

**Mystic River Watershed Steering Committee
Draft Water Quality Meeting Notes
June 7, 2010**

**Wednesday, July 7, 2010, 9:30am (10:30am)
Pfizer, 35 Cambridge Park Drive
Cambridge, MA**

Brownfields Overview and Discussion (Alan Peterson, EPA)

- Brownfields → partnerships, find some other use for the land
- Who is eligible? Local governments, regional planning agencies
- Only private access
- Coalition Assessment Grant MAPC- North Shore
- Only can pay if eligible to make sure no one is responsible
- Land/Property- need to know history, sampling, how to clean up to move to redevelopment, then redevelopment takes over
- Would like to have a site that gets over the finish line. If you don't have a developer to support the property, it doesn't get implemented and time goes by and you need to start over.
- Need to know: Who's owning the property, and who wants to get involved?
- If a city has a grant, they can assess a private owners property to understand how much it will cost to clean up
- Market value of property – cost of clean-up = actual property-value
- The land is only worth what it is after clean up
- Work with property owners to get their willingness and understanding for someone else to take responsibility- liability
- Become stewards for the property and maintain it
- Find out what private entities can help, HUD grants, State housing authority
- Innocent land owner status – find out what's there, clean up what you find, make a decision to clean it up, find funds, or walk away. Not liable today, but have been in the past
- Question: what funding is available for open space, not to redevelop all of it? Are there any organizations providing funding for acquisition of space?
 - o Look for partners that want to get involved
 - o Cyclical program: October 15ish- Nov 15th-ish, applications come out September-ish
 - o Hold grant writing classes- usually mid-late august
 - Run through application and talk about it
 - Think about the story behind what you are trying to accomplish
 - Where you want to work, and the history of the area
 - What are the needs of the community?
 - Establish a vision as part of the proposal
 - Statistics + Story
 - o Longer range picture (next year): look for areas within the watershed
 - o Work with the city, get interest, do outreach
 - o No one is moving contaminated areas

- Q: Ranges of funding available for assessment and/or clean-up?
 - o EPA gives \$200,000 for assessment OR clean-up (max. on one property)
 - o Under a coalition grant, you can get up to \$1 million
 - Need to assess a minimum of 5 properties, can be more and in multiple towns
- Q: On the clean-up, are there restrictions on the level of clean up for desired use?
 - o Need to clean-up within the criteria for re-use (for a park, garden, etc.)
 - o 2 feet cap of soil on top of level of contamination – for a park
 - o Remove source contamination, eliminate direct contact threat
 - o Property owners must understand that they cannot dig under the 2 feet without consulting with MassDEP
 - o An option is to place a parking lot on top of main source of contamination
- Lynne- mentioned Lawrence and their work on the Spicket River. The community developed parks, gardens, playgrounds, open space, etc. using brownfields grants.
 - o They get a lot of private money to do these projects
 - o GroundworkLawrence.org
 - o Bank of America bought from energy company
- Brownfields funding is only one component of recovery act funding
- Everett GE site- Mystic Valley Development Commission: River's edge project along Malden River, try to find owners in Everett to work on waterfront projects to make sure they know the interest
- Alan will get list of grants for projects and people/contacts within the watershed
- Q: How do we go about getting a property assessed that hasn't been? Do we have any leverage with a private firm?
 - o Program of partnerships, we don't regulate private owners
 - o Would get it assessed if private property owner donated to the effort – then you would become the steward and taking ownership
 - o If you're in a situation where (silver maple project), come to a community agreement between partners
 - o If property owner wants community to be happy, they may designate where the buildings go and ensure safety and enjoyment for the community
 - o Partnership program for everyone to go in the same direction
- Q: Grant program?
 - o Revolving loan fund – primary grant for clean-up dollars
 - Need assessment from other grants
 - City can offer loans to non-profits
 - Can get a sub-grant out of loan pool for clean-up
- Q: How does this interface with Mass. Brownfields program, can we use their funds in combination with this?
 - o Yes, their money is more flexible than ours
- Tony: If you find contamination, you don't have to pay the loan back under the state program? Or pay without interest?
 - o If you do development, you have to repay as a loan
- Q: What liability do we have after acquisition of property?

- Liability of undiscovered contamination?
- Do as good of an investigation as possible, as thoroughly as possible
- If you find something, then you have to do something about it
- Liability may not cover you, but you are not responsible for the things you don't know. Once you discover problems, you must deal with them and decide whether to clean up the property or to walk away (have the option).
- If MRWA finds a parcel, can check with MassDEP
- Example: if something went wrong and groundwater is contaminated?
 - As owner of the property, you have to comply with getting it in control again
- Allows you to walk away or deal with it
- Q: Environmental insurance?
 - Cost is generally high, unaffordable to small property owner
 - Generally purchased by big corporations so they don't take on any liability
- Q: if we find a parcel of land on the river, can you serve as liaison for EPA to find out more information regarding non-compliance, history of the land? Is that public record?
 - DEP has public records
 - Most brownfield sites are bottom apples on the tree
 - EPA doesn't have information unless we've done something with it before
 - Should go to the state to find the information
- When cities and towns take property by foreclosures, they are relieved of liability right away. Prime properties for cities to do something with and make useful for the community.
 - Sit down with consultants that do the Phase I work, and get information regarding history of site
 - They can give owner a ball park idea of what's going on
- Q: Partnerships with the state? How easy is it for the EPA to do partnerships with the state?
 - EPA Brownfields program gives money to the state
 - Depends on the situation, if EPA is involved or not
 - States are the allies in many cases, especially when DCR is involved (big leverage in MassDEP)
- Alan offered to come and talk to cities and towns to get them into the brownfields program to talk about the grant program (environmental property, contamination).
- Lynne: Ideas on how to move forward??
 - Open space plans for open communities- if there is a list of properties for open space opportunities to look at and maybe do a 2 level look at the list of potential sites as part of a continuous pathway and parks adjacent to watershed, maybe look at which ones have brownfields history
 - In general, will zero in on some parcels that could be turned into open space
 - Joan may have funding to prepare a map of Mystic with parcels
 - Start with existing information and work on down
 - Plans are basic level, but they represent the communities

- Beginnings of a partnership when communities show interest in which parcels to look at
- Prepare a map based on open space plans, extend to watershed
 - through compiling several maps for a common base
 - walking crew can fill in the gaps with GPS coordinates
- build maps up from parcel based data, using GIS to give a visual, a sense of what people are thinking within certain communities
- might be worthwhile to go back a second time, to see which areas aren't being prioritized because they don't know about them. Develop a second layer for things to consider
- List priorities and tier 2 where they are interested and where they may need help (Joan will check and see if she can shake loose staff time)
- take 2-3 communities, put plans together
- Dana will present a section of the watershed, might be a good place to start
- Objective of community: develop up to date compilation of what's already been done by different groups
 - Gather all information, get all in one place. Tuft's and MyRWA plan should be looked at and priorities may jump out, then we can look at municipal open space plan and promote or organize an effort to acquire a parcel. Identify top priorities

Somerville Pathway Pilot (Dana Spang, City of Somerville)

- Working with Ivey (team leader), and Andrew on 3 different walks, meet with EK on how to perceive and what information we should be gathering
- Map of 2 walks
- Mini-meeting between Dana, EPA and Joan
- Reaching out to municipality sub-committee will be helpful
- Google mapping, can use Google Earth application
 - Click on each point for information about GPS points and photos of areas (access points, vacant lots, etc)
 - Put different symbols for what each category is
 - Current categories: Potential, existing, feature of interest, potential for improvement
- "Chemical Lane" – trailer is the only inhabitant on parcel.
- Part of parcel in Everett, owned by Boston and won't give it up because it's near the commuter rail: someone in the Steering Committee knows more about it (Patrick knows the history very well)
- Show outline of parcels
- Analysis of trails that were walked
 - Colors coordinated with dots on GIS map (existing, potential, etc)
 - Some sidewalks are in poor condition or they don't connect, might be easier to improve the condition instead of creating new trails
- Super impose a tool that someone can carry with them

- This is a good example of where the inconvenient walks are, and where easier paths can be put in from common places/high traffic areas (T-stops, public parking)
- MET is looking at an area to connect to river's edge
- Public parking areas, for people to access the path
- City of Medford got funding to do improvements (MET funding) on the pathway all the way to 16 (maybe). Connect an existing path
- Underpass underneath commuter rail tracks, great waterfront view where the vacant parcel is. Who owns it???
- o Joan can check to see, or check with the city
- Do we own frontage? Answer is never clear.
- Does someone want to take the lead to investigate anymore? Patrick Johnson?
- Proposals for future steps for the committee
 - o Places where there is nothing, or plans that exist for future improvements
 - o See handout.
- Do we have an update on when we will see Mystic River Reservation plan?
 - o There may be a hierarchy on how they looked at connections, and may give us a way of looking at connections
- There is a large amount of data that can be accessed and it's a matter of pooling it and putting it all in one place
- Identify what exists, and make objective as Steering Committee and get a vote to see if it makes sense and looks accurate and then establish priorities of most important parcels, points of access, etc. and use that as creating prioritization within communities and develop momentum within committee. Might take a while to assemble
 - o If we can identify, then we can update current perspective on pathways
 - o If people are already thinking about how to use Chemical Lane parcel, then it can be powerful if it's a key parcel.
 - Good WQ, existing salt marsh, historical event in 1980s by Green Peace that plugged outflow
- How do we want to leverage this information? How active will the committee have to be?
 - o With this information and priorities, the committee can offer additional information regarding funding and action
 - o After areas are identified, can establish partners with municipalities for funding
 - o Establish beginning priorities of what we should work on
 - o Take advantage of all the skills from those in the committee, from planning to science
- Dana will e-mail links to maps
- In future meetings, take some time to look at the progress of the maps
 - o Get open space plans and add to what we already have
 - o Meet with GIS people
- Need an update on the master plan. Look at their maps and coding to give us a way to look at things.
- Identify partners and priorities for funding opportunities

- Alan: Back to brownfields, partners with City of Boston...is this a chance to spend some of the brownfield money on this particular parcel? Find partners, help write applications for EPA clean-up funding and create pathways on cleaned up land
 - o Form a coalition for \$1 million for 5 parcels, but can only use \$200,000 max on one parcel.
 - o If the city owns it, that's great because EPA gives the city money
 - o Coalition of cities decides how to divide up the \$1 million between a minimum of 5 parcels
- Create a list of priority sites and database of stakeholders
- Dana: committee would have to be active and could lend credibility. Committee could help prioritize for funding and action (See handout for more detailed recommendations on next steps.)
- Next steps: Perfect project for kids to identify pathways, and get stakeholder buy-ins. High school kids have great ideas of what to do.

Next Steering Committee Meeting: July 21, 2010

- Dana will present their progress, hold a meeting with GIS people
- Spend bulk of the time for WQ and Open Space people to present
- Think about a potential Lawrence connection, see what they are doing
- Look at what Dana and EK put together and get comments on second page by end of next week -- Consolidate proposal for future steps
- Get some ideas on how to capture greater level of community involvement later on – Nick
- Should we recommend to the steering committee that we continue to keep Open Space and Water Quality sub-committees? Yes.
- Presume that we will not meet again after the steering committee meeting on July 21 until September. People should bring calendars to the steering committee meeting so we can set a September date.

**Mystic River Watershed Open Space Sub-Committee Sign-in Sheet
July 7, 2010**

Name	Organization	E-mail address
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