

**MMOC Meeting Minutes**  
**June 14, 2023 ZOOM Meeting, 6:00-7:35pm**  
**As approved September 13, 2023**  
Minutes prepared by Matt Eddy, MMOC Administrator

**Member Attendees:**

- Kelly Brilliant, Elton Elperin, Jan Henderson, Parker James, Arleyn Levee, Arlene Mattison (representing Brookline GreenSpace Alliance), Karen Mauney-Brodek, Tom Timmons, Freddie Veikley, Matt Eddy (MMOC Administrator).

**Other Attendees:**

- Jack Schleifer

**Phase 2 Update:**

- Charter's landscaping work continues at Work Areas 4 (Netherlands Rd), 6 (Back Bay Yard), 11 (Agassiz Rd), 12 (Victory Gardens), and 13 (Fire Alarm HQ). All areas are on schedule.
- Charter is aware of incomplete growth of plant material in steep sections of Work Area 2 (Riverway @ Brookline Ave). They will undertake remedial efforts there to minimize erosion – likely landscaping cloth.
- Turbidity curtains have been removed from the length of the project. This will facilitate fish migration but may also lead to increased rates of transfer of litter and Phragmites stems down into Charlesgate and into the Charles River.
- Phragmites regrowth remains a persistent concern. In some areas (Work Area 10 upstream of Agassiz Rd), Charter has removed the Phragmites and re-applied hydroseed. In other areas (e.g. Work Area 8 upstream of the MFA pedestrian bridge), Phragmites is growing aggressively. Tom stated that he would reach out to John Rudd (USACE) to produce a clear and detailed statement about the methods and timing Charter will use to manage Phragmites in those areas. The next anticipated treatment is expected in fall 2023. Long-term, Boston Parks plans to hire a contractor to treat and remove Phragmites regularly from the full length of the river.
- A resident emailed the MMOC asking if fences could be moved to increase access to Mother's Rest Playground. Tom agreed to speak with USACE about this possibility.
- Tom is working with Mayer Tree to address growth of trees from headwalls of several bridges. This work is anticipated to be completed by the end of the month. Freddie Veikley recommended that BPRD treat bridge headwalls annually. There remain persistent questions about the jurisdiction of various parts of various bridges; Jan Henderson said that she could provide results of her research into jurisdiction of the Longwood Ave bridge. The MMOC's Historic Bridges Subcommittee can also assist in this effort.

#### Carlton Street Footbridge:

- Work on the footbridge is largely complete. No date has been set for full opening, but it is likely there will be a “soft opening” (allowing pedestrian and bicycle traffic to access the bridge) in the next few weeks, with a more celebratory “official opening” to be held in September 2023.
- There was discussion of whether the bicycle “runnels” (narrow ramps that allow a cyclist to walk their bicycle up or down the stairs without having to carry it). Arleyn Mattison noted that they may represent a tripping hazard for pedestrians who need access to the hand-rails. Since cyclists already have bridge access via the ramp, are two runnels really necessary? Freddie Veikley added that she thought the runnels detracted from the historic aesthetic of the bridge. [NOTE: following the meeting, Kelly spoke with both Erin Chute Gallentine and Tom Brady. They reported that because this is a MassDOT project, the runnels will remain in place.]
- Social media reports show that a snapping turtle was the first local resident to use the bridge!

#### MEPA Annual Update, USACE Inspection Report:

- Tom Timmons reported that he expects to receive the revised Annual Update from CDM Smith “any day now.”
- There is no clear date on when USACE will release its latest Inspection Report, but in previous years these have been delivered to the non-federal sponsors in July.

#### Lower Riverway/Cofferdam Area:

- Kelly Brilliant summarized recent conversations with Kurt Gaertner regarding the future of water levels along the lower Riverway. Kurt has been in contact (or will be, soon) with representatives of Mass DEP to better understand the role of DEP in their choice to accept current conditions of low water. Kelly further pointed out that the MMOC is in a unique position of leverage given that all non-federal sponsors are equally concerned about this issue and its potential negative impacts on the river (habitat, water quality, and aesthetics) and the Project as a whole.
- Tom Timmons stated that the non-federal sponsors had retained CDM Smith to conduct regular monitoring of water levels in the area. The plan is to continue such monitoring for two years, per standard “guarantee” terms for other aspects of the project.
- Kelly has also had conversation with CRWA’s Deputy Director of Programs Conrad Crawford, who has agreed to be a partner in strategic work for the cofferdam issue.
- There was general consensus that a two-year “wait and see” period was not an ideal strategy at this point. A sub-group of MMOC members agreed to gather to write a letter to USACE to discuss the collective concerns. Volunteers included Kelly Brilliant, Karen

Mauny-Brodek, Arleyn Levee, and Elton Elperin; Kelly also suggested that Lisa Kumpf and Elisabeth Cianciola join this group.

- In a separate email, Karen summarized a number of the key questions we all have about the impacts of low water. She suggested communicating with state elected officials.
- The possibility of hiring a consultant was discussed, although it wasn't clear who would pay for that work or how much it might cost. Jan Henderson recommended Epsilon Associates as one possibility. Arlene Mattison noted that the non-federal sponsors were supposed to supply a "clerk of the works/engineer" to the MMOC at public expense. There have been two such individuals hired in the past.
- Arleyn Levee expressed her concern that low water levels could contribute to large mosquito populations.
- Matt presented photos of areas of the mudflats that have been colonized by low vegetation.
- A resident contacted the MMOC asking about coarse woody debris in the river in this area. Snags are removed on a case-by-case basis via conversation between Boston Parks, Brookline DPW, and USACE. Karen Mauny-Brodek expressed her understanding that DCR is responsible, at least in principle, for cleaning the watershed of the whole river on a regular schedule [awaiting confirmation/reference for this].

### **Phase 1 Update:**

- Tom Timmons and Matt Eddy collaborated to update Committee members on the current conditions of the Phase 1 area:
- As of now, the banks of Phase 1 show a lot of growth and flowers. While visually appealing and effective at minimizing erosion, there is some concern that most of these flowers represent invasive species that threaten the health of the shrubs and other plantings.
- Tom Timmons reported that Terraink (Kellie Connelly) had recently met with A&M Home Services in the field to conduct training and assess conditions. A&M received this training enthusiastically.
- Burdock has been removed from large areas of the embankment. This may be an improvement (burdock tends to shade out other plants), but its removal exposes large areas of bare soil. The Landscape Maintenance Subcommittee recommends that these areas be managed in some way as soon as possible -- before the fall planting season -- so as to minimize both erosion and re-colonization by invasives.
- The Landscape Maintenance Subcommittee has drafted a letter to Tom Timmons and Boston Tree Warden Max Ford-Diamond expressing the subcommittee's frustration that they were not consulted before agreed-upon tree planting sites were moved. Tom has replied that he meant no ill but that the Tree Warden has final say on tree placement. Arleyn Levee and Freddie Veikley emphasized that the MMOC's charge includes both tree health and efforts to uphold the Olmsted design.

- The 9 new trees in Phase 1 have been provided with water bags by ENC's Jack Schleifer. ENC will be watering these trees throughout the summer. Trees have been staked to reduce the chances of windthrow.
- A few upland areas show some turf establishment following seeding in late May. Tom is working with A&M Home Services to fence off an upland area as an experiment to see if reducing public access might allow the turf to be more robustly established. Many other areas, although apparently green to the eye at this time of year, are colonized by annual vegetation that will die in winter.
- A&M Home Services plans to remove dead shrubs and plant new ones in the fall.
- Phragmites growing in Justine Mee Liff Park is being monitored and will likely be chemically treated in the fall. This Phragmites is probably sprouting from root stock that was buried several decades ago when the Sears parking lot was built.
- Freddie expressed concern for the health of a fringe tree opposite Peterborough St. that appears to show recent limb damage. It was suggested that Jack Schleifer confer with Max Ford-Diamond to determine the best way to help save this tree.
- Matt briefly presented the results of the MMOC Phase 1 Health Assessment, which evaluated the condition of 12 different sub-areas for 9 different features. He can provide more detail on this analysis and lessons learned from the assessment process at a later date. He noted that neither Boston Parks nor DCR has endorsed the MMOC's assessment criteria, so it's important that the report not be used to criticize management efforts of the land-owners.

**Public Comment:**

- No questions were asked by members of the public.

**MMOC Member Business:**

- Following motion by Parker James and second by Karen Mauny-Brodek, minutes for the MMOC meeting for May 10, 2023 were approved by unanimous vote (with abstentions from those who were not present for that meeting). Final copies of the minutes will be distributed to MMOC members and will be available on the MMOC website.

**Upcoming MMOC Meeting:**

- Weds, July 12, 6:00 PM

Adjourned 7:35PM