

MMOC Meeting Minutes
September 13, 2023 ZOOM Meeting, 6:00-7:30pm
As Approved October 11, 2023
Minutes prepared by Matt Eddy, MMOC Administrator

Member Attendees:

- Kelly Brilliant, Elisabeth Cianciola, Jan Henderson, Parker James, Lisa Kumpf, Arleyn Levee, Kay Mathew, Karen Mauney-Brodek, Tom Timmons, Freddie Veikley; Matt Eddy (MMOC Administrator).

Other Attendees:

- Max Rome (CRWA), Jack Schleifer (ENC)

Phase 2 Updates:

- Matt Eddy shared a short video of a snapping turtle climbing over the exposed MWRA sewer pipe at Netherlands Rd.
- Work Areas 3, 4, 7, 8, and 9 are scheduled for inspection by the non-federal sponsors on October 19 (see map at end of this document). If the landscaping is deemed acceptable, management responsibility for those areas will pass from the Army Corps to the local landowners.
 - Tom Timmons reported that there are a number of open questions about how areas under the Boston Parks umbrella will be managed. For example, there is no current management plan for the stretch of Riverway Park between Work Area 4 and Work Area 5, or for upland areas in Work Area 3 that were outside the construction fence. The eventual intention is for Boston Parks to assemble a scope of work that will integrate care of the Project Areas with management of adjacent areas that weren't touched during the Project. A management contract would likely begin January 1, 2024, so any maintenance required between the handoff date and January 1 will be taken care of by service order on an ad hoc basis. Maintenance needs are generally low during November and December.
- Both MMOC members and the general public continue to express concern about the growth of Phragmites in a number of key areas. At Agassiz Rd., the Phragmites has grown tall enough to block the view of the river. Matt Eddy reported that he'd reviewed Charter's Invasive Species Control Plan, which details the date ranges for twice-yearly herbicide treatment for invasive species within the fenced areas – early June and early September. Tom Timmons verified that he had communicated with John Rudd (USACE) who had said that Charter planned to execute herbicide treatment on September 15, 2023. The plants will be left in place for several weeks to allow the herbicide to take effect, and then they are to be cut and removed. The MMOC will monitor this.

- Matt Eddy presented photos of parts of Work Area 10 where herbicide treatment last summer appears to have been effective in minimizing re-sprouting this summer.
- Tom Timmons reported that he will be meeting next week with SWCA – a landscape maintenance firm specializing in wetlands invasive species control – with the expectation that SWCA would assist the city in managing Phragmites and purple loosestrife for the entire length of the Muddy River. Boston Parks had received all necessary permissions from the Conservation Commission to proceed with management plans.
- The MMOC will prepare social media posts to communicate this information to the public.
- The possibility of posting signage for public education about Phragmites was discussed. Tom will check in with John Rudd about that possibility. Karen Mauney-Brodek offered ENC’s support in producing that signage.
- Vinyl fencing has been installed along the Boston side of Work Areas 5 and 6 (lower Riverway Park). Tom Timmons will be meeting with USACE and Charter on site on Tuesday, September 19 and will report as to whether/when the footpath in that area will be reopened to the public.
- Median strips along Agassiz Rd – used for Charter’s employee parking during the Project -- are now being converted back to planting beds.
- While most Project trees are thriving, a few appear to have died (e.g. near the Victory Gardens). These are under warranty by Charter and will be replaced.
- Tom Timmons reported that Ailanthus stems were recently cut from the headwall of the Agassiz Rd bridge, and the stems treated with herbicide. There are still some untreated Ailanthus plants there, however.
- The Watergoat has been installed at Ipswich Street (with thanks to the Muddy Water Initiative and volunteers). Regular clean-up of the watershed in that area is now underway.
- The issue of encampments in the Charlesgate area was discussed. Parker James reported that the area has very low police presence and open-air drug sale/use are common there. Kelly Brilliant agreed to reach out to Patrice Kish to ask whether DCR was preparing a protocol for addressing issues related to unhoused persons in the area.
 - Parker James reported that the Charlesgate Alliance had coordinated with Project Place to conduct clean-up efforts in that area in the past, and that additional clean-up efforts would be a good idea.
- Several large red oak trees at Netherlands Rd. and along the Riverway have died and appear to have been marked for removal.

Carlton St Footbridge:

- The Town of Brookline will host a ribbon-cutting at the Carlton Street Footbridge on Sunday, September 17, 1-3pm. All are invited to attend.

Cofferdam/Riverway Water Level Update and Discussion:

- Kelly Brilliant reminded the MMOC that a subset of members had drafted a letter of concern about low water levels in Riverway Park and sent it to MassDEP and EOEEA in August. Kelly gave thanks to the MMOC members who worked so hard on that letter. She further reported that she'd received an email from the office of MassDEP Commissioner Bonnie Heiple, acknowledging receipt of the MMOC's letter. A reply is expected in the coming weeks.
- Jack Schleifer is in communication with the non-federal sponsors about the preparation of "talking points" for use in explaining the on-the-ground situation to the public. Kelly stated that those talking points are expected shortly and will be posted on the MMOC's website, along with the MMOC's letter to MassDEP. She further asked that the MMOC's organizational members communicate with their constituents to spread the word.
- Water levels along Riverway Park are being monitored by CDM-Smith on behalf of the non-federal sponsors. No preliminary data is available at this time. Arleyn Levee stated her concern that water temperature was an equally concerning variable that should be monitored. Karen Mauney-Brodek also asked for additional details about the scope of CDM-Smith's monitoring program so that we all might communicate more clearly with the public.
 - Tom Timmons noted that the Water Quality Subcommittee will be meeting with Mary Mancini (CDM-Smith) in the coming weeks, and these questions and concerns can be discussed at that meeting.

Phase 1 Updates:

- The Phase 1 area has shown a lot of growth of vegetation as a result of the rainfall this summer. Many of the shrubs have grown tall and most of the trees appear to be healthy.
- In some areas of Phase 1, small parcels managed by separate agencies and landscaping crews are adjacent to one another. For example, the median strips along the Park Drive side of Justine Mee Liff Park are the responsibility of DCR, while the Park itself is maintained by BPRD/A&M Home Services. This seems inefficient.
 - MMOC members identified questions and concerns about the median strips; there isn't clarity as to the management goal for these areas. With this in mind, Kelly will float the idea of coordinating management across jurisdictions at the next Cabinet meeting.

Subcommittee Reports:

- WQSC: Lisa Kumpf reported that the Water Quality Subcommittee has a meeting scheduled for the end of September. The Subcommittee will be meeting with Mary Mancini (CDM-Smith) to finalize details about post-construction water quality monitoring.
 - The WQSC is also discussing DCR's outfall stabilization project, which is to be presented to the Boston Conservation Commission this fall.
- LMSC: Per Arleyn Levee, The Landscape Maintenance Subcommittee had a productive meeting with Tom Timmons (BPRD) and Kellie Connelly (Terraink) on site at Phase 1 on August 22. Management of this area is a big challenge with many competing priorities, and the LMSC lauds the efforts of BPRD and Terraink in balancing those priorities.
 - The good work of A&M Home Services in maintaining the landscape was acknowledged, and new priorities were identified. The LMSC recommended additional shrub pruning and a focus on removing additional invasive and noxious species such as staghorn sumac and morning glory. The goals include attention to long-term sustainability and resilience as well as efforts to maintain Olmsted's "view-sheds" as originally intended.
 - Five new trees are expected to be planted in the Phase 1 area in fall 2023 – with enthusiastic thanks to Tom Timmons for securing the funding for those.
 - The LMSC has prepared a draft proposal for addressing the degraded landscape along the downstream side of Brookline Ave. (the "Moonscape"). Tom Timmons and the subcommittee continue to discuss the possibility of packaging this proposal as a capital expenditure for the City to fund within the next 1-2 years.
- CommSC: The Communications Subcommittee has not had a meeting in recent months. One possible focus could be about public education about meadows and other areas where plants are being allowed to grow taller than a few inches.
- BridgesSC: The Historic Bridges Subcommittee has not had a meeting in recent months but intends to meet soon. The accumulation of such a comprehensive dataset on historic bridges is relatively unique, nationwide. It is possible that a publication might be useful to other historic preservation groups.
 - Matt Eddy asked that the Bridges Subcommittee continue to balance attention to annual bridge maintenance issues with long-term structural assessments and planning.

Member Organization Updates:

- *Emerald Necklace Conservancy*: Karen reported that ENC is halfway through their new strategic planning process. ENC had received more than 1,500 responses to their survey, and data compilation is underway.

- *Charles River Watershed Association:* Lisa reported that CRWA has begun an 18-month visioning process for improving water quality for the entire Muddy River watershed. The first major public event in that process will take place this fall (date TBA). CRWA's annual gala is scheduled for October 4, and all MMOC members are encouraged to attend.
- *Charlesgate Alliance:* Parker James reported that the Charlesgate Alliance is continuing to partner with Project Place to conduct clean-ups of the area. The Alliance has recently received contractor bids for removal of the decorative walls under the Bowker overpass, with additional updates forthcoming.
- *Fenway Alliance:* Kelly reported that the Fenway Alliance's annual gala is scheduled for December 5. Michael Nasso, the recently retired director of the Huntington Theater, will be honored at the event.
- *Fenway Civic Association:* Freddie reported that Fenway Civic is collaborating with Fenway Garden Society to retain Norm Helie for assessment and treatment of historic trees in the Victory Gardens. The Association is also collaborating with Jack Schleifer on an effort to replace dead street trees along Park Drive.
- *Updates of general interest:*
 - Boston's proposed Sunshine Protection Guidelines are currently in a holding pattern at City Hall.
 - Boston's Article 80 process is undergoing a comprehensive evaluation and overhaul in City Hall.
 - The KZLA firm is in a design phase for the \$7 million Fens path restoration. Next steps are to be announced in the coming weeks.
 - Design documents for the Evans Way Bridge are in the works, but funds for construction have not yet been raised.

Public Comment:

- No questions were asked by members of the public.

MMOC Member Business:

- Following motion by Karen Mauney-Brodek and second by Jan Henderson, minutes for the MMOC meeting for June 14, 2023 were approved by unanimous vote (with abstentions from those who were not present for that meeting).
- Following motion by Karen Mauney-Brodek and second by Parker James, minutes for the MMOC meeting for July 12, 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, October 11 and Weds, November 8, 6:00 PM

Adjourned 7:30PM