

Mystic River Watershed Steering Committee
Draft Meeting Notes
Wednesday, February 16, 2011, 9:00am – 11:15am
Metropolitan Area Planning Council
60 Temple Place, Boston, MA

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

- The Committee will continue to form business and municipality subcommittees.
- The Committee approves the 2011-2012 Joint Mission and Priorities
- The Committee gives approval to both water quality and open space subgroups to work on their behalf.
- The current version of the Environmental Atlas will be launched on MyRWA's website.

Introductions and Past Meeting Notes

- Meeting Minutes from last meeting are accepted by consensus by those present
- Amy Cotter (MAPC) will give overview of grant, and where MAPC is going with it.
 - o See if there's further opportunities with MAPC wants to accomplish

Amy Cotter: Sustainable Communities Grant Presentation

- Metro Future was a program that was adopted in 2008
- Recently, this effort got a boost when competed for one of the first regional planning grant (HUD-EPA-MAPC partnership)
- Sustainable communities Grant webpage can be found at:
<http://www.mapc.org/metrofuture/sustainable-communities>
- Yesterday, MAPC signed cooperative agreement with HUD. This will bring \$4million to the region to implement Metro future.
- This agreement includes additional things that HUD is looking for such as a climate adaptation plan and a regional housing plan.
- Local planning work is the heart of this program
- Work plan that outlines 12 activities that MAPC will be doing, efficiently and effectively
 - o Will develop tools and models to be used beyond MAPC and beyond the duration of the grant

- Hope to inform state level policy work (set the stage for local decision), to encourage more rational local level decision making and enrich the capacity of municipalities and volunteers to advance at local level
- The goals of the plan are bold to achieve by 2030, but they are achievable
- In order to track progress:
 - Use regional indicators program, which is already underway but receives a boost from the grant
- Implementing MetroFuture requires participation, so it's never closed to new members.
 - Public and Private entities are welcome to join the consortium which is currently led by an interim steering committee
 - Guidelines for the consortium developed by interim steering committee (allocating funds to their own communities)
 - 130-140 current consortium members, and always open to more
 - 2 forms: municipal and non-municipal organizations
 - Give name and contact information to Amy Cotter if interested
- A permanent steering committee will be elected and will select proposals for future work
- MAPC currently has enough work for a year, but some folks are eager to expand their projects over 3 years that is consistent with the grant
- Q: What proportion of the funding is available?
 - no specific budget numbers attached to illustrative projects
 - probably have ¼ of the grant already obligated, and a large portion is left for additional projects (~\$300 million)
- MAPC will provide a bulk of technical assistance
- There are 27 people on the steering committee
 - non-profits and municipalities are represented and are responsive to a constituency that meets on a regular basis
- Some members (NGOs and Municipalities) of the Mystic River Steering Committee are also members of the Sustainable Communities Consortium)
- Potential work on Monsanto property might be an opportunity for this grant. Come up with a work plan
- Next Steps
 - Currently working with an interim SC that will bring an MOU to all participants by March. (March 1, morning)
 - On April 12 there will be a consortium meeting, in the afternoon (2pm)
 - Hoping for participation from National folks at APA conference that day
 - Show plans, ask members to meet and have meaningful dialogue about their hopes for the grant.

Report out from Open Space group (EK Khalsa, MyRWA/Joan Blaustein, MAPC)

- The group has been working since May of last year when it began the process of deciding on priorities. The process has been invigorating and exhaustive
- Dana Sprang, Andrew Fitzgerald and Ivey St. John did a tremendous amount of field work
- Outline originally prepared by D. Sprang in July 2010
 - o Start with pilot area of the river
 - o Pick a segment of the river, examine it carefully for opportunities for open space access and development
 - o Map the investigation and its results using GPS and highlight best prospects for Open Space development and attributes of the properties.
- One priority: Group picked main stem of the Mystic, and selected 4 priority sites
 - o Attention from members of the Steering Committee can support the development of these sites
 - o Segment that we looked at involved analyzing data
 - Examined municipal open space plan, MyRWA action plan, DCR Master Plan
 - Looked for undeveloped sites in the pilot area
 - Many available sites are Brownfields
 - Committee attended presentation by EPA personnel on Brownfields funding and development assistance
 - Sites selected represented the best opportunities to develop open space and all had high environmental and recreational values
- Mapping project- priority sites displayed on MAPC mapping tool and now transferred to the MyRWA Environmental Atlas
 - o Focus on sites that we want to recommend for SC attention and support
 - o Ensure locations become areas of open space development and access
 - o Each priority site is currently at different stages of development
- Malden River/GE site
 - Already a plan in place
 - Nurture that along and make sure that nothing gets in the way of making that a reality
 - Developers are waiting for a leaser
 - Brownfield site, questions of public access and wetlands
 - Nick Cohen has done research on this site
- Draw 7 Park
 - Established site, hard to find but once you get there It's beautiful and has great views of the river
 - Help to make a connection to Draw 7 through MBTA yards
 - Ivey and Jen are working closely with MBTA, Somerville, MAPC, and Federal Realty to make sure funding is allocated to develop parkway
- Chemical Lane
 - A lot of information is known here, hazardous wasteland
 - Very important parcel
 - Salt water river front

- Zoned for mixed use
 - Tremendous potential for people to come together
- Made contact with present owner, hope to persuade the owner early on to develop open space – in their own best interest
- Chelsea Creek
 - Several scattered parcels in the Mill Creek area
 - Redevelop salt marsh? Open space opportunities?
 - Too small, not worth committees effort
 - Hess site was suggested
 - Looking for another site in the Chelsea Creek area
- Future steps: need a couple of things
- Create additional priority sites in other segments of the river. Duplicate the work elsewhere, beginning in the Upper Mystic.
- Further examination of another segment- need help in doing this
 - Contacts, and willing volunteers
 - In lower and upper Mystic Lakes, up to Woburn and along the Aberjona
- Hope that Steering Committee will memorialize recommendations if they think its worthy by approving priorities established by the Open Space sub-group
- Jen and Ivey met with developers regarding Draw 7 Park
 - Dan Driscoll made a proposal
 - Fed Realty investment trust – substantial amount of money (\$500K has been identified, but \$7 million is needed to repair everything)
 - Need to Repair bulkhead
 - Dan’s proposal to create pathway was accepted
 - Where bulkhead begins to be a problem, the path will narrow and there will be a sign to pass at your own risk
 - There is hope that by 2013 that there would be a clear understanding how there would be a connection from Draw 7 into Charlestown
 - Jen and Ivey want to bring in residents, and have community advocacy
 - This area is an Environmental Justice community
 - Side note: Pedestrian pathway across Amelia Earhart dam is no longer in the works
 - Now looking at a separate crossing, so it makes the linkages critically important
- How will we proceed if we approve these priorities?
 - There is still a large amount of detail to address
 - Would like Steering Committee approval to that those who work on these sites, that they may act on behalf of the Steering Committee in order to keep the work moving forward
 - The subgroup will report back in writing to SC as progress as made (through e-mail or at meetings)
 - Goals of subgroup are clear:
 - Establish more public access
 - Establish more open space development
- As long as we are working towards these goals, it gives the subgroup the ability to work

- Ivey has 20 copies of DCR Master Plan, and would like members of the SC to think about which individuals to give those to

Presentation of MAPC mapping tool

- o Many different maps were being created at the same time
- MAPC and MyRWA entered into an agreement to create Environmental Atlas
 - o Goal was to show all of the data that MyRWA has collected over the years
 - o Want to make it user friendly, and have a multi-functionality platform
 - A lot of ability to change data layers
 - Can be used in quite a few ways
 - I.e. Add in transportation and water quality data
 - o An agreement is now being negotiated with MyWRA
 - o Pilot project collected photos, access and trails
 - Pulled it together into priority sites to aggregate last summer's work
 - Link documents and websites to each priority sites
 - o Have some preset maps with buttons, so user doesn't have to click on a bunch of different layers
 - o These maps/data have large amount of value, but need to think about funding
 - o Extremely valuable to have other information to view
 - As long as committee feels comfortable with MyRWA's site to be repository for data, then we can make it live (non-Beta)
 - Committee agrees to go live with the site
 - o Moved to move forward with mapping tool. Will be launched on MyWRA's website and can be accessed
 - Joan and EK will discuss how to make this happen
 - o All future mapping of Open Space will go on the MyWRA website.

Water Quality Group Report (Patrick Herron, MyRWA)

- There was strong participation from several Steering Committee members
- Started off by brainstorming a long list of problems
 - o Some isolated, some widespread
 - o Some complicated and some simple
- Went through a careful planning process to generate a long list of problems in order to consider what the most important problems are and which are most approachable by the SC
- Broke the list of strategies up into 2 categories
 - o 1. Ones that steering committee could work on
 - o 2. Those that weren't appropriate for SC to get involved with
- We didn't vote. We had a productive discussion and came to a clear consensus on the topics that the SC would have the most power to address
- The results of this exercise are in the first section of the M&P document

- Joan suggests that MAPC's Martin Pillsbury and WQ subcommittee should meet because some of the items overlap, to know full extent of what is already being worked on.
- The fertilizer issue may be a good topic for a joint municipal and business subcommittee meeting
- Currently seems that there are some resources not at the table that are not addressed, especially when dealing with sediments
- Work with the sediments (legacy pollutants) ties into Open Space work, to access river and allow for rowers, canoers, etc to use the river
- First step in the process is knowledge. There are inconsistent approaches within the watershed right now on addressing issues. Bottom line: Encourage safe recreational use
- Tony: Sediment remediation projects are a disaster. Years of legacy pollution, and stormwater runoff
 - o At one site, sediment from stormwater runoff failed a chronic 28-day toxicity test in 2 days.
 - o Tony will look into what the Corps is doing, and will pull in some more information on sediment contamination.
- Hope that Steering Committee will adopt the priorities set by WQ subgroup
- Question (Ivey): Is there a way that public can be warned to diminish liability so that public can get to the waterfront?
 - o Can't make any kind of judgment without the data.
 - o Tension between using the river, and being safe. There's no agreement. But there's no disagreement either because there's not enough information. Sending mixed signals between accessing the river, and the safety concern.
 - o A tremendous amount of work has been done regarding sediment contamination, but we need to draw some conclusions
- Steering Committee should adopt WQ priorities

Review of Mission and Priorities Statement – Comments and concerns

- Send grammatical and typos to Caitlyn or Karen
- DEP and MWRA are concerned about item ii and the language, particularly the word "volume". It is hard to get exact data to report on this but everyone is committed to trying
- **Will the Steering Committee adopt priorities as they are written in the Mission and Priorities document?**
 - o **All in favor. Action is moved.**

Next Steps: Direction from SC to working groups regarding implementation of the Mission and Priorities document

- Everyone individually think about how to publicize this milestone of choosing priorities
 - o Contact EPA public affairs, MyRWA e-mail list.
 - o Re-energize by sending M&P out to everyone
 - Send out by e-mail and hard-copy to March 2 meeting

- EK will work with EPA on communication plan to send out
- Update and re-do Mystic brochures
- Post M&P on front page of EPA Mystic River website
- Look at the nexus of water quality and open space groups on access and sediment issues
- Do we know where people fish? Mike Celona will give a presentation at a future Steering Committee meeting on fish advisories
- Set up another joint municipal and business subcommittee meeting devoted to priority issues
 - Very soon action step
 - March 2 joint committee meeting
 - Patrick will speak to the M&P document at this meeting
 - Get Mission and Priorities out to these sub-committees
- Get data on fishing occurring in MA
 - Requires a permit for fishing in marine? Coastal? Tidal? Areas
 - \$10 for permit, available this year
 - Action item - get to a place where we all understand what the fish advisories mean.
 - Where can we fish, where do we need a license?
 - Environmental police may know where people are fishing
 - Mike Celona will give a presentation at a future meeting
- Develop a parking lot of things to work on, reminder on each agenda to act as a disciplinary structure.
- Memorialize groups for the future to implement the documents
 - Keep the sub-groups ongoing, SC has reached a consensus
 - A lot of work to be done and we need more people
 - Open Space group especially needs people from the upper mystic

Meeting schedule as a Steering Committee, next couple of meetings

- Meet on a third Wednesday every __ months.
- Committee agreed to meet in May, and then decide whether to meet every 2 or 3 months
- Next meeting is tentatively scheduled for May 18th, 2011 (EPA needs to check their schedule)

Report card event

- MyRWA will plan and organize on May 15, 2011
- It will be incorporated with Herring Run and Paddle
- Puts report card event in the center of the watershed, Blessing of the Bay Boathouse on the edge of the river
- Tracks close to 500 people, easy to get there and plenty of space/parking

Logo and letterhead for SC

- Hope to have something sent out by e-mail and ready for the SC meeting in May

- Mystic River identity on walking routes or kiosks
- Bring back logo, signage issue to keep alive
- Have affiliations associated with logo
- Blue Back Herring logo- Rachel Kelly will send out to SC
 - o Goal of this is to make the path is recognizable by logo

Announcements:

- March 2: Meeting with municipal subcommittee and business subcommittee, as well as several members of the legislature.
 - o Have sent invites to Businesses and legislatures, will send out to municipal reps
 - Will send out agenda to those who are interested
 - EPA can help with federal involvement
- Ivey suggests that Tony be a member of the SC, put Tony on the agenda for next meeting
- Jen and Ivey would like to find a grant source around the re-development of Draw 7 Park.
- EPA is hosting a series of 4 MS4 workshops, will send out schedule.
- Maple Syrup Boil Down Festival: Saturday, March 5 from 10-2 at the Community Growing Center (22 Vinal Avenue in Somerville) (<http://www.groundworksomerville.org/2011/01/05/maple-syrup-boil-down-festival/>)

Mystic River Watershed Steering Committee Sign-in Sheet

February 16, 2011

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