

Recycling Advisory Committee (RAC) Meeting

October 8, 2025, 8:00am – 9:30am

Minute Taker: Debby Knight

Virtual Meeting

Members present: Debby Galef, Tracie Gordon, Sakiko Isomichi, Debby Knight, Elka Kuhlman, Emily Lee, Carlie Peters, Dawn Quirk, Diane Roseman, Meera Singh, Helen Snively, Rob Vandenabeele, Stephanie Wasiuk,

Members absent: Dailey Brannin, Dave Demme, Richard Nurse, Quentin Steenhuis

Staff Present: Jennifer Letourneau, Mike Orr, Sara Schneidman

Public present: Amy Waltz, Tamene Tedla

1. Housekeeping

- Vote on September 2025 Minutes
- Solid waste position (Camilla's job) has been posted
- Still looking for waste sort help on October 27 & 30

2. Presentation from Jen Letourneau, Conservation Commission

- New standards have been developed by the City Council related to flood storage - goal is to mirror natural functions, can't just dam it up
- Wetlands should receive the same amount of water they received before construction, not have it damned up and the wetland then dry up
- Examples of ways sediments are managed, way water can flow through areas - all this time allows water to be as clean as it can be before it's discharged into the river
- Fresh Pond Reservation description – City was able to capitalize on the abandoned railroad line - bought the line and created storm water infrastructure and plantings - looks extremely natural, but captures water and gives it attention before it's discharged into pond so it's as clean as possible before the water treatment begins
- Importance of Inter-Department work, site visits
- Site restoration is critical - so much of large construction work is on the big bang - curbs, pavement, etc., but tree and plant work is essential

Questions and Discussion:

- How can we support this work as citizens?
- Storm Stewards, Adopt a Drain program - especially important at this time of year when there are a lot of leaves coming down
- Explanation of combined sewer overflows – the City has done a tremendous amount to avoid just putting water in the pipes (storage tanks, separating crossconnections, etc.) to minimize any combined sewage going into the system
- Gamify tours – it would be great to be able to let people know in a positive way about things that are happening in the City
- How can we get the word out to people to get leaves out of the gutters before street cleaning (more yard waste, less trash)

3. Recycle Center design proposal and feedback

Mike shared map of area, talked through proposed traffic flow and different containers and how the area would function. Separately, DPW will start piloting a mobile Recycle Center in Spring 2026. This was a Participatory Budgeting winner.

Discussion and additional information:

- DPW has gotten rid of the 30-yard compactor for cardboard (gone a couple years) – very old and had hydraulic issues – testing out whether the dumpster works for regular recycling collection
- How will the traffic flow work for cars – stopping, moving – numerous questions and suggestions
- Food waste dropoff along side of Norfolk building – open all the time
- Can the site include textile recycling bin?
- Labeling of the containers, map of area would be really helpful – difficult now, although person working there is helpful
- Shelves for “shopping” are gone – lots of people liked those, ugly though they are; could wall move over slightly to make more space?; can some of us come over and walk through the plan and give you feedback?
- Mike – There’s pressure around “How can we make it smaller? How can we make it do more?”
- Is it good to have cardboard mixed with other recycling, or better separate (Mike – definitely benefit to doing just cardboard – saves us money) – but then we need another container for co-mingled recycling. Emptied 3 times a week, before each shift
- What about Styrofoam? Tough one!
- What about the hours? Can we extend them?
- Mobile recycling center starting up in the spring – will make it easier if located closer to people’s homes
- Questions about how the mobile vehicle will work – hours, access
- How to make the attendant space connected to people coming and going – need to design/outfit a shipping container so they can see people coming and going
- City vehicles and where they park is pretty variable – some are old, not often used (specialty examples, like drain cleaning truck), so when they break down they need to be stored while waiting for parts
- People interested in a walk-around the site with Mike – suggested a Doodle Poll

4. Closing, 9:20am

Public Comment -none

- Action Plan/Decisions
 - Need more people for upcoming events – trash sort, other volunteer opportunities
- Announcements
 - Related to specialty recycling and styrofoam comments, Mike and Dailey attended a conference in Boston yesterday for northeast recyclers – lab plastic is also a hot topic right now
 - Comment from Mike – We need to stay nimble and think of the best ways of getting rid of our waste efficiently

Upcoming Meetings in 2025

- November 12
- December 10

Chat

07:59:48 From read.ai meeting notes to Everyone:
Tamene added read.ai meeting notes to the meeting.

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Type "read stop" to disable, or "opt out" to delete meeting data.

08:02:56 From Jennifer Letourneau (Jen: she/hers) to Everyone:
I hope it is ok, I shared the meeting with 2 members of Engineering staff (Lena Frappier and Sara Schneidman).

08:17:51 From Helen Snively to Everyone:
i'm curious about Mount Auburn which has several ponds.. Do all these rules apply to it? Or maybe not, since it's private?

08:31:32 From Debby Knight to Deborah Galef (direct message):
Started taking minutes about 8:15

08:32:34 From Helen Snively to Everyone:
yes, to echo Rob... SO useful to understand this history and the current processes. It may not sound specifically relevant to recycling, but we all need to understand it.

08:40:03 From Helen Snively to Everyone:
ok, Tracie, write that up for Participatory Budgeting!
Mike Orr: 🗨️

08:41:09 From Amy to Everyone:
The increased volume of runoff from increasing heavy rains with climate change & increased impervious surfaces is immense. Can greater rain capture from rain barrels help? Are there personal practices that can reduce CSO (don't do laundry or dishes, flush, during heavy storms?)
Rob Vandenabeele: 🗨️

08:41:19 From Emily Lee to Everyone:
Replying to "ok, Tracie, write that up for Participatory Budget...":
Geocaching is one way to "gamify" self-guided tour. DPW actually has contributed some spots on it in Danehy Park.
Mike Orr: 🗨️

08:41:31 From Helen Snively to Everyone:
great questions, Amy!

08:41:44 From traciegordon to Everyone:
I AM ON THE PB COMMITTEE. I am Iso a storm steward.
Rob Vandenabeele: 🗨️

08:42:17 From traciegordon to Everyone:
I think I'll submit it tonight if not to late.

08:42:25 From traciegordon to Everyone:
Thank you for coming!

08:54:38 From Amy to Everyone:

I stopped at the recycle center this summer & asked people what would make it better. Surprisingly, about 9 out of 10 people said bring back the book swap shelves without any prompting! We have had impassioned requests for that at this meeting as well. Can we bring this back in some way? Perhaps a book share cabinet by the bike area?

08:58:28 From Amy to Everyone:

The recycle center is the only place I know of in or near Cambridge to drop off scrap metal; but limited hours make it inconvenient. Is it possible to have a bin by the bikes for small metal items (similar to the clothing drop bins)?

08:59:04 From Rob Vandenabeele to Everyone:

Maybe have a sign that explains how close the current textile drop off location is.

08:59:38 From Helen Snively to Everyone:

great idea, Rob! in fact, maybe a sign with info on all the other places to recycle.

09:01:39 From Amy to Everyone:

Yes, a single drop site for items is very helpful. Anything to make things more convenient will increase use. Definitely signage!

09:02:27 From Amy to Everyone:

Reuse shelves would be fabulous!!!

09:04:29 From Deborah Galef to Everyone:

There were a ton of large vehicles parked there last night.

09:04:43 From Amy to Everyone:

Reuse in Z - the first thing you come to - would be sending the right message. Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.

09:05:09 From Deborah Galef to Debby Knight (direct message):

That's fine. Thanks, Debby!

09:05:16 From traciegordon to Everyone:

There's aa fuel tank right there in the middle - concerns compound with just that.

09:08:49 From traciegordon to Everyone:

Is there a time of day when there are not a ton of DPW vehicles in the area? Is there protocol as to who can park where?

09:09:35 From Deborah Galef to Everyone:

Newton collects Styrofoam.

09:10:39 From traciegordon to Everyone:

The Mobile vehicle that was granted the PB for next year, can it possible have dedicated days per month to just collect styrofoam and perhaps by then you can find a place that recycles styrofoam?

09:11:07 From Amy to Everyone:

Cleaner, more restrictive recycle streams like cardboard, or I have heard uncontaminated white paper (rather than mixed), perhaps could be considered.

09:13:02 From Rob Vandenabeele to Everyone:

Awesome point!

09:20:23 From Amy to Everyone:

The greater issue with styrafoam may be avoiding the pollution from disposal (plastics from waste runoff or incineration).

09:21:14 From Rob Vandenabeele to Everyone:

Seems like styrofoam of most kinds needs to be banned.

Recycling Advisory Committee
October 8, 2025

Cambridge Conservation Commission

Jennifer Letourneau

Administrator Since April 2003

Joined Cambridge Public Works April 2016



CAMBRIDGE
DEPARTMENT
OF PUBLIC
**THE
WORKS**

Overview

- ▶ Wetlands
- ▶ History
- ▶ Jurisdiction
- ▶ Permit Process
- ▶ Project Examples
- ▶ Lessons Learned
- ▶ Work in Addition to Conservation Commission

Wetlands: Definition

- ▶ A wetland is an area of land whose soil is saturated with moisture either permanently or seasonally.
- ▶ These areas may also be covered partially or completely by water.
- ▶ Wetlands include rivers, swamps, marshes and bogs, among others.
- ▶ The water found in wetlands can be saltwater, freshwater or brackish.

Wetlands: Function

- ▶ Filters sediments, pollutants and nutrients
- ▶ Sponge-like quality allows water to be returned to the ground during dry periods
- ▶ Helps slow water flow and prevent floods
- ▶ Supports diverse wildlife
- ▶ Provides open space



Black's Nook within Fresh Pond
Reservation

History: Conservation Commissions

- ▶ At least 95 percent of actual wetland losses were due to human activities.
- ▶ In 1957 Representative John Dolan of Ipswich filed a bill in the state legislature which became the Conservation Commission Act (M.G.L. Chapter 40 Section 8C). This state law enabled municipalities to establish Conservation Commissions.
- ▶ The Commissions protected open land and natural areas. Their assigned duties included promotion and development of natural resources and protection of watershed resources.
- ▶ The Cambridge City Council voted unanimously on June 12, 1961 to accept the provisions of Chapter 233 of the Acts of 1957 to establish a Conservation Commission. Only 12 municipalities voted to form Conservation Commissions.
- ▶ On December 13, 1965 the first Cambridge Conservation Commission was appointed by the City Council. There were 4 appointed members.

History: 1963 Black's Nook Restoration within Fresh Pond Reservation

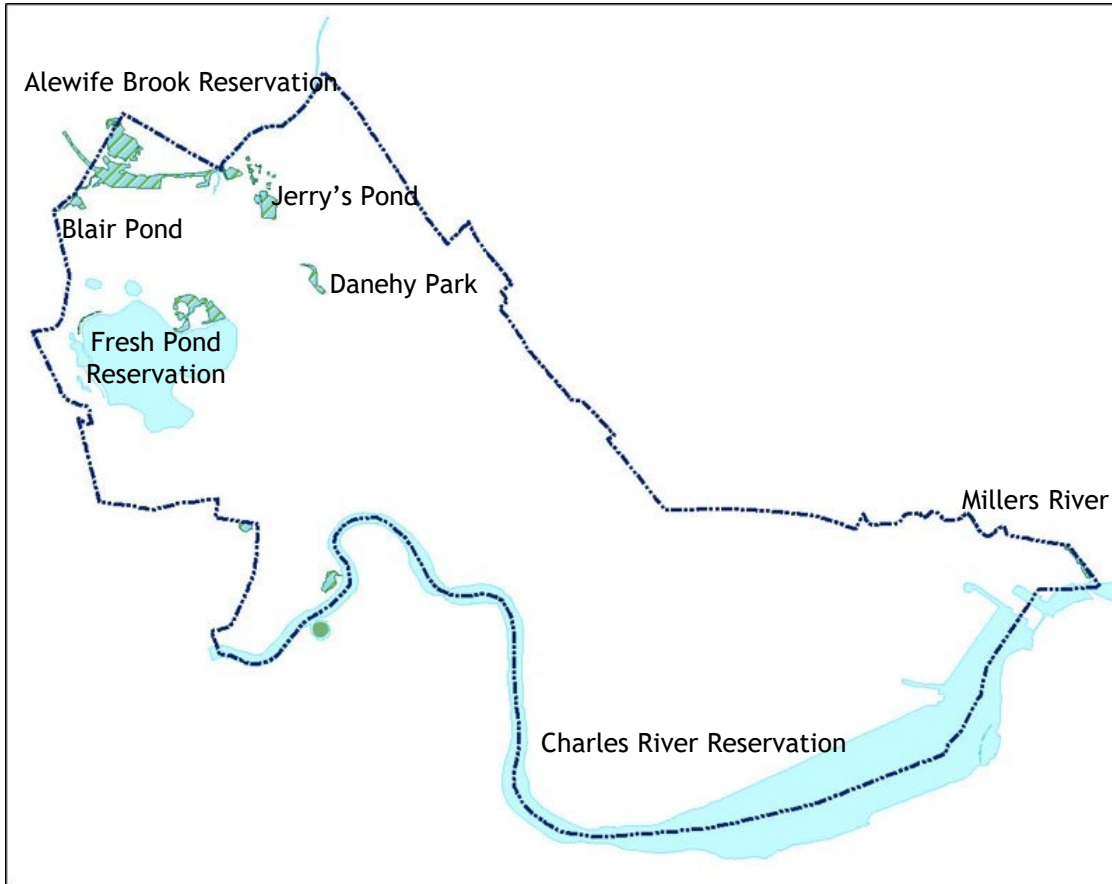


Founding Conservation Commission Member Ruth Birkhoff with
her fellow Cambridge Plant and Garden Club Members
Mary Kennedy and Patricia Pratt

History: Wetlands Protection Act

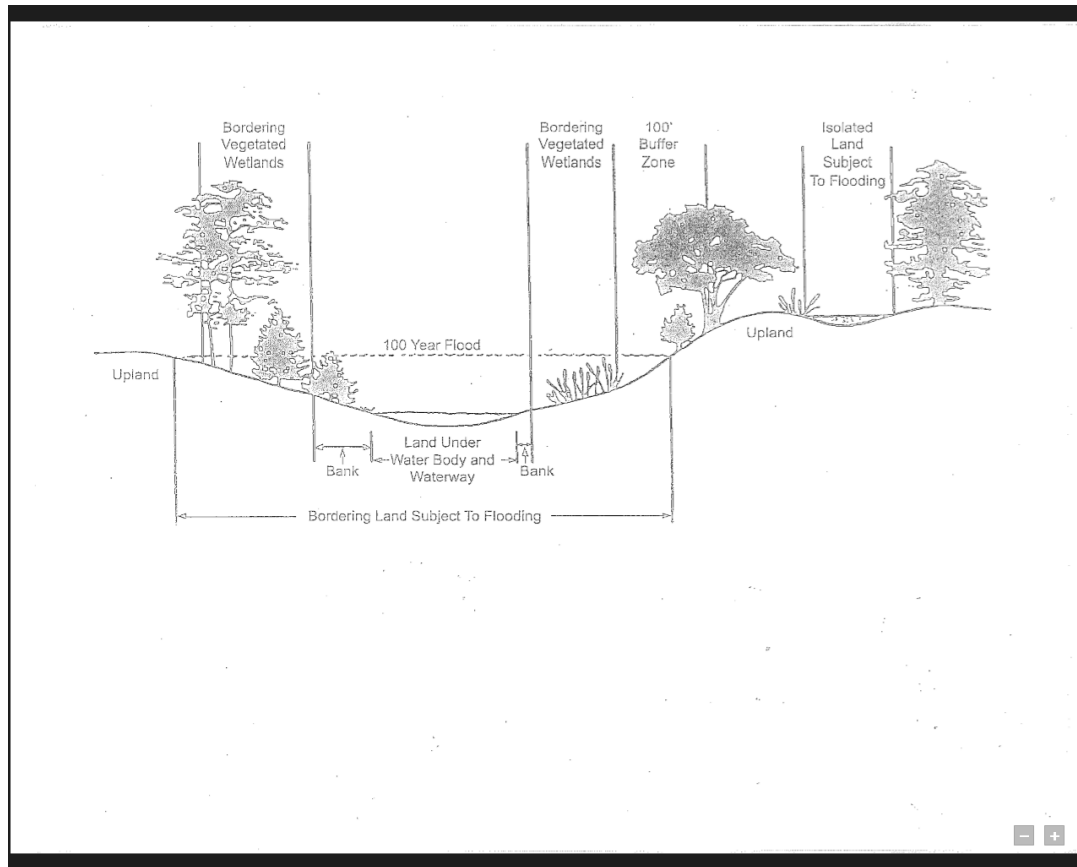
- ▶ The Wetlands Protection Act (WPA) was passed in 1972 (Massachusetts General Law Chapter 131 Section 40). The Act gave Conservation Commissions the legal right to review and permit projects seeking to alter a wetland resource area.
- ▶ The WPA protects wetlands and the public interests they serve, including flood control, prevention of pollution and storm damage, and protection of public and private water supplies, groundwater supply, fisheries, land containing shellfish, and wildlife habitat.
- ▶ However, it was not until 1983 that the specifics of the review process was promulgated as its own Code of Massachusetts Regulations (310 CMR 10.00).
- ▶ The Cambridge City Council voted unanimously in 1985 to appoint a 7 member Conservation Commission.

Jurisdiction: Locations in Cambridge



- ▶ Alewife Brook Reservation
- ▶ Blair Pond
- ▶ Jerry's Pond
- ▶ Danehy Park
- ▶ Fresh Pond Reservation
- ▶ Charles River Reservation
- ▶ Millers River

Jurisdiction: Wetland Resource Areas



- ▶ Land Under Water
- ▶ Bank (Water Interface to the Break in the Slope)
- ▶ Riverfront (25 feet from Top of Bank in Cambridge)
- ▶ Bordering Vegetated Wetland and Buffer Zone (100 feet from the BVW)
- ▶ Land Subject to Flooding and Isolated Land Subject to Flooding

Jurisdiction: Revisions and Exemptions

- ▶ The 1996 Stormwater Policy and associated Stormwater Management Standards aimed at encouraging recharge and preventing stormwater discharges from causing or contributing to the pollution of the surface waters and ground waters.
- ▶ The 2008 amendments to the WPA incorporated the Stormwater Management Standards
- ▶ The amendments included a provision for stormwater management systems created after January 2, 2008. Specifically, operation of a stormwater management system does NOT create additional buffer zone or wetland resource area. Future review of the system will be limited to the functions of the system.

Permit Process: Typical Permit Requests

- ▶ Resource Area Delineation (RAD): Approve or Deny the Resource Areas as Mapped
- ▶ Request for Determination of Applicability (RDA): Determines Whether the Project Requires the Filing of a Notice of Intent
- ▶ Notice of Intent (NOI): Either Approved or Denied with Conditions or Special Conditions; Order of Conditions (OOC to be Recorded at the Registry of Deeds)
- ▶ Request for Extensions: An NOI may be Granted Extensions in 1-3 Year Increments until the Project is Complete

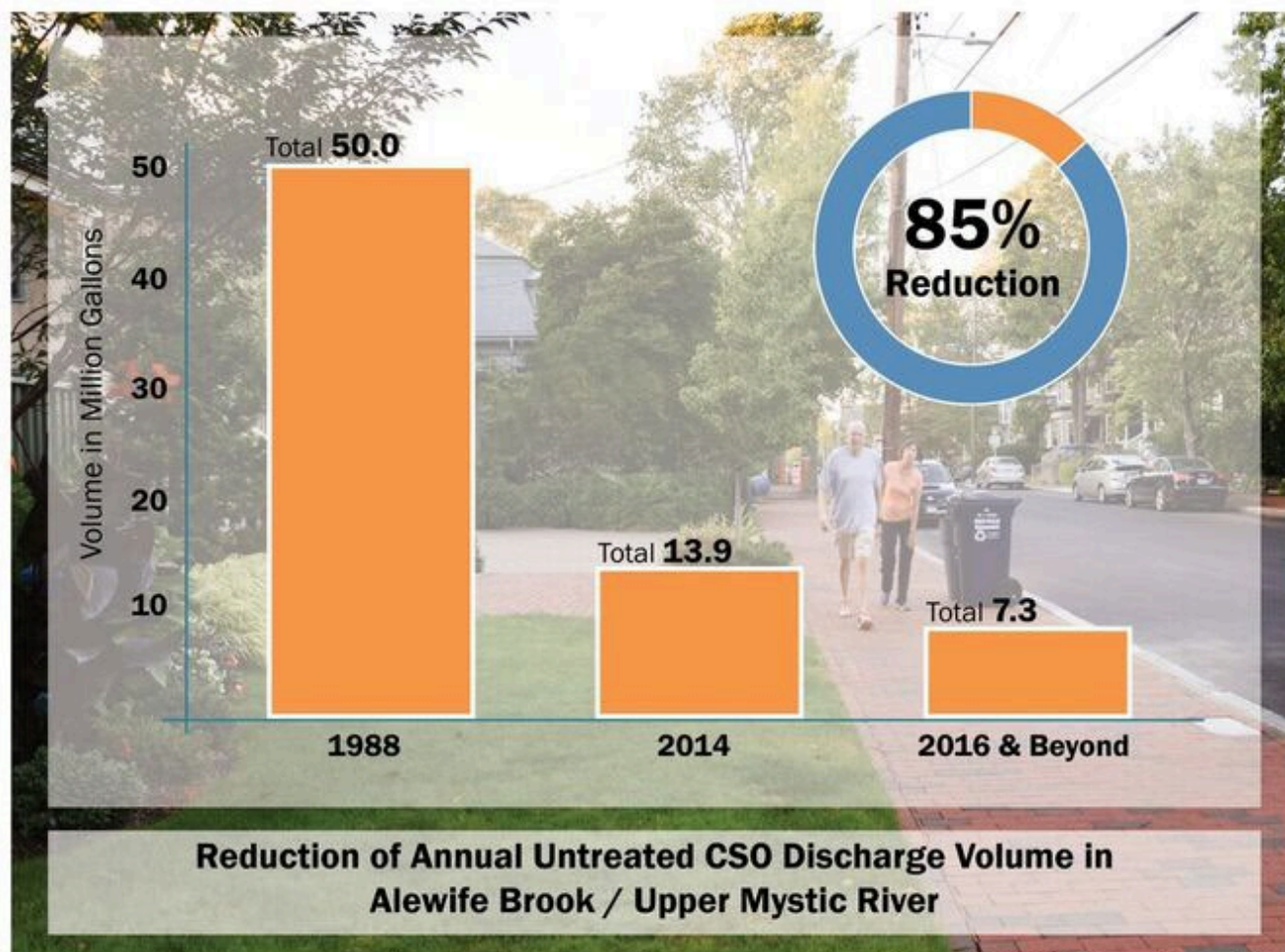
Permit Process: Submittals

- ▶ Submittal Review Meeting: Prior to Final Submittal
- ▶ Received 10 Business Days in Advance of a Hearing
- ▶ Legal Advertisement
- ▶ Meeting Notice
- ▶ Hearing Must be Held within 21 Days of a Submittal

Permit Process: Site Mitigation

- ▶ Project provides compensatory flood storage up to Elevation 7.50 (NAVD88) on site through site grading and at grade under-building flood storage areas.
- ▶ Flood waters will be able to flow unrestricted in and out of the site.
- ▶ In response to the City of Cambridge Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment recommendations, projects are to be designed such that the bottom of each of the building slab is elevated higher than the potential flooding associated with the anticipated 2030 100-year storm event, which for Alewife area is expected to be Elevation 7.46 (NAVD88), and will mitigate the impact to the projected floodplain by providing additional flood storage within the projected 2030 100-Year floodplain.
- ▶ Reduction in impervious surfaces on the site to promote groundwater recharge and reduce stormwater runoff, as well as includes enhanced landscape plantings throughout the site. These improvements will help to lessen the urban heat island effect experienced in North Cambridge and surrounding communities.
- ▶ The implementation of both natural, a wet pond or rain garden, and structural, deep sump hooded catch basins and Stormceptor (or approved equal) water quality units and Best Management Practices (BMPs) to manage stormwater runoff on-site prior to ultimate discharge to the adjacent wetlands.

Permit Process: Positive Results



Source: MWRA CSO Annual Report 2015

Project Examples: Discovery Park (Former ADL Site)



Project Examples: Discovery Park



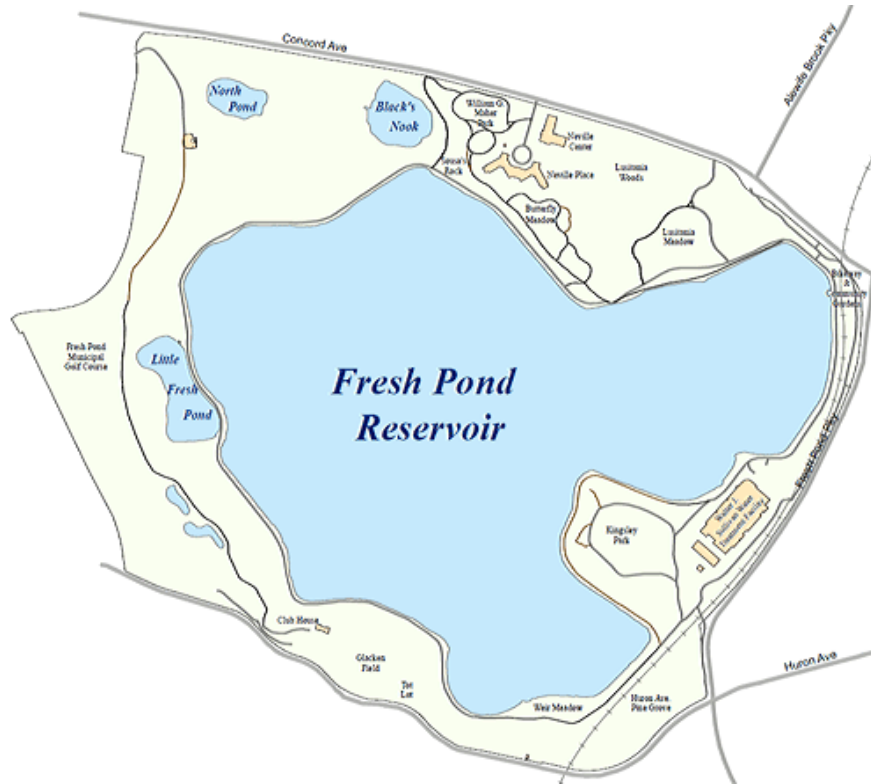
Project Examples: Constructed Wetland Alewife Reservation



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Project Examples: Fresh Pond Reservation \$20 Million Since 2003



- ▶ Northeast Sector (Lusitania Meadow to Concord Avenue)
- ▶ Little Fresh Pond Shoreline Restoration
- ▶ Golf Course Drainage and Landscape Improvements
- ▶ Glacken Slope and Perimeter Path
- ▶ Kingsley Park Drainage and Landscape Improvements

Project Examples:

Fresh Pond Drainage and Community Garden

Spring 2017 to Spring 2018



Project Examples:

Fresh Pond Drainage and Community Garden

Spring 2017 to Spring 2018

A drainage and community garden project began in 2009 and grew into a multi-discipline landscape restoration and improvement marvel. The Drainage and Community Gardens construction project will eliminate untreated stormwater discharges to Fresh Pond Reservoir; re-purpose and improve a former rail corridor; improve perimeter road drainage; create a graded, planted buffer between Fresh Pond Parkway and Reservation users; create an accessible, relocated, updated Community Garden; and restore native plant communities.

Project Examples:

Fresh Pond Drainage and Community Garden

Spring 2017 to Spring 2018



Lessons Learned

- ▶ Communicate Inter-Departmentally
- ▶ Complete Regular Site Visits
- ▶ Check and Re-Check Erosion/Sedimentation Controls
- ▶ Site Restoration is Critical
- ▶ Tree and Plant Establishment is Expensive, Time Consuming and Often Not Done
- ▶ Follow Up with Long Term Operation and Maintenance

Work in Addition to Conservation Commission

- ▶ Senior Engineer at the Department of Public Works
- ▶ Boards and Commissions: Fresh Pond Advisory Board, Food and Fitness Policy Council, Urban Agriculture Working Group, Open Space Committee
- ▶ The Community Garden Program: 14 Community Gardens City Wide
- ▶ Support Community Preservation Act Committee and Participatory Budget Delegates

Thank You!

Any questions?

Jennifer Letourneau

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FRAZIER BUILDING
#147

2 STORY
BRICK

1 STORY
STEEL

CONC

Gate

traffic flow

NORFOLK STREET

6.5 STK 88.00'
N66°04'15"W
MAP 85 LOT 14

41.00'
N23°55'45"E

73.99'

GENERAL NOTES

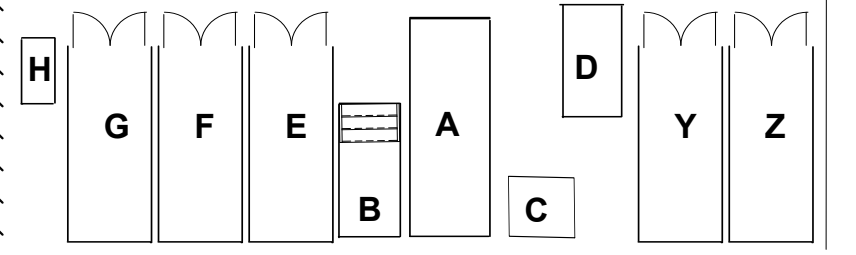
- A. 8X22 Scrap Metal Roll-Off
- B. Stairs
- C. Plastic Baler
- D. 7x12 RECYCLE DUMPSTER
- E. 8X20 Attendant Trailer/Storage
- F. 8X20 E-waste Shed
- G. 8x20 Universal Waste Shed &Sup
- H. Extra 2-yard recycle dumpster
- Y & Z: Shipping containers from rear
- I. Mattress shed/Storage

NOTE: Book bin will be moved to
Norfolk St, near bike racks

SIMARD BUILDING
#13
2 STORY
BRICK

Fuel Tanks

CONCRETE



WASH BAY

Current Recycle
Center