be done properly so that it does not reach the salt.

Pallotta McDermott had the following question: 1) what measures have been taken to insure Avitrol does not get into the salt? She was concerned that if Avitrol got into the DPW salt it could then travel to the Charles River. She noted that Avitrol had been removed from the DPW.

Town Councilor Angela Kounelis, 55 Keenan Street, provided a detail timeline of her involvement with DPW and the use of Avitrol for pigeon management. Pallotta McDermott responded that pigeon control is not a CC issue. She informed that the CC jurisdiction is limited to the protection of wetlands. The concern of the CC is whether there was Avitrol contact with the salt. She indicated that Union issues are not the jurisdiction of the CC.

Kounelis indicated that \$49K was expensed for pigeon control and \$19K for pigeon feces. These costs do not include Avitrol use. She indicated that Councilor Susan Falkoff had the Avitrol removed from DPW. She has requested more information from the Town Manager.

Falkoff introduced Councilor Vincent Piccarelli. She informed that Avitrol did not contact wetlands. She indicated that Mee assured her that the Avitrol used was in a diluted amount. She noted that the Avitrol was stored close to the Calcium chloride but had been removed. She noted that Dan Melansson, of DPW Union Local 25, expressed concern that Avitrol getting spread throughout the town.

Hammitt inquired how the CC could get answers to this issue. Falkoff suggested that the CC write a letter to the Town Manager, with copies to the DPW and the Health Department. Magoon suggested that staff could provide the answers and that if not satisfied, and then a more aggressive approach could be taken.

Pallotta McDermott requested that the following questions be asked: 1) how much Avitrol got into the salt? 2) what is the impact of Avitrol? 3) what happens to the dead pigeons?

Falkoff informed that hawks eat pigeons.

Piccarelli informed that there was only one treatment of Avitrol in the corn. The Avitrol solution was diluted at a 1:27 ratio. Only whole corn kernels were used. He indicated that it was a solid non soluble form. He reported that DPW removed all uneaten corn and that it wasn't mixed with the salt. He said that there was no concern about Avitrol being a hazard.

Hammett inquired if the use of Avitrol had been discontinued. Falkoff and Piccarelli assured that it had.

Rose inquired if Avitrol was not water soluble. Piccarelli responded that the corn will not leach into the salt. Martin asked if the corn got wet, would it then be soluble. Piccarelli said: "yes."

Kournelis read a letter from the Town Manager addressing her questions about duration of treatment, number of treatments, dead pigeons found and buried. She expressed frustration that some of the questions were not answered. She was concerned about the safety and health of Town employees.

Pallotta McDermott emphasized that the CC's concerns are limited to the affect of Avitrol on the stormwater and the Charles River systems.

3. Old Business

Item	Update status
Whitney Hill Report	Pending legal counsel. Rose provided a letter regarding the different definition for Chapter 97 and Conservation Land.
Recycling Center/Filippello Park	Hammett to send a letter to the TC and Manager requesting a temporary location for the Recycling Center.
Stormwater Management Standards	Goal – to pursue the establishment of a Stormwater Management Advisory Committee.
Gore Estate	TC discussed item in Executive Session in December 2006. No update. Hayward informed that the Jewish Community Day School purchased the parcel north of their school to be used for playing fields.
Ordinance	Ordinance adopted.
Pleasant Street Master Plan	Hammett updated. Special exceptions to developments may have CC review.
Rules and Regulations	Hammett to update.

4. Minutes of September 3, 2008 – Adopted.

5. Informational Discussion with Town Councilors Falkoff and Piccarelli regarding Stormwater Management Advisory Committee

Falkoff informed that President Younger wants to establish a Storm Water Management Advisory Committee (SWMAC). Next Tuesday, the DPW Subcommittee will meet to discuss the DPW's organizational structure. They are proposing that the DPW be required to meet the CC four times a year instead of establishing a SWMAC. Pallotta McDermott informed that the one of the roles of the SWMAC is to educate the public on stormwater issues. Falkoff was concerned that it would be difficult to populate a board with members with expertise on stormwater issues as knowledgeable as Hammett and Rose. In addition, she was concerned about staffing the SWMAC with the limited Town staff. She informed that the DPW Subcommittee consists of Falkoff, Piccarelli, Devaney and Corbett.

Hammett was concerned about responding proactively to stormwater issues without a SWHAC. Falkoff felt that the CC would be more empowered than a new committee.

Piccarelli indicated that with the reorganization of DPW, Mee expressed interest in a Water Quality Division and the 2009 Budget includes a budget request for that new division. He noted that the Pleasant Street Master Plan addressed water issues and he suggested that the next piece of legislation to come out of the CC be stormwater.

Falkoff reported that she had a three page list of DPW issues which included stormwater management.

6. New Business

Hayward notified that Meeting on the RAO on Sawins Pond will be held on October 15, 2008 at the Greek Orthodox Church at 7pm. A possible CC meeting to review Anne Marie Desmarais' draft comments on Tuesday, October 28 at 7pm. CC members are to send any comments by Thursday.

Pallotta McDermott inquired if a permanent display could be made of CC items prepared for the Faire in the Square.

7. Watertown Riverfront Park Restoration Order of Conditions

CC requested that DPW repair drain/outfall before project is undertaken. Magoon will contact Mee regarding this matter.

18a, b, c, d as state in plan and approved by agent, e, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, 28, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41a, b, c, f, g.

Meeting adjourned at 10:20pm