

**Mystic River Watershed Steering Committee Meeting
(Delta Dental, Charlestown)
Draft Meeting Notes
September 15, 2010**

Ground Rules:

- Everyone is encouraged to speak
- Please raise your hand to speak
- All ideas should be treated with respect
- One person should speak at a time
- Try not to use acronyms or abbreviations
- Ideas should be written as the speaker intends
- Audience member should state their name and affiliation before they speak

Agreement Points:

- EK (MyRWA) will serve as co-chair with Stephen Perkins (EPA)
- Next meeting will be on November 17, and two members of the Steering Committee will help find a place
- Please contact Caitlyn Whittle if you're interested in hosting the November 17th meeting

Approval of meeting minutes

- Correction: Bottom of page 3: correction in the notes....Water quality variance is in effect on the lower Charles River.
- Minutes *approved* with correction (will be re-posted online).

Choosing location for Nov. 17 meeting

- Rivers Edge, contact John Preotle (Rafael Mares will look into it)
- Tuft's Boathouse? (Tony R. will contact because he is an alumni there)

Presentation and distribution of DCR Master Plan (Dan Driscoll)

Presentation of plan and maps

- Took a while for DCR to authorize release, ran out of money on funding of the plan which contributed to the delay
- Large maps on the wall are the core of the plan (they are in the master plan that was passed out)
- 4 Parts of the plan
 - Recreation plan
 - Trail plan
 - Access plan
 - Conservation plan
- Handed out a brochure: simple summary of comprehensive plan
 - Includes goals and objectives
 - Case study areas of prominent areas
- Documents are not available online until press release (supposed to be this week)

- Available on disk from Dan (send request to him if you'd like a digital copy of the plan)

The Master Plan

- Introduction is pretty straight forward, reiterating importance of restoring Mystic River
- P. 2 and 3: project area delineated by yellow line
- Basis was to capture as much of the river as they could with the budget they had (\$125,000)
 - Starts just below Mystic Lakes to Malden Bridge past Amelia Earhart Dam
 - Extended beyond DCR property ownership to capture critical access connections from neighborhoods
 - Shows disconnections, and where connections are needed to travel safely
 - Shows what adjacent communities can do to provide better signage, bike lanes, etc. to connect with incredible resource (i.e. Mystic River)
 - Core of the plan: river's ecological health
 - Historically, the primary focus has been recreational planning
 - Add an ecological component to result in a much better facility.
 - Just as many people come for birding as biking
 - Multi-use corridor with a restored, relatively healthy river corridor and park lands
 - Determines areas suitable for recreation, education and preservation where appropriate
- Core of destruction of resources was the construction of AE dam and route 93 (which had the largest impact on the river). The development of Route 93 was a project of massive dredging and alteration of Mystic River. In an attempt to desalinate, they ended up poisoning the wetlands. This project caused more destruction than any other project
- There are only 32 acres of wetlands left in McDonald Park
- Pages 10-16
 - Plan covers aquatic habitat.
 - talks about different animals in the water. Even though they didn't see and inventory all of them that are in the plan, they showed all the animals that they are expecting to see along urban rivers
- Page 17: Clearly identify areas that have opportunity for restoration at a reasonable cost and further protection
- Actual Plan starts on page 25
- Part of the plan includes "Managed meadows", this method is sensitive to growing seasons
- If you try to find money for a multi-use design, will have a lot of luck moving project forward
- The best way to restore ecology is to build trails
- Page 29
 - shows a cross section of outside residential street, across the river to the next residential street

- showing across the section where we think the multi-use primary path and secondary paths should be
 - Shows opportunities for bike lanes along the river
- Current trail system is designed to connect to public transportation
- Recreation Plan - Pages 30-31
 - Shows pathway and recreational facility map
 - along the river, where you see a thin red line – primary pathway recommendation along the river
 - 10' paved ADA compliant pathway
 - Dark black lines are the roads
 - Shows corridor system
 - Important to note that the majority of the mapped trails are not existing
- Access Improvements Plan - Pages 32-33
 - Notes are different than previous map
 - Light orange line: meant to be a secondary path
 - Not ADA compliant, not asphalt. More appropriate closer to the river
 - Alternative to avoid fast cyclists
 - Create a matrix of pathways to create opportunities for everyone (elderly, children – secondary, cyclists and fast moving path—primary path)
 - Primary paved path will bring in fast cyclists, so there needs to be a secondary path for “slow movers”
- On the Cambridge and Somerville side of the river, the path will be asphalt for faster moving recreation
- On the Arlington side, there will be a stabilizer parkway, this makes it harder to go fast by cyclists so it's safer for the slower moving recreation
- One thing that the Mystic has going for it that Charles and Neponset didn't is that almost everywhere, we abut roads and hardly any encroachments. This causes the plan for the Mystic easier to implement (money aside)
- Conservation Plan – Pages 34-35
 - Brings most anguish for Dan because there are many permits involved
 - Very opportunistic plan
 - Dan refers to “Misguided environmentalism”. We will never rid rivers and corridors completely of invasives. The environment will never be back to pristine and natural conditions because of the amount of degradation and alteration from humans
 - We need to keep in mind that it's an urban river that has been highly impacted area (filled, altered, etc), but it can still be stunning to those who benefit from it
 - It's also important to understand the difference between opportunistic and invasive species
 - For example, the Japanese Knotweed doesn't kill native species. Where Japanese Knotweed grows, native species grow between it
 - DCR doesn't have maintenance in place to maintain a plan of this type
 - Could do more native plantings (which is easy to correct), but this plan calls for more than DCR can handle

- DCR is currently trying to get rid of Japanese knotweed, but it calls for a massive dredging operation, planting of natives, and monitoring → all of which are difficult for the DCR to do successfully
 - There is extensive permitting required to remove invasives successfully because you need to remove soil and the rhizomes
 - Dan feels that the planting of natives, if chosen correctly, can compete with invasives
 - Another challenge to conservation and elimination of natives: the only other way to do it effectively is chemicals which don't make people too happy
 - Herbicides are being tested on the Alewife Greenway where the invasives have to be controlled
 - Monitoring invasives from local agencies have been very helpful to watch and see where things are re-growing and they then work to cut it down
 - Second prominent concern: water quality
 - Why are we cutting down the plants that are helping to control the pollutants that we are all concerned about?
 - Part of the conservation plan that is important to understand is that we are heavily over-mowing.
 - If we mow and seed with wildflowers, then we will get a more diverse environment to not have to cut as much.
 - Much lawn mowing for DCR is contracted out, so there's incentive for landscapers to cut.
 - We should be cutting 2 times a year instead of every 2 weeks.
 - Our goal is to put in native species. They compete better, need less water, and benefit wildlife more.
- Page 36: more cross sections
 - proposing bike lanes, sidewalk enhancements.
 - Show how you can make improvements off of DCR land.
 - Need adjacent communities and elected officials to help out.
 - Condon Band Shell
 - Phase 1 complete
 - Phase 2 of Condon Band Shell is to tear down and rebuild a new music facility. (too difficult to restore) A lot of work has been done already on the area for access.
 - DCR is only proposing bike lanes where they are 100% confident that there is a cross section to do it. This will keep fast cyclists out of reservation AND calms traffic in those areas.
 - The plan helps to show where towns and cities can help out.
 - Next section (Page 39): provides definition of what DCR is doing.
 - 3 Levels of trails:
 - Primary, secondary and tertiary paths
 - elevated boardwalks, bridges.
 - 9 bridges along this section of the river.
 - Not owned by DCR, owned by MassDOT.

- Need to partner with them on this project
 - Retrofit to accommodate
 - Build underpasses at Woods Memorial Bridge
 - Build bike lanes and side walks at Mystic Valley Bridge
- Page 43 - addresses water trail
 - how to navigate river safely in canoes and kayaks
 - new canoe launch sites with parking
- Page 52 - shows photos of what we can do on sites that are non-DCR to get people from the river
 - Stenciling of bird footprints to guide people to the next access point
 - If possible, don't put anything within 25 feet of rivers edge

Discussion on the plan

- Much of this plan fits in with what MAPC is doing and can do
- MAPC currently has funding for walking routes, soliciting with communities and neighborhoods
- Q: What are your thoughts on outreach to get communities to implement the effort?
 - We will mail copies with cover letter to commissioner to town officials
 - Put in reference sections of libraries, pdf'd to get on disc to get a hard copy
 - At some point, initiate discussions on continuing partnerships with communities to see what they can do to help
 - DCR wants to get \$200,000 for design (100% construction drawings) of the multi-use system, will also design ecological restoration. Once we can get 100% construction drawings fully permitted, then money starts showing up
- MAPC and DCR should sit and talk about and look at how this project falls out in the neighborhoods and which communities are already interested in the MAPC projects
- Steering committee can be useful
 - Once it goes to the state legislators, (we are the first to see the plan) then they will be in a good position to pressure governor and DCR commissioner to implement plan in some way.
- Need to get people fired up by handing out hard copies of the plan
- Strategy for implementing this plan should be something that the Steering Committee should take on
- Each member needs to think about who in their network can take this and make it real
- On next meeting's agenda: discussion on how to start with a strategy to help Dan
- DCR: Needs to now be careful about being the lobbyist for the plan. The more that it appears to come from outside sources, the more effective its going to be. We need get it to the right people and provide how those people can help get the plan to people in power and then persuade them to implement it
- The Open Space sub-committee is currently working on the exercise to pull integrated maps together to combine with Environmental Atlas to map water

- quality information and online mapping of open space mapping effort. Pulling in this information to this level of detail will help to move things forward.
- Town wants to know where DCR owned and privately owned properties are
 - Dan might be able to get the maps on a separate disc and maybe contact our computer people to get the layers
 - They are “old school maps” so they are not easy to work with. Will see what he can do to get the information loaded onto the Environmental Atlas
 - Q: Have you implemented any plans with green infrastructure?
 - Not really. If we go out and restore an area to take out old infrastructure. Put in stormwater management swales in one particular brook. GI is in the more advanced design
 - Question regarding ownership of bridges:
 - DCR still owns all the parkways, but not the vehicular bridges. Still own pedestrian bridges.
 - Q: Why was this section chosen?
 - Budget: \$125,000 total (\$25,000 to extend back to Alewife reservation).
 - Also because DCR doesn't own much in other sections of the river
 - Stormwater and LID- in the future it might be good to have support to implement these techniques.
 - DCR installed a permeable pavement section near Charles River, but it failed functionally because it cannot be vacuumed every week. (Pore space with a drywell under it needs to be cleared of debris).
 - Permeable pavement is a lot more expensive more difficult to maintain (functionally) than asphalt
 - Need to know the hydraulic or hydrologic benefit of putting in LID or it will not be considered
 - Open Street Map- an interactive tool available online that allows for community input, they can add street level data and develop a comprehensive map.
 - Village landing park: added last February for canoe launch – not in the plan.
 - We should integrate city owned property – talk to municipal committee about this
 - Encourage 2 way communications between Steering Committee and Municipal Subcommittee (what does each group want from each other, and how can they benefit?)
 - Suggestion of making a presentation to the municipal subcommittee to integrate public works. This will give them a concrete set of suggestions of what each municipality can do
 - We can create shorthand for municipal leaders, and give them the bullet points on the plan and the benefits produced. (In addition to looking at funding cycles)
 - Each municipality has a conservation commission and if we can get them on board, then maybe we can move forward
 - Perhaps pull 2-3 conservation commissions together
 - A list of DCR's top 5 projects would be beneficial in order to put in future grant proposals which define restoration priorities
 - One of these projects might be the Wellington underpass, assembly square development (currently a complicated process)

- Ellen Mass suggests referring back to Alewife Brook as one of the top 5 projects.
 - Use that as a model for the whole Mystic
 - DCR agrees that Alewife Brook is a good one where a lot of work has been done already
- Corporate partners will continue to be abutters for open space and land use change
- Need partnerships with people who are influential in getting money for open space projects (such as Dan Preotle)

Committee co-chairmanship

- Steven Perkins agreed to serve as government chair
- EK would love to do it, if the committee agrees
 - First term: 2 years, then revisit after that
 - EK agrees as long as EPA helps to convene all of that work
- 2 year term for EK and S. Perkins as co-chairs: Motion made and approved.

Announcements

- MAPC boat tour for people to see how great the river is, and where future opportunities are, get people interested in working with us
- Business sub-committee meets next Wednesday (9/22)
 - MS4 presentation
 - Comments on draft regulations
 - Meet at century bank, keep to 1-1.25 hours
 - Strong emphasis on group discussion
 - 18 business folks
 - Others will let Ivey know
- EK invites everyone to annual Mystic River Watershed Meeting
 - Thurs. Oct 28 at 7pm
 - John Preotle (Rivers Edge) will present on work on Malden River
 - Tufts University Boathouse @ Rivers Edge
 - Light snacks at 6:30pm
 - Curt Spalding (EPA) will be speaking
- Nick Cohen:
 - Will soon have a screening of video of the Malden River that his youth created, starring some of the Steering Committee members
 - This video will eventually be on YouTube
- River Fest 2010
 - Saturday September 25
 - Assembly Square, Somerville
 - 4:00pm-8:00pm (Fireworks at 7:45)
- Walk to the River Day- Somerville
 - October 16th at Foss Park at 11am
 - 12:00 at blessing of the bay boathouse: work day, ground breaking
- Andy DeSantis: trying to establish uniform nomenclature for the identification of outfalls
 - Would like to bring up at the municipal sub. meeting (October 28)

- Involve state and DCR when referring to an outfall
- Next Water quality workgroup meeting: September 29 from 10-12 @ EPA
- Open Space meeting: Oct. 4 at 10am @ Groundwork Somerville

Follow-Up Actions

- Steering Committee members will discuss the goal and priority list with their constituencies for discussion in November.
- Steering Committee members should think of ways of implementing the Master Plan
- Next meeting will include a discussion on how to start with a strategy to help spread the word about DCR's Master Plan
- The next Meeting will be on November 17, 2010. Place to be determined.
- Dan Driscoll will attempt to obtain digital copies of the maps to distribute to Open Space Subcommittee members interested in combining the DCR plan with current Environmental Atlas water quality data

Parking Lot Follow-Up Actions

- Steering Committee members will forward additional academic information to EPA.
- Joan Blaustein will assist with planning an agenda or help clarify for the April meeting.
- EPA will work with Steering Committee members to schedule private meetings with each elected official in the watershed towns.
- EPA New England will circulate the matrix to municipalities and ask them to fill it out. EPA will also send the latest version of the matrix to Steering Committee members.
- EPA New England has compiled a list of NPDES permittees in the watershed and plans to draft a letter inviting them to attend the first subcommittee meeting, once it has been planned.
- Ivey, EK, Caitlyn and Lynne will work on making language for adding and disengaging groups from the Steering Committee.
- EPA will work with DCR to provide printed copies of the Master Plan to all Steering Committee members.
- The Steering Committee will continue to have briefings and/or distribute materials on state and federal water quality standards and regulations (CWA, TMDLs, etc.)
- EPA will continue to gather and distribute existing Mystic River Watershed plans from DCR, MyRWA, MAPC, and Chelsea Creek and look at how they relate to the list above.

**Mystic River Watershed Steering Committee Sign-in Sheet
September 15, 2010**

Name	Organization	E-mail address
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