

Mystic River Watershed Steering Committee

Meeting Report, March 6, 2014

Approval of Previous Meeting Reports:

Both June and September Reports were approved

Updates from Members:

MAPC's Joan indicated the agency has been assisting Somerville in its efforts to control and reduce the Wynn Everett Casino impact; at the same time, it has submitted an extensive critique of the Casino DEIR to EEOA. Joan also described her outreach and work with nine Metro North communities to identify open space and pathway connections.

MAPC had two funding sources which are now ending to improve signage and pathways in several Lower Mystic communities, including Medford, Malden, Somerville and Everett.

CWC's Ivey expressed frustration and compelling concern about the impact of the Wynn Casino on Charlestown and the immediately surrounding communities. The Casino traffic load devastates the Rutherford Avenue/Sullivan Square (RA/SS) Redesign approved by Mayor Menino in March of 2013. That Redesign reduced RA by four lanes and created a 50 to 55 foot green space from City Square to the Mystic, and for the first time in a century, provides access to the Mystic shore line. Ivey further stated that Wynn's DEIR & RFA-2 Application for a casino license are non-compliant in five areas, and that the Gaming Commission must be convinced to require the submission of the FEIR if full compliance and MEPA requirements are to be fulfilled. It is critical that the Commission study that FEIR for a full understanding of the casino's negative impact on Charlestown and other surrounding communities.

EK followed, saying MyRWA has been working with other surrounding communities to assist them in their analysis and advocacy to protect and enhance water quality, wetlands and reduce traffic impacts.

EK also reported on the advocacy effort initiated by MyRWA and other organizations to persuade the Legislature to approved Senator Jehlen's amendment to the FY 2015 budget to authorize \$250K for the DCR Mystic River Reservation Master Plan. He described a large coalition of mayors, legislators & town officials who have gotten behind the effort. Members need to contact their legislators and senators to ensure that they support the amendment.

EK spoke about MyRWA's and MAPC's joint application for \$970K to develop a watershed climate change assessment and plan, with a goal of protecting the river's resources.

DPH's Mike described algae last summer in Melrose's Ell Pond and in Upper Mystic Lake which drove beach closures for two weeks. Mike said DPH released a new fish advisory, including a limited one on large mouthed bass and for Horn Pond where DTT was found in fish.

Ellen reported on improvements in storm water wetlands protection by DRC, and the coming development plans which will increase traffic loads on Rt. 2 and surrounding roads. She described heavy pedestrian use in parklands adjacent to Rt. 2 and the Pfizer buildings.

Discussion Of Federal Partnerships(FP) as presented at the June 2013 Meeting:

Caitlyn recapped the notes from that meeting; Joan referenced her work on pathways and signage in Metro north for possible FP funding, and EK mentioned the \$4.5 million Army Corps of Engineers plan in the Lower Malden requires a \$2 million matching grant from non-federal resources, for which Medford, Malden and Everett have received \$150 K planning grant. The new Friends of Malden River and Tuft are supporting this planning effort, but non-federal funds are difficult to identify and access now.

Caitlin pointed out the revised MS-4 is to be released shortly, and EK suggested that the Municipal Committee would be an appropriate group to follow up on HUD funds for improved infrastructure plans. Ivey suggested Somerville's & DCR's Draw 7 Park needs a massive installation of trees, and perhaps the Forest Service would be interested in a project there, or in concert with HUD's block grants to the cities. Joan added the Municipal Committee needed to include a focus on open space in its work with HUD.

Agreement was formed to invite both the USFS and HUD back for subsequent meetings to explore these two areas, after the presentation of the revised MS-4 permit draft. Tony suggested before we invite the two federal agencies we should have letters of intent prepared. Outreach to Jay Corey and George Z. will be initiated to restart the Municipal Committee.

Lastly, Caitlyn said there is a small grant award possible from EPA to help with administrative tasks supporting the Steering Committee, and it was agreed Caitlyn should follow up on the funding opportunity.

Member Questionnaire Report & Discussion:

Responses generally praised the interactions and connections enhanced by membership and information given by guest presenters, but did mention the difficulty with endorsing letters. EK pointed out that letters will not be a future focus, and described the private foundation grant which had supported attendance at MRWSC meetings by Chelsea Green Space Alliance, ACE and NOAH, all of which have other conflicting responsibilities. EK suggested it is time to seek renewal of that grant.

Relook at Mission & Goals:

The ensuing discussion looked at committee goals and tasks, and noted the confluence between MyRWA monitoring efforts and Water Quality tasks. Joan's work in Metro North is expediting open space, pathway and public access planning and projects.

Water quality issues and the good momentum driven by Patrick and EPA interns were discussed, as well as our ability to convene groups around information sharing, and the fact that we have many communities continuing to look at open space expansion and public access to the water. DEP's Nihar indicated there is some work left to be finished on the MS4 permit draft, and there was some interest in convening the Municipal Committee before the release. Joan and Ivey indicated they would join such a gathering.

In the meantime, EPA will review the Mission and Priorities for any edits or rewrites that might strengthen their applicability to our slimmer attendance numbers.

MassPort Planning:

Tony Rodolakis reported on an interaction with MassPort's Deb Hadden who told him that the agency is working with the Governor's Office and members of the Congressional delegation plan for deepening of the Harbor channels in the Mystic and in Chelsea Creek to prepare for the bigger boats which will come through the rebuilt and enlarged Panama Canal. He indicated MassPort is interested in meeting with the Steering Committee and EPA was asked to extend an invitation.

Next Meetings:

Meeting dates through the end of the year were tentatively set for June 19th, although the 12th will be a back up date.

The September meeting was set for the 4th, and December's was also set for the 4th. Please mark your calendars.

Respectfully submitted, Ivey St John, with valuable assistance from Caitlyn White