



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS**  
**CONSERVATION COMMISSION**  
**JOSEPH A. CURTATONE**  
**MAYOR**

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2018, 7:00 PM  
**MINUTES**

Meeting at Somerville High School AUDITORIUM  
81 HIGHLAND AVENUE

*DRAFT Meeting notes prepared by Vanessa Boukili, based on a recording of the meeting*

**Commission Members in attendance:** Rachel Borgatti (Chair), Michael Fager, Aladdine Joroff, Cristina Kennedy, Mathias Neuber, David Turin

**Commission Members absent:** Owen Wartella

**Others in Attendance:** Katie Barnicle (AECOM), Christie Baker (AECOM), Zoya Puri (Wynn Design & Development), Dan Driscoll (DCR), Anne Zielinski, Bill Noll, Robert Singleton, Gordon Fontaine, Shari Huval, Peter Heller, Jeanine Farley, Rachel Schwarz, Marijke Schuurman, Nina Huntemann, Erica Rogers Jensen

**Staff:** Vanessa Boukili (Conservation Agent)

Rachel Borgatti called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm followed by introductions.

**New Business (7:03 pm)**

- 1) AECOM Update on Mystic River Pedestrian Bridge Design
  - Courtesy presentation from DCR and AECOM (same presentation as Somerville and Everett community meetings).
  - Overview of conceptual design and opportunity for comment.
  - Primary project purpose: regional connectivity. Goal is an interconnected, off-road, family-friendly greenway system.
  - Multiple planning studies over time have recommended crossing over Mystic River. Studies have concluded that crossing has to be independent span bridge.
  - Unanimous support for project at both public community meetings (Somerville and Everett).
  - Unsure of funding source for bridge.
  - North landing in Everett (Wynn Resort) with two new paths to be developed by Wynn.
  - South landing in Draw 7 Park, next to MBTA Assembly Station, Assembly Row, Mystic River Trail.
  - DCR to be developing new pedestrian and bike path on top of MBTA bulkhead wall; design for path to be completed this summer. MBTA bulkhead project already underway.

- Estimate about 2400 people walking/biking on new bridge per day on weekdays (estimate over 2,700 on weekends).
- Many stakeholders have been involved in process.
- Alignment and design provide most direct route while also giving sufficient vertical clearance necessary to get the bridge up and over the navigation channel. Design also limits the number of foundations in the water, and provides connection to Harborwalk and Draw 7 Park. Onward connection to MBTA Assembly station and Assembly Row.
- Main span of bridge ~225 feet, only three piers in water (V-Piers, aligned with railroad bridge piers) plus tight arch and steel upstand beam to support the length. Bridge 14 feet wide. Left 40 foot-wide corridor throughout the length that could be used to accommodate potential future Silverline bridge.
- Drainage on bridge: bridge sloped towards main girder, deck grillage to provide positive drainage. DCR has said no chemicals will be used for snow maintenance or removal.
- Fabrication: looking at different options, perhaps build large pieces offsite and ship in.
- Propose navigation lighting, lighting in railing along deck, and lighting on structure.
- Estimated construction cost (includes design, construction, and construction engineering): \$22.6 million.
- Permitting: approximately 19 agencies (5 federal, 8 state, 6 local), approximately 14 actions.
  - Will file formal NOI with Conservation Commission at about 75-100% design.
  - Have to apply for Ch.91 license application with MassDEP.
  - Coast Guard Permit.
- Q & A from Conservation Commission:
  - Funding in place?
    - Wynn obligation to 25% design. No identified sources to finish design or build the bridge, but DCR and Wynn in discussions and looking at multiple avenues.
  - Timeline?
    - Somewhat dependent on funding. Ideally soon enough to keep current team in place. If funding put in place soon, ideally have 100% design by Spring 2019.
  - DCR role?
    - Co-applicant with Wynn. Also land-owner (one side). Most likely owner of bridge (structure), including operation, maintenance, security. Will need partnerships with Wynn, etc.
  - What projections of potential flooding levels have been used?
    - Draw 7 Park master plan and design – a lot of climate resiliency. For design we are looking out 50 years using projections and numbers from MBTA bulkhead wall project. Design more to drain quickly and absorb what it can, rather than avoid flooding. Also working on riverfront restoration.
  - MBTA funding for attachment?
    - No identified source yet. There is a “nub” for future head house. Important access point.
  - How deal with different requirements from different Commissions?
    - Accommodate what is being asked within reason. Prefer to stick to jurisdictional elements within filing, but can go beyond that when possible and reasonable.
  - How does this project rank in terms of DCR priorities?
    - Committed to getting system connected. Urban priorities: MBTA bulkhead wall connection, Clipper ship connector near Medford Square, and a key missing link on

the Neponset. Have wanted to do bridge here for 20 years. Now with additional potential funding beyond DCR's means, it can now be a high priority.

- Permitting: need a General Construction Project permit from EPA?
  - Has not been determined yet. Aware of 1 acre threshold, and unsure how fit in yet (with Wynn, bridge, Draw 7 park, etc.). Depends on phasing of projects.

## 2) Community Garden discussion with Garden Coordinators

- Coordinators present from all community gardens except Avon, Chuckie-Harris, Glen.
- Discussion focused around the following topics, which were provided ahead of time:
- Share a success or an exciting story from last year's gardening season.
  - Morse-Kelly (15 plots + ADA plot, many shared plots (probably about 30 people use garden); Erica is coordinator): successful gardener community that helped out when Erica had a baby. There is a standard of what happens every season, with jobs attached to each plot, and that works really well. Worked out even without much oversight. Co-coordinator does money collection, Erica does the rest.
  - Tufts (28 plots (about 45 active gardeners), coordinators = Peter, Jeanine, Rachel): last year biggest success was controlling rat population. Had devastating problem a few years ago. Last year dug around the fence and lined with hardware cloth/wire fencing – took about 9 months of gardeners working together. Also Tufts put out bait stations.
  - Walnut (around 22 plots, coordinator = Shari and Catherine (not present)): last year everyone really worked in their plots and tended them. Also fewer rats last year than in previous years.
  - Allen St (15 plots, 1 ADA, coordinator = Gordon): splitting coordination role and there was a miscommunication and ended up not having a fall cleanup. Then recruited folks from martial arts studio next door to help with an impromptu clean up.
  - Albion (12 plots + 1 raised bed, Rob): Success in that got rid of rats and rabbits (and a groundhog) by patching up back fence.
  - Bikeway (28 plots (about 40 gardeners), coordinators = Bill + Sarah): Lots of interest from passers-by. Great community. Have outside beds right outside of garden. Good job last year of getting invasives out of the front beds. Also had minor catastrophe where internal hose connection broke and began shooting up like a geyser. Some of the gardeners rushed in and fixed the problem ASAP.
  - Osgood (two garden areas, Osgood 1 and 2, with 10 plots in each, coordinators = Marijike, Nina): The garden shed was breaking down, and one of gardeners rebuilt it and it's very nice. Also, the water faucet was difficult to use, but another gardener fixed it so that it's now easy to use. Another win - someone backed into fence, damaging fence and about 1/3 of one plot. Reported damage to the city and it was fixed within a week. One issue about the garden is that it's next to a park, get lots of nip bottles etc.
  - Durrell (19 plots, 2 are ADA, coordinators = Anne, Cathy (not present)): Cathy focuses on money collection and coordinating with the city, Anne manages the waitlist, spring and fall cleanups, and monthly cleanups. Biggest issue is construction on Beacon St., also they have some rabbit problems, and they often find nips etc. in pocket park area. Success was that they had good tomatoes last year.
- Discuss how you manage the waitlist as your community garden.
  - Morse-Kelly: very long waitlist (about 70 people). An application would help – date, phone number, address. The new waitlist template (google docs) is helpful. 1-2 gardeners leave every season. Contact people on waitlist (2 emails and phone call), if don't respond then they are moved off active wait list.

- Tufts: In January contact people on the waitlist, if they don't respond by email then try texting. There are 36 people on the waitlist, this year 3 plots have opened up. Tufts has priority on 1 or 2 plots.
- Walnut: Fair amount of people on waitlist, use the google doc sheet. Average about 2 plots open up per year. If folks on waitlist don't respond to emails or phone call they make a note, but leave them on list.
- Allen St: Nine or 10 people on waitlist. Actively push for success in garden. If there are gardeners that are not working in their plots, coordinators call and email to make sure they start working or give up their plots. It's a lot of effort but helps cull waitlist.
  - Note that one of Citywide Garden Coordinator's responsibilities is to enforce the garden rules. She can help with this communication and make sure that the gardeners who are not actively maintaining plots give up their plots.
- Albion: 90 people on waitlist. Approximately dozens of the folks at the top have been on the list for years but have not responded to emails or phone calls. Excluding these folks only about 60 people on waitlist. At Spring cleanup he tells everyone how many people are on the waitlist, good mechanism to encourage people to maintain their plot or give it up. Turnover is about 1 plot every other year.
- Bikeway: ~111 people are on the waitlist, many new people in the Spring. About 2-3 plots open up every year. Check in with people on the list about once per year (email, phone, address). It probably takes about 6 years to get a plot. Tara has been great, especially in coordinating communication amongst gardeners. Bill echos that when plots are not maintained, issuing infraction notice and follow up is very time consuming. Usually one infraction notice motives people to start caring for their plots.
- Osgood: About 30+ people on waitlist. 3-year waiting time for people. About 3 plots open up every year. In the spring send out email to folks on waitlist with a timeframe to respond. About 10 each year don't respond and get moved to the side of the list. Citywide waitlist on google docs has helped to show that some of those people have plots in another garden.
- Durrell: 42 people on waitlist. Around the end of March, Cathy contacts current gardeners to see if they are planning to come back. Every year about 1-2 plots open up. Anne contacts everyone on wait list to see if want to remain on list. Usually can remove about 15-20 people per year because they move, get a plot in another garden, etc. Tell everyone when go on list that they can contact Anne anytime to see what position they are in the list.
- Commissioner questions:
  - Do waitlist people get information about spring cleanups, etc. to start getting involved?
    - Usually not, would be a lot to manage.
  - Any other ideas about how to manage waitlists (term limits, etc)?
    - Coordinators did not recommend having term limits. Some have discussed the idea with the gardeners and there was a strong reaction against this. Some of the current gardeners are very committed to the gardens and the community. They take very good care of the gardens (including the public spaces) – they have worked really hard to maintain this. The way the gardens run now encourages good community feeling and knowledge transfer. Benefit of exchange between newer folks and
    - Active management of waitlists helps to keep the numbers lower.

- Tufts gardeners did not like the idea of reducing the size of the plots to create new plots.
- Some success in opening up common spaces to folks on the waitlist. Morse-Kelly has about 4 or 5 people on the waitlist that help maintain the common spaces. They are also available to help maintain people's plots when they go away (vacation, etc.). For some people assisting with gardening is enough. Mention this possibility at spring cleanup, and have an all-gardener email list so that people can arrange for assistance when they are away.
- Discuss how you give the public access to the garden (or if you do not currently do that, your ideas of how you might do that going forward).
  - Morse-Kelly: When leave gate open, kids have come in and done a lot of damage. So tend to leave lock locked.
  - Tufts: When people are gardening, tend to leave gate unlocked. Sometimes people come in and wander around. A few years ago the Somerville Garden Club organized a Garden Tour and each garden had representatives there throughout the day. Supervised access is key. The idea of an Open Garden Day in summer is workable, where gardeners could coordinate amongst selves to staff garden.
  - Walnut: Generally leave gate open when gardeners are in there. Kids come in, and gardeners ask them to stay on the path. Also have berry and grape vines growing along fence; encourage kids to come by and pick them.
  - Allen St: Have a lot of problems with cigarette butts and nip bottles, so do not encourage public access.
  - Albion: Some of gardeners leave gate open when they are gardening. Lots of balls from playground get into garden, people climb over fence to get them.
  - Bikeway: Gardeners leave gate open when they are there, if they feel comfortable. Also, there are plantings outside of locked area (ex. grape vines, raspberries, etc.), these are open to public.
  - Osgood: Gate is open when gardener is present. Talk with folks over fence, especially kids. Very enthusiastic about open garden day. Could have sign-up sheet for waitlist, give a tour, etc. Best if communication comes from City.
  - Durrell: Gate often open when gardener is present. Also front garden has seating area with flowers that public uses. If people are around at the right time, they are invited into garden.
  - Commissioner Comments:
    - Would be good to have general policy decided upon and communicated with gardeners. Perhaps word-of-mouth policy that gardens are open when there is a gardener present (as long as the gardener feels comfortable), and be sure to invite people to come in.
      - One opportunity to do this would be at Spring cleanup. Good to remind gardeners early and often that they are lucky to have a plot.
- Other ideas/ discussion points:
  - Partnerships on plots/ teamwork.
  - Coordinators could provide data looking at how many people have had a plot, how long they have a plot on average, etc. Can use data to inform decisions.
  - Mentorship gardener – have plot for X number of years, and then transition into mentor gardener.

- Have small portion of plots that are annual plots or rotating plots. Have new people come in for one year or so, and then turn over to someone else.
  - Need more community gardens in city. Huge interest in urban agriculture. Experiment with other forms of community gardens, ex. collaborative gardens/ mini farms. More varied types of programs.
  - Letter from Commission for coordinators to send to gardeners mentioning how lucky they are to have a plot and with directive about how important it is for them to maintain their plot.
  - Collaborations with school garden programs, Groundwork Somerville, etc.? Useful to communicate other outlets. Could include this information in wait-list application form.
- 3) 2017 Annual report from the Mystic River Watershed regarding the In-Water Control Non-Native and Nuisance Vegetation in the Mystic River OOC, (DEP file #287-0054)
- *Tabled until next meeting*

### Updates and Discussion (8:57 pm)

- 1) CPA proposals for Open Space
- Requests far exceed the amount of money available.
  - Highest amount of public support for the Growing Center project and the School Yards.
  - Final vote at CPA meeting next month. There will be more discussion at CPA meeting 2/28/2018. Any decisions or instructions will be needed by next month.
  - **Action:** *put CPA proposal discussion on next month's agenda.*
- 2) MWRA contract No. 6539 Weston Aqueduct Supply Main 3 Boring Program
- Boring completed January 8, 2018
- 3) DCR Update Draw 7 Park – Community Meeting Report
- Shared presentation from the February 5<sup>th</sup> DCR Community Meeting with Commissioners.
  - Green and Open Somerville collected almost 300 signatures on petition asking DCR to look at two more alternatives – one with grass field and one with no field at all.
  - Public comment period closed on Monday.
  - **Action:** *invite Dan Driscoll to attend March Commission meeting.*
- 4) Ongoing projects
- Post-construction site visit Mystic River Dock Removal Project (DEP file # 287-0061)
    - *Tabled until next meeting*
  - Compiled ASQ water quality sampling data
    - *Tabled until next meeting*
- 5) Outstanding Action Items:
- Comments provided on the letter to the Winter Hill Yacht Club.
    - Some small edits provided, plus one suggestion to change last sentence.
    - With a few modifications could send letter to all property owners within jurisdiction (informational).
  - Discuss document sharing and editing options.
    - Boukili talked to Law Department to see if Commission could use google docs or dropbox to edit file for educational brochures, etc. Received advice from law department that should not edit files on shared drive. Need to follow Open Meeting Law requirements.
  - Everyone to provide comments on *Conservation Commission Policies* document.
    - A few Commissioners provided comments.
    - Continued until next meeting
  - Everyone to provide comments and suggestions on the draft of the public education brochure.

- *Tabled until next meeting*
  - Commissioner Wartella to look for general audience brochure examples and to start working on one for Somerville.
    - *Tabled until next meeting*
  - Boukili to check on maintenance schedule of Vortech Units at ASQ.
    - *Tabled until next meeting*
  - Commissioner list on website has been updated.
- 6) Discussion about high speed boats and wakes
- *Tabled until next meeting*

**Other Business: (9:39 pm)**

- 1) Schedule Assembly Square walk through
- *Tabled until next meeting.*

**Approval of minutes:**

- 1) Minutes approved January 23, 2017 minutes with one amendment at 9:41 [motion – Fager, second – Turin, vote: 4:0:1].

**Adjourn:**

- 1) Motion to adjourn meeting unanimously approved at 9:41 [motion – Turin, second – Fager].

**Complete List of Outstanding Action Items:**

**February:**

- **Action:** *put CPA proposal discussion on next month's agenda.*
- **Action:** *invite Dan Driscoll to attend March Commission meeting to discuss Draw 7 Park.*

**January:**

- **Action:** *Contact MWRA re: contract No. 6539 Weston Aqueduct Supply Main 3 Boring Program. They need to provide more information about the project and a plan of how they are protecting the resources. [Done, but did not yet discuss]*
- **Action:** *Reach out to Sewer Department to check on maintenance schedule of Vortech Units at ASQ.*

**November:**

- **Action:** *Everyone to provide comments on Conservation Commission Policies document to Commissioner Joroff.*
- **Action:** *Everyone to review the draft of the public education brochure and provide comments and suggestions to Commissioner Joroff.*
- **Action:** *Commissioner Wartella to look for general audience brochure examples and to start working on one for Somerville.*
- **Action:** *Boukili to have Gene Crouch provide spreadsheet with compiled water quality sampling data. [Done, but did not yet discuss]*

**List of Meeting Documents** (located here: K:\OHCD\Shared\Conservation Commission\Agenda + Minutes + Legal Notices 2018\2018\_02\_27\_Meeting\_Documents):

- Agenda (2017\_02\_27\_Agenda.pdf)
- Ongoing Project Data Spreadsheet (Ongoing Project Data.xlsx)
- January meeting minutes (2017\_01\_23\_Minutes\_Draft.docx)
- Mystic River Pedestrian Bridge presentation (1 - mystic-river-bicycle-and-pedestrian-crossing-presentation 021218.pdf)
- Garden Coordinator documents: 2- Info about Somerville Citywide Comm Garden Coord.docx, 2- Somerville Community Garden Coordinator Responsibilities.docx, 2-Garden Coordinator Discussion Questions.docx
- Annual Report for the 2017 In-Water Management of the Mystic River (3- Mystic River\_annual report 2017 complete.pdf)
- MWRA Contract No. 6539 - Weston Aqueduct Supply Main 3 - Boring Program information (2- B-104 MWRA.pdf, 2- MWRA Somerville Boring B-104 outlook item)
- Draw Seven Park Renovation Project DCR Public Meeting presentation 2/5/2018 (3- draw-seven-2018-2-5-presentation.pdf)
- Mystic Dock Removal Project photos (10 photos K:\OHCD\Shared\Conservation Commission\Agenda + Minutes + Legal Notices 2018\2018\_02\_27\_Meeting\_Documents\Updates and Discussion\4a- Photos of post-construction site visit)
- Assembly square water quality monitoring dataset (4b- AssemblyRowCompiledStormwaterResults.pdf)
- Draft of letter to Winter Hill Yacht Club (5a- Conservation Commission Letter to WHYC\_DRAFT.docx)
- Draft Conservation Commission policy document (5b- Draft Somerville ConComm. Policy (Nov. 2017).docx)
- Draft Conservation Commission educational brochure (5c- Conservation commission two-pager (11.28 draft).docx)

