

September 7, 2017 - Fresh Pond Reservation Master Plan Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

Resubmitted: Sam Corda – March 15, 2018

Advisory Board Members in Attendance:

Janice Snow (Chair), David Kaplan, Susan Agger, Jim Barton, Doug Brown, Janet Burns, Adam Corbeil, Jennifer Letourneau, Candace Young, Claudia Thompson, Deborah Masterson, Ann Roosevelt, Purvi Patel and Jamie Porreca

Advisory Board Members Not in Attendance: None

Water Department in Attendance:

Sam Corda, Tim MacDonald, Vincent Falcione and Jamie O'Connell

Others in Attendance:

Sarah Barnum - Ecologist

Michael Newhouse - Ecologist

Susanne Rasmussen and Bill Deignan (Community Development Department)

Taha Jennings (City Manager's Office)

Richard Johnson (Cambridge Water Board member)

Kathleen Kelly (Cambridge Water Board member)

Chris Balerna (Kleinfelder)

Andrea Williams (Cambridge Bike Committee)

Martha Stearns - resident

Meeting opened at 6:05 pm

Meeting Minutes: S. Corda

Item 1: Review Agenda

No changes

Item 2: Meeting Minutes

Susan Agger moved and Deborah Masterson seconded the motion to approve the minutes of the March 16, 2017 minutes as written. The vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.

Candace Young moved and Doug Brown seconded the motion to approve the minutes of the May 18, 2017 minutes as written. The vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.

Item 3: New Conservation Commission Representative to the Advisory Board

Purvi Patel was introduced as the Conservation Commission representative to the Advisory Board, she is the current Chair and has been a member since 2012.

Item 4: Ecological Study of effect of artificial lighting on Huron Pine Forest habitat

Janice Snow stated that before the two scientists give their reports, she and Jim Barton, as members of the Master Plan Committee that wrote the Master Plan, voted by the City Council in 2001, thought it important to provide a brief overview on the historical and ecological context they concluded were missing from the ecological reports and lighting plans the Board had

recently received. Bill Deignan stated they would not be giving presentations as the Agenda noted but were available for questions. He would instead give a presentation.

Janice read from a timeline some of the key dates in the history of the Reservation as a water protection landscape including the Water Board's hiring of the Olmsted firm to restore damage sustained from the previous uses and the planting of thousands of pine trees to create the Huron Avenue forest. In response to serious deterioration of the reservation from neglect, between the 1930's to the 1960s, a group of citizens paid to help replant trees and pushed for a master plan. Finally, in 1997, with the decision to replace the treatment plant, the City Manager agreed to appoint a committee of citizens to write a long-term Master Plan whose vision statement looked to protect this singularly unique landscape for future generations.

Janice argued that the lighting structures (poles and fixtures) outside the building boundaries is contrary to the vision and policies of Fresh Pond Reservation Master Plan.

She further argued that the Master Plan's Land Use Policy designated the Pine Forest section of the DCR Greenway (This section is about 1100 feet in length) for further protection as one of the few locations within the Reservation and the only such places in the City to remain "forever as undisturbed natural areas." She noted that the Advisory Board voted to ask the City in January of 2015 to consider alternate locations for the paved path and in an August 2015 meeting Mr. Deignan had agreed to do so and share all Greenway documents related to the Reservation with the Advisory Board and to consider alternate path locations and alternatives to lighting. She received no response making it difficult for the Advisory Board to do its required oversight. The Board was never asked to review any lighting strategy and voted in January of 2017 to oppose the installation of lighting structures. This was the first time she said that a review of the scope of services for a City-sponsored ecological report at the Reservation was not discussed with the Board. She stated that the DCR who met with the Board in May of 2016 requested the Board's input and as a result altered its planting plans in coordination with the Water Department and the Advisory board. At that meeting the DCR's Director of Recreation Facilities Planning said the DCR policy, with only a few exceptions, was to not light greenways. .

Jim Barton, a member of the Master Plan Committees Land Use Policy subcommittee chaired by former Manager Rossi, spoke of the language and intent of the policy that lighting was to be removed and not installed in any natural areas of the Reservation and in fact lights had been removed from the Perimeter Road. The Master Plan clearly states the goal is to increase green space by removing structures, not adding them and that the Plan has Reservation specific standards, different from the City's park standards, for structures such as fences, signs and benches but not lights, because the plan did not support adding lights along natural areas. He was especially concerned, as the Board had noted in its January letter to the City Manager, that the addition of lights, within a closed area at the bottom of a ravine hidden from the roadway and in a closed, unlit Reservation, could create more serious safety problems than the absence of lights.

Doug Brown stated that the Chair and Jim Barton's introduction should have been noted in the agenda.

Bill Deignan gave a presentation on the DCR Greenway and the results of the ecological reports. This presentation can be found using the following link to the Community Development Website.

<http://www.cambridgema.gov/~media/Files/CDD/Transportation/Projects/watertowncambridgedgreenway/watertowncambridgedgreenwaysept72017fmpabpublicmeetingpresentation.pdf>

He mentioned that there were four public meetings relating to the DCR Greenway design, two of which were in Cambridge and two in Watertown. He also mentioned that the DCR/MassDOT will be advertising the project before the end of September and the conduit for any future lighting was part of the design for both Watertown and Cambridge.

Jen Letourneau stated that there will be no need to revisit the lighting issue with the Conservation Commission if there is or is not lighting as part of the project.

After the presentation was made questions were asked of the authors of the reports: Sarah Barnum, Ph.D., Senior Wildlife Scientist, Normandeau Associates, NH and Michael Newhouse, Biologist/Wetland Scientist, Kleinfelder's, New York office.

Kathleen Kelly stated that the report's focus on rare and endangered species was too restrictive to determine the real habitat impact.

Ann Roosevelt asked if lighting was a good idea from a safety, habitat and cost benefit point of view? Both ecologists stated that they were not asked to report on the safety aspects of lighting the pathway.

Susan Agger stated that there was not currently "rich" habitat in this corridor now and both the ecologists agreed with that statement, but she noted, the linear path is still a valuable wildlife corridor connecting Mt. Auburn Cemetery to Fresh Pond Reservation.

Richard Johnson reported the lighting intensity, based on the design, was 17.5 lux under the light pole and 1.7 lux outside of the pathway being lit.

The consultants were asked if they were given the schematics or plant lists for the native plant and wetland swales restoration along the path and/or were asked to consider the ecosystem that would be created when the entire forest habitat was restored following Master Plan priorities. They said they were not given that information but they did not expect the future habitat value would change their conclusions.

In response to a question the scientists stated that they were not asked to consider the effect the light structures would have in attracting people and dogs in the area at night. They noted that the introduction of dogs at night might change their "analysis."

Jamie Porreca asked if there would there be impacts to trees, butterflies and moths from the lighting. They scientists said they did not consider these potential impacts.

Susan Agger commented that the wildlife does not have a choice here, while Doug Brown commented that neither do the children.

Andrea Williams, a member of the Bike Committee, mentioned that she is in favor of the pathway as an alternate form of transportation and in particular to allow kids to bike to school and many other places.

Jim Barton reiterated many of the comments mentioned already. He voiced his concern about well construction impacts and lack of alternatives to lighting, such as illumination/nothing at all/stripes/light emitting stripes and he questioned if any other possible alternatives may exist.

Candice Young stated that it would be good to have a visual/mock-up to show what the extent and coverage of the lighting would look like. Lighting the proposed greenway in the pine forest, a protected habitat, should not be compared to standard park or street lights.

Kathleen Kelly suggested that the reports did not provide sufficient scientific data and that solving the lighting issues through science alone, using a declining baseline (the current condition of the area) is not acceptable and she would argue against this approach.

Susanne Rasmussen summarized the concerns as follows:

- Clarify the light (Lux) levels
- Define safety issues relating to lighting
- Visually illustrate greenway lighting vs. other alternatives
- Consider less intrusive alternatives to lighting, such as
 - Bollards
 - Stripes
 - No lighting
 - Others
- Is there a boundary at lighting versus no lighting
- Fresh Pond Master Plan Standards at Fresh Pond Reservation are different from those at any other place within the City.

Item 5: Watershed Managers Report

Drainage and Community Garden Project: The project is moving along very well. The basic infrastructure (e.g. detention basins relocating the Perimeter Road, community garden, hummocks) is complete. Fall plantings have begun. Best practices were employed to properly cap the railroad right-of-way.

Several specimen oak trees were saved and we expect the site will open in the late spring/early summer. A Board tour of the site could be planned for the spring 2018.

Landscape Maintenance: Vinnie Falcione has been working with the UMASS Extension school to help define the type and extent of native fungi (4 possible) that are affecting the white pine stand near Lusitania Meadow. There is still no information as to why the Ash Trees are in decline. Some possible strategies to help slow and/or stop the decline are thinning and deep root feeding.

Item 6: Reservation Signage

A mock-up of the community garden signage was provided for review. A draft of the signage listing information for the Drainage and Community Garden will be made available at the November meeting for review and consideration.

Item 7: Long Term Master Plan Projects: Annual Update

The list of large projects to be completed are Kingsley Park phases 2 and 3, Circulation and Access Plan, Pine Forest Restoration and Perimeter Road improvements. Projects will begin in FY 2020 and continue for several years. Kingsley Park restoration of the stone walls of the two

original overlooks are next on the list of “small” work to be completed with work expected to commence in the Spring of 2018. Other smaller projects to start the planning process are Black’s Nook and the Pine Forest study.

Item 8: Fresh Pond Day Report

The Advisory Board had a table along with the Maynard Ecology Center at the base of Kingsley Park along with the Conservation Commission and other environmental groups and consultants which provided a better access for visitors interested in the reservation landscape. There was good attendance and a lot of nice activities for children inside the fence near the building.

Doug Brown announced that given too many work, family and other Committee meetings, this was his last meeting and he would not reapply to remain of the Fresh Pond Master Plan Advisory Board. He thanked the Board for a lively exchange of ideas. The Board thanked him for volunteering and asked him to keep in touch regarding Alewife development affecting the Reservation.

Item 9: Preliminary Agenda for November 16, 2017 Advisory Board Meeting

History and function of the Cambridge Conservation Commission, Black’s Nook permanent fencing, updating the Fresh Pond Master Plan planting list, developing a sustainable landscape Maintenance Plan and DCR Greenway bid process.

Item 10: Public Comment

No comments

Doug Brown moved and Janice Snow seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting. The vote was unanimous in favor of the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 8:10pm.