

Mystic River Watershed Steering Committee
Wednesday, May 26, 2010, 1:00 pm
200 Cambridge Park Drive, 6th Floor
Cambridge, MA

Agenda and Discussion Topics

Introduction

It might be worth creating a roadmap that helps the group collaborate and support ongoing projects. The group can discuss drafting letters of support to help move along each other's ongoing work.

The group can identify gaps where there are no ongoing projects and try to get things moving by creating awareness and finding ways to collaborate. It might be a good idea to create a plan that outlines what priorities would be accomplished in one year. This activity will help the group stay within reality, but give it goals to work toward.

While the Steering Committee can create ways to collaborate and support each organization's efforts, it might be worthwhile to look into existing documents that focus on creating and/or conserving open space and access and update them. There are the MyRWA Action Plan, the 2009 MAPC plan, and DCR's Master Plan. Some of the work has already been accomplished, and it might be useful to update each plan accordingly to celebrate what is accomplished and highlight opportunities.

This group should focus on 1, updating/creating a priority list; 2, supporting Steering Committee efforts; and 3, selecting one to three projects and to be worked on in the short-term.

Around the Room Brainstorming

Top two activities each organization would like to see the Steering Committee work on collaboratively, who would be responsible, and in what timeframe

- Designate Alewife Reservation as a conservation area of Greater Boston to protect its habitat
- Better coordination with MA DCR
- Obtain DCR Mystic Master Plan
- Bring neighborhood residents to the water thru signed routes similar to the Somerville Blueback Herring project
- Increase visibility
- Revise the MyRWA 2006 Assessment to revise our understanding of open space and see where there is additional connectivity
- Create a looped pathway around the Mystic that has connection to the Charles
 - Find where current linkages exist

- Walk the current trails to investigate, document, and GPS them – are they “trailways to nowhere?”
 - Note trail features – history, water, wildlife and recreation features, etc.
- Figure out where connections need to be made
 - Lower Malden – Mellon Property – Station Landing – Rt-28 is about \$700K
- Utilize MyRWA’s urban trail map and guide that is being developed with MET funds
 - Populate this map with water quality information and other types of information
 - Mill Creek Interpretive Walk is a good example
- Create a map to show existing and planned pathways
- Do on the ground tours that will help with visioning
- Find out where Chelsea paths near the Tobin Br. go
- Identify open space areas in Chelsea that can be accessed
- Find out purpose and origination of restrictions on the Mellon park and other areas
- Expand open space areas along the river
 - Hess Site
 - Involve the communities when creating space
- Create a map that prioritizes connections
 - Get municipal input
- Expand MAPC’s online dynamic map tool to include EJ, communities, paths, etc.
- Improve leverage to get work done
- Pursue priorities to make change over the next 1-2 years
- Look into brownfield opportunities for conservation in the lower Mystic
 - Identify sites, technical information and risks, and potential for acquisition
 - Look into clean up standards for the ultimate use of property
- Investigate Charlestown parcel #5 as a potential brownfield site
 - The goal is for public use – sailing and classrooms, ferry landing
 - Currently looking at EPA brownfield funds to clear it
- PARC Grants thru the state
 - Helps to develop BF sites into parks
 - Will not pay for clean up activities
- Safe pedestrian crossing under Rt-28
- Brownfield assessment grants
 - Prioritize Brownfields as potential open space
 - Need to be careful of the types of use and appropriate clean up standards
- Grassfields
- Land Grants
- Identify the need for the creation of open space vs. connection of what is already there
- Discuss conservation plans at the next municipal subcommittee meeting
 - Identify open space plans and potential collaboration

Discussion/Prioritization

The group should create an action-oriented roadmap that identifies what could be accomplished on the next 24 months. It seems there are three paths to take:

1. Prioritize brownfields and identify trailways and connectivity as priorities for work
2. Identify gaps, and examine existing municipal planning activities
3. Examine the universe of possible brownfield opportunities

This group could do research and come back together with more information at the next meeting. At that meeting, there could be one or more of the online atlases projected on the wall that could serve as a basis for discussion. We need a good understanding on what we'd like to get changed or accomplished.

It might be a good idea to divide up the watershed and develop a template for each segment. We could look into such statistics as river/path mileage, municipal open space plans, gaps, trail system and ongoing projects, etc. This exercise would help produce a set of information that will help us identify priorities.

Ivey St. John volunteers to work on the Somerville or Charlestown areas with Dana Spang.

All municipalities have open space plans. We should get in touch with communities to discuss their open space plans to ensure that their priorities are not at odds with ours. There may be good ideas that have been overlooked. Coming together with these ideas will provide a bigger stronger plan going forward. This should be on the agenda at the next municipal subcommittee meeting (scheduled for July 29, 2010) so that each community can identify what their priorities are and if there are brownfield priorities already in place. Common goals might lead to the most reception and ability to move forward efficiently.

There is money out there in EEA under the PARCs program. Funds can be used to develop brownfields into community parks. Communities can also apply for land grants thru EEA. The Groundwork organizations have been able to take advantage of brownfield opportunities.

The group should be considering the differences between needing new space and connecting what is already available.

In Cambridge, the city owns none of the land bordering the rivers. It is all DCR property and Alewife Reservation is not recognized. The backs of the buildings are on the urban wild property.

This group should become familiar with areas of important habitat and wildlife. It would be worthwhile to add this information to the inventory – such as natural habitat, marshes,

etc. There may be funding available to restore/protect/preserve wildlife, and we should be informed of those areas.

Friends of Alewife Reservation has a book of professionally assessed wildlife. There is a GPS map where the trails are and it can be shared.

Next Steps

- A mini group (Ivey, EK, Dana, and EPA intern) will pilot a walk of the Wellington Greenway with Bill Hinkley (invited). This is planned for June 15, 2010 at noon.
- Assess watershed wildlife habitat as has been done in Alewife Reservation.
- MyRWA will help integrate the various plans. MAPC will share their GIS information.
- Melissa Cryan (EEA) is willing to summarize open space plans and bring them back to this group.
- This group will meet again during the week of July 6 – 9. EPA will check with Ellen to provide space and a walk. This meeting will last 1.5 hours and include a 30 minute walk. Bring your lunch.

**Mystic River Watershed Steering Committee Open Space Group Sign-in Sheet
May 26, 2010**

Name	Organization	E-mail address
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