

MMOC Meeting Minutes
November 13, 2024, ZOOM Meeting, 6:00-7:35pm
As approved January 9, 2025
Minutes prepared by Matt Eddy

Member Attendees:

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

Other Attendees:

- Michael Berger, Caroline Reeves, Carroll Williamson

Welcome:

- MMOC interim chair Kay Mathew welcomed all attendees and brought the meeting to order. She thanked everyone for the ongoing good work of the MMOC.
- We welcomed Abby Oliveira, Senior Land Use and Sustainability Planner for the Longwood Collective, as the newest member of the MMOC. Abby succeeds Jan Henderson in that role.

Phase 1 and 2 Updates:

- Earlier in November, the City of Boston and Town of Brookline formally accepted five Phase 2 Work Areas at the end of their USACE guarantee periods. Construction fences have been removed and all areas are now open to the public. There are a few dead trees that are due for replacement, and Tom Timmons will send that list to Matt Eddy for distribution to the full MMOC. The only Work Areas that remain under USACE responsibility are Work Area 6 (lower Riverway Park) and Work Area 14 (Phragmites removal area near the Fire Alarm HQ in the Back Bay Fens). These two areas are to be returned to local control in November 2025.
- Boston Parks is in the process of drafting maintenance scope-of-work documents and contracts for the sections of Phase 2 under city ownership. The contracts will be divided into two sections – one running the length of Riverway Park, and the other for all segments downstream of Phase 1. The Landscape Maintenance Subcommittee will collaborate with Boston Parks in editing these scopes of work. Contracts are expected to be awarded in the coming weeks, with a start date of January 1, 2025.
- Tom Timmons reported that Boston Parks has engaged SWCA Environmental Consultants to address invasive species management issues for all Project areas under city jurisdiction. The focus will be on Phragmites and knotweed, but SWCA will provide

recommendations for control of other invasives as well. Field work is expected to begin in late spring 2025.

- Embankments near the Carlton St Footbridge have been regraded but not stabilized. Matt Eddy will reach out to Tom Brady to ask whether any stabilization could occur there before winter.
- As reported last month, DCR has completed replacement/repair work of several stormwater outfalls that discharge into the Muddy River. The riprap stones are not to specification. Matt Eddy reported that Tom Valton (DCR project engineer) communicated that the contractor will add additional larger stones to those outfalls at some point, but there is no information on the timing for that work. Matt will continue to monitor and communicate.
- DCR's annual clean-up of the water-sheet at Charlesgate is underway. Caroline Reeves reported that DCR crews had removed a significant number of trees that showed signs of chainsaw work, suggesting they may have been dumped in the river.
- Town of Brookline is due to begin dredging and bank stabilization of Willow Pond (and sections of Leverett Pond) this winter. More information is available from the Town's [project page](#). Matt has reached out to Project Engineer Sam Downes to get more information on the start date for that work. [UPDATE:
- Boston Parks is proceeding with design for the Back Bay Fens Pathways Project, which will include rebuilding the Evans Way Bridge. Public hearings before the Landmarks Commission and Conservation Commission are in the works, but no dates are announced. More information is available [here](#).
- Freddie Veikley expressed concern about the ongoing drought in the state and the likelihood of a dry winter (generally due to a weak La Niña year and the northward displacement of the jet stream too far north. Several local rivers have already dried up, and groundwater depletion could be severe. Lisa noted that CRWA is tracking drought impacts and that biweekly reports on drought conditions are released by the EEA secretary.
 - Alyx Britton noted that ENC had already winterized its watering truck, but it might be possible to bring it back into service this year if necessary. Matt will reach out to Jack Schleifer to discuss.

Subcommittee Reports:

- The Landscape Maintenance Subcommittee has assembled a scope of work document for tree care at the corner of Brookline Ave and Park Drive (AKA "Moonscape North"). The work involves significant decompaction, soil amendment, mulching and fencing for six trees in that area. A contract will be issued and overseen by Jack Schleifer/ENC and paid for by mitigation funds received by the MMOC from Samuels. Tom Timmons reported that Boston Parks had OK'd the work, pending receipt of an access permit application. Work is expected to be completed in winter 2024-25.

- The LMSC also intends to submit a request to Tom asking that Boston Parks plant 2-3 additional oak trees on the northwest side of Brookline Ave between the Fenway and Park Drive.
- The Water Quality Subcommittee continues to assess CDM-Smith-provided post-construction water quality data. Tom Timmons noted that at least one more water quality survey will be conducted this fall.
- The Historic Structures Subcommittee continues to strategize about how to assess the condition of the Muddy River bridges. Elton Elperin and Matt Eddy recently met with Massachusetts State Representative Tommy Vitolo to discuss possible avenues for securing state funding for assessment and repair. The subcommittee intends to meet soon to identify next steps.

Muddy River Cabinet:

- Kelly Brilliant summarized the role of the Cabinet in overseeing the Muddy River Project.
 - The Cabinet meets quarterly in March, June, September, and December.
 - Cabinet members include representatives of Boston Parks and Recreation (Acting Commissioner Liza Meyers, Tom Timmons), Brookline Department of Public Works (Erin Chute, Tom Brady), DCR (Patrice Kish), Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (Kurt Gaertner), ENC (Karen Mauny-Brodek) and the MMOC (Kelly and Matt Eddy)
 - Issues discussed at the Cabinet level include those that are cross-jurisdictional, macro-scale, or politically sensitive, plus any “log-jam” issues that haven’t been successfully resolved through other channels.
- Kelly provided a summary of major items discussed at the last Cabinet meeting:
 - The Cabinet agreed that it wouldn’t hurt for the MMOC to reach out to USACE regarding the issue with mudflats at Riverway Park. A request for USACE water level data is reasonable.
 - Kurt Gaertner suggested the state might be able to provide funding for additional water level surveys by the City.
 - The Cabinet agreed that the MMOC could reach out to EEA Secretary Rebecca Tepper to discuss water levels, with the recognition that the path forward is probably not a regulatory or legal one. Advocacy for state-level funding, private sector funding, and/or a collaborative partnership may be the best way for EEA to support future work in the Muddy River.
 - The Cabinet discussed the possibility of improving the Project Annual Update (see below for more on Matt Eddy’s response to that suggestion).
 - Boston Parks confirmed that graffiti on historic structures is managed by a contractor with experience in working with historically sensitive materials.

- All MMOC subcommittees and members are invited to suggest issues to be included in Cabinet agendas. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, December 12, 2024.
 - Arleyn Levee noted that DCR no longer sends a representative to MMOC meetings, and Brookline's participation is inconsistent. Perhaps this issue could be raised at the next Cabinet meeting.

Annual Update Changes:

- Matt Eddy presented his recent work to recommend changes to the Muddy River Project Annual Update. Historically, the Updates have lacked meaningful data, and the MMOC's feedback has been inappropriately detailed. Still, the Updates are a requirement and are essential for the MMOC to conduct its oversight function.
- Matt's recommendations include (a) streamlining by focusing on the five major Project goals; (b) focusing on organizing information from existing sources without the need for additional studies; (c) providing the data in graph and table format that is easy to interpret; (d) ensuring an emphasis on actionable recommendations; (e) including lists of recent achievements, challenges, and upcoming work.
- Several MMOC members commented positively on Matt's recommendations. In the coming month, subcommittees can meet to solidify a template (or report card) for the Annual Update, perhaps to be presented to the Cabinet on December 12.

Nearby and Adjacent Projects:

- Sean Lynn-Jones summarized the Draft Project Impact Report for a new housing development proposed for 142-146 St. Mary's St – opposite Back Bay Yard near the Fenway T stop. The Planning Department webpage for the project is [here](#).
 - The project will not cast shadows on the Riverway Park.
 - Arleyn Levee noted that the artist's renderings did not show mechanical utilities on the roof of the building. It's unclear where mechanicals will be located.
 - ENC and the Boston Parks Commission have commented on the DPIR. Their letters are included in the DPIR documentation.
- Comments on the DPIR for the project are due by November 22.

Public Comment:

- Caroline Reeves reported that Terraphase (the engineering consultant hired by the Muddy Water Initiative to study the river from a herring migration perspective) will be on site November 22. All are invited to gather at 2PM at Café sauvage (25 Massachusetts Ave, Boston, MA 02115).

Member Organization Updates:

- Lisa Kumpf invited all interested folks to sign up for CRWA's [River Advocates Workshop](#) December 14, 2024, 11am-2pm.

MMOC Business:

- The MMOC will not be renewing its office lease and will vacate on or before February 15, 2025. Printed material in the office will move to a storage facility while we look for a long-term repository/archival authority. Arleyn is taking the lead on this work with support from Parker James and Matt.
- Kay announced that the Operations Subcommittee is in the process of planning a MMOC retreat, likely in January or February 2025. The focuses of the retreat will be building interpersonal connection, re-energizing ourselves around shared goals, and considering ways to strengthen our committee structure. The retreat will last 3-4 hours and will be run by a facilitator. Food will be provided. Kay is in the process of identifying candidate facilitators, and Kelly is working on securing a venue. All MMOC members are encouraged to volunteer to help with retreat planning. Matt will send out a poll to determine members' availability.
- Following motion by Freddie Veikley and second by Kay Mathew, minutes for the MMOC meeting for September 11, 2024, 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. (The October 2024 meeting was not held, so there are no minutes to approve. Instead, Matt provided a bullet-point unofficial Project update).

Adjourned 7:35PM.