

MMOC Meeting Minutes
October 11, 2023, ZOOM Meeting, 6:00-7:30pm
As Approved November 15, 2023
Minutes prepared by Matt Eddy, MMOC Administrator

Member Attendees:

- Tom Brady, Kelly Brilliant, Elisabeth Cianciola, Elton Elperin, Parker James, Lisa Kumpf, Arleyn Levee, Sean Lynn-Jones (BGSA), Kay Mathew, Jack Schleifer (ENC), Tom Timmons, Freddie Veikley; Matt Eddy (MMOC Administrator).

Other Attendees:

- Arlene Mattison, Caroline Reeves, Carroll Williamson.

Phase 2 Updates:

- Most of the Phase 2 area looks to be in good shape, overall.
- The date for final inspection and acceptance for Work Areas 3, 4, 7, 8, and 9 (Upper Riverway Park and upper stretches of the Fens) has been postponed to November 1, 2023. Upon approval, the nonfederal sponsors will reclaim stewardship of those areas from the USACE.
- Construction fences are being removed and replaced with lower vinyl fencing in Work Areas 5 (Riverway Park, Boston side) and 12 (Fens, Agassiz Rd to Mothers Rest). Stone-dust paths in these areas are – or will soon be – open to pedestrian traffic. Similar work is underway along Agassiz Rd adjacent to the Duck House.
- Tall Phragmites stems along Agassiz Rd were treated with herbicide on September 15 and now show signs of decline. These will be removed in the coming weeks, restoring the view of the river in that stretch. Tom Brady emphasized that the MMOC can be most useful in communicating to the public that this evidence of growth and management is proceeding as expected. Kelly Brilliant noted that blog posts to that effect have been posted on the MMOC website.

Carlton Street Footbridge:

- The ribbon-cutting for the Carlton Street Footbridge took place on September 17, 2023. Speakers included Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis, Brookline DPW Commissioner Erin Chute, Massachusetts State Representative Tommy Vitolo, Brookline Construction Project Coordinator Bill Smith, Frederick Law Olmsted NHS Superintendent Jay Newman, Brookline Greenspace Alliance co-founder Hugh Mattison, and Brookline Town Meeting member Cathleen Cavell. Congratulations to all for this major milestone in the Muddy River Restoration Project.

Phase 2 Updates:

- On October 11, 2023, five new trees were planted in the Phase 1 area near the intersection of Brookline Ave and the Fenway. Enthusiastic thanks to all who supported this effort, with particular thanks to Tom Timmons.
- A&M Home Services – Boston Park’s contracted provider of maintenance work in Phase 1 – continues to work hard in managing plant growth in that area. Recent focal points include cutting back of woody shrubs to restore a view of the river at the upstream end of J. M. Liff Park, removal of mugwort, vetch, and invasive staghorn sumac.
- Tom Timmons has met with SWCA and asked them to prepare a strategy for invasive management for wetland species in particular (Phragmites, purple loosestrife) along the length of the Muddy River Project. He is awaiting further details.
- Matt Eddy presented preliminary results of an assessment of Project trees in Phase 1. Using ENC’s tree inventory as a baseline, he scored each tree’s health on a scale of good-fair-poor-dead. One observation was that red oaks in particular have struggled to survive in the Phase 1 area.
- Freddie Veikley observed that a number of linden trees in particular show signs of leaf tip scald and other forms of stress, despite plenty of rainfall. Tom Brady replied that last winter’s erratic temperature fluctuations caused many trees to break bud prematurely and then die back.
- The possibility of trees being impacted by road salt was discussed at length. Tom Brady noted that most departments of public works had moved to the use of brine rather than salt for winter snow management. Lisa Kumpf suggested a study of salt in soils along the Muddy River would make a good research project for a graduate student. Professors Pam Templer (Boston University) and Michael Berger (Simmons University) were both mentioned as having some expertise and interest around salt stress for the local ecosystem.

Water levels in Riverway:

- There were many questions and a lively exchange about the perceived changes in water level and watercourse in the Riverway. Tom Brady reiterated his firm belief that the ongoing monitoring of water levels and river elevations (by CDM-Smith) was the best course of action and that no mitigation steps should be taken before two years of data-gathering was complete.
- Kelly Brilliant reported that she is in communication with MassDEP Commissioner Bonnie Heiple in regard to the letter the MMOC sent her in August (posted on MMOC website). Commissioner Heiple is waiting to receive a report from USACE so her office can better understand the technical details of the issue. A reply is expected before the MMOC’s November meeting.

- Both Lisa Kumpf (CRWA) and Jack Schleifer (ENC) offered their organizations' resources and monitoring experience to the nonfederal sponsors.
- Lisa Kumpf noted that CRWA was considering a plan to plant native species on exposed banks in the area as a way of combatting colonization by invasive species. Such an action would require authorization from the Boston Conservation Commission.
- A blog post summarizing the Riverway water level issue, including links to talking points from the nonfederal sponsors, has been posted on the MMOC website.

Historic Bridges:

- While Ailanthus stems were cut back from the headwall of the Agassiz Rd bridge (with thanks to Tom Timmons for coordinating that), a number of the other historic bridges show evidence of woody plant growth, vines, and graffiti. Matt Eddy encouraged the Historic Bridges subcommittee to meet to discuss next steps.
- Freddie Veikley expressed concerns about graffiti on the Longwood Ave Bridge. In general, reporting graffiti to BOS-311 or BrookONline are the preferred actions, but Freddie's concern is that if this work is not performed very carefully, it could result in harm to the historic character of the bridge. Kelly agreed to follow up with Tom Timmons about how best to support careful graffiti removal in this area.
- Sean Lynn-Jones reported that the Town of Brookline is in the process of applying for \$250,000 in CPA funding for an evaluation of the Muddy River bridges.

Subcommittee Reports:

- The Water Quality Subcommittee has resumed its regular meetings. Subcommittee members are scheduled to meet later this week with Mary Mancini at CDM-Smith to finalize details about the post-construction water quality monitoring effort. The WQSC is also looking at the details of DCR's outfall stabilization projects and will likely submit a comment letter to the Conservation Commission. WQSC members Michael Berger and Caroline Reeves have both given recent reports to the subcommittee on assessments of the effectiveness of phosphorus reduction strategies at Ipswich St.
- The Landscape Maintenance Subcommittee has been focused on providing suggestions to Boston Parks regarding the new tree planting. They continue to monitor work done by A&M Home Services and they pass their suggestions along to Tom Timmons. A proposal to the city for addressing degraded conditions at Brookline Ave is in the works. The subcommittee has been discussing ways to support Boston Parks as they prepare to take over large sections of Phase 2 maintenance.
- The Communications Subcommittee has not met recently but is open to increasing its membership. Subcommittee Chair Kay Mathew has a number of ideas for new communications projects.

Public comment:

- Arlene Mattison noted an item in the September MMOC minutes that Kelly Brilliant planned to initiate a conversation with the nonfederal sponsors about coordination of landscape maintenance. Has that happened yet? Kelly replied that a meeting with the landowners is scheduled for Thursday, October 12.
 - Attention to historic bridge maintenance and repair was identified as another critical cross-jurisdictional issue – not just with the City and Town but also with state agencies and historic preservation advocates. Parker James identified himself as an expert on jurisdiction boundaries for the Richardson Bridge in particular.
- Caroline Reeves thanked the MMOC for the Committee’s efforts related to the water level issue at Riverway Park. The Muddy Water Initiative will also mobilize its members to send letters to state agencies. MWI will be undertaking citizen science projects related to salinity monitoring and water flow rates.

Organization Member Updates:

- Parker James (Charlesgate Alliance) announced that MassDOT has scheduled a virtual public meeting on October 26 at 6PM to present the 25% design plan for altering the Bowker overpass. Details and a registration page are available [here](#). The MassDOT plan includes the proposed removal of a down-ramp supported by two piers that are currently in the Muddy River.

MMOC Member Business:

- Following motion by Kay Mathew and second by Parker James, minutes for the MMOC meeting for September 13, 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 Meetings:

- Weds, November 8, and Weds, December 13, 6:00 PM

Adjourned 7:30PM

