

MMOC Meeting Minutes
January 8, 2025, ZOOM Meeting, 6:00-7:25pm
As Approved February 12, 2025
Minutes prepared by Matt Eddy

Member Attendees:

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

Other Attendees:

- Corey Jordan, MA State Representative Chynah Tyler, Caroline Reeves, Carroll Williamson.

Welcome:

- Matt Eddy brought the meeting to order and welcomed our guests.

Update on December 2024 Oil Spill:

- Alex Cassie reported that the oil booms at Leverett Pond are likely to remain for an indefinite period.
- In conversation with MassDEP's Max Scott, Matt Eddy learned that MassDEP had decreased its estimate of total oil released to 50 gallons of home heating oil #2. No evidence of oil "upstream" has been observed in Brookline's storm sewer system, and there have been no observations of any additional oil after 12/8. It appears the oil stayed on the water surface and had minimal impacts on the shoreline or river bottom.
- MassDEP issued a "Notification of Potential Responsibility" to Brook House in December, but enforcement action is unlikely due to a paucity of concrete evidence. Brook House is cooperating fully and is also undertaking its own investigation. Brook House removed its oil tanks, capped its pipes, and conducted soils testing in spring of 2024.
 - Alex Cassie urged MMOC members to focus communications on factual information and to avoid speculation beyond the information confirmed by MassDEP.
- 37 ducks and geese were successfully treated by New England Wildlife and released back into the Muddy River. (Approximately seven birds died). A variety of agencies assisted New England Wildlife in this effort, including MassDEP, Brookline Park Rangers, Brookline DPW, Brookline Animal Control, Boston Park Rangers, and the MA Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Updates on Phase 1, Phase 2, and Charlesgate:

- Temporary vinyl fencing around landscaped areas near Leverett Pond remain in place. Management of the area is in a transitional state as Tom Brady winds down his involvement.
- Alex Cassie reported that fallen/damaged trees in the area have been removed quickly by the Town and are expected to be replaced in spring 2025. Peter Jutras is the forestry supervisor.
- A significant number of trees in Riverway Park have been marked for removal with orange paint. [After our meeting, Jack Schleifer visited these areas and reported that many of these are white ash trees that are in decline.] Tom Timmons will seek information about planting plans for Riverway Park.
 - There are also trees in the Back Bay Fens marked with orange paint, although it is a smaller number.
- Tom Timmons reported that the City of Boston had awarded two maintenance contracts for the Phase 2 sections under city control. The upstream section (Riverway Park) will be maintained by A&M Home Services, and the downstream section (Back Bay Fens) will be maintained by Leahy Landscaping. Litter clean-up is to begin March 1; Boston Parks and Recreation may assist with litter removal between now and then. Tom will provide copies of the contracts (and associated maps) to the MMOC.
 - The upstream portion of Work Area 7 (actually the downstream portion of Phase 1, just downstream of Avenue Louis Pasteur) was recently tidied up for the first time in several years. Nuisance trees were removed and shrubs were pruned.
- Matt continues to provide photo records of low water, especially in Riverway Park. The water is especially low in the winter, when DCR maintains a seasonal lower-than-average water level for the Charles River Basin.
- There has been a rash of graffiti on historic structures throughout the Muddy River Parks. Matt is reporting these to BOS:311, although some of the tagged structures are the responsibility of other agencies (DCR, MBTA, MassDOT). Representative Tyler offered to assist in contacting state offices to expedite graffiti removal. Tom asked that he be cc'd on all graffiti reports.
- Removal of the first of two decorative stone walls at Charlesgate has been completed. The sightlines are much improved!
 - Separately, Charlesgate Alliance has won approval from the Boston Conservation Commission to proceed with the planting of 11 trees in the Charlesgate Park area. This will likely include a “Fran Gershwin Memorial Grove.” The MMOC wrote a letter of support to the ConCom.

Muddy River Cabinet:

- Kelly Brilliant summarized the most recent Muddy River Cabinet meeting, which took place on Thursday, December 13, 2024.
- The Cabinet group welcomed interim Boston Parks Commissioner Liza Meyer to her first Cabinet meeting.
- Tom Brady provided a summary of his understanding of the December oil spill. He lauded MassDEP's response and encouraged the MMOC to continue to disseminate MassDEP's phone number as the point of contact for future concerns by members of the public.
- Patrice Kish was absent, but the MMOC's desire to have regular representation by DCR at MMOC meetings was noted. This will be discussed again at the next Cabinet meeting.
- USACE monitoring of water level in Riverway Park is expected to conclude in April 2025. Kelly inquired as to whether there would be a way for DCR to adjust its management of water level in the lower Charles River Basin to benefit the Muddy River, but Tom replied that this was not practical. Kay Mathew is in the process of organizing a meeting with EEA Secretary Rebecca Tepper to discuss state-level options. The non-federal sponsors view the MMOC as a critical partner and fellow strategist on this issue.
- The Flow Restriction Control Structure (cofferdam) is expected to remain "as is" for the foreseeable future. Any further cutting back of the cofferdam (below its current elevation of 0.4 ft) would probably exacerbate aesthetic/mudflat concerns in Riverway Park.
- Liza Meyer reported that she was open to further discussion of the Annual Update and of Boston-owned bridges. Matt (and others) will reach out to Liza's office to schedule a follow-up conversation.

Subcommittee Reports:

- Water Quality Subcommittee is to meet Wednesday, January 15. Agenda will include:
 - Reviewing the 4th Quarter post-construction water quality data provided by CDM Smith.
 - Discussing a request from Abby Oliveira/Longwood Collective to monitor the effectiveness of proposed bioswales to be installed along Avenue Louis Pasteur.
 - Further discussion of water level in Riverway Park.
- Historic Bridges Subcommittee is working on assembling data related to bridge health for presentation to Liza Meyer (BPRD Interim Commissioner).
 - Kelly reported that Erin Chute had stated that Brookline DPW had CPA funding available to pursue an evaluation of bridge conditions; Sean Lynn-Jones expressed his belief that DPW had not submitted an application to the Town's CPA committee for this work. Kelly will pursue clarification.

- [Prior to the convening of this evening's meeting, Sean Lynn-Jones reported on a conversation with Erin Chute, who told him that Brookline DPW's plan to partner with local engineering graduate schools to assess the bridges has fallen through.]

Update on local/nearby projects:

- Following a meeting in mid-December between MMOC representatives and the architectural firm working on the 142-146 St. Mary's St development, the MMOC submitted a comment letter to the Boston Planning Department encouraging changes to the project to better complement the experience of Riverway Park users.
 - Elton Elperin proposed that the MMOC draft a set of guiding design principles for all projects adjacent to the Olmsted Parks, to be delivered to the Planning Department. Freddie Veikley offered to assist in delivering this communication to appropriate BPD authorities.

Member Organization Updates and Upcoming Events:

- The Colleges of the Fenway will host the 19th annual Muddy River Symposium on Tuesday, April 8, 2025. Emmanuel college will host the event. This year's theme is "Environmental Policy and Engagement," and the keynote speaker will be John Rogers (Senior Energy Analyst, Union of Concerned Scientists). The Frances Allou Gershwin Local Social Action Award will also be presented. MMOC members are encouraged to attend.
- Jack Schleifer reported that ENC had completed its inventory/survey of tree health for 2,442 trees in the Back Bay Fens, with the awarding of a pruning/thinning contract for 933 trees to follow soon. Work will begin in late winter 2025; structural pruning of young trees will follow as separate contract. ENC has funds to undertake tree planting in the spring, with an emphasis on DCR-owned properties.
- Lisa Kumpf announced that CRWA is celebrating its 60th year with a variety of educational events and community engagement opportunities throughout the Charles River Watershed. Learn more at <https://www.crwa.org/events>.
- Kelly announced the Fenway Alliance "Faces" Gala is scheduled for Tuesday, April 8. The event will honor the contributions of David Manfredi and Elizabeth Lowrey (of Elkus Manfredi Architects) for their exceptional contributions to the Fenway neighborhood. More information is available at <https://www.fenwayculture.org/faces>
- On behalf of the Brookline GreenSpace Alliance, Sean noted that Tom Brady would conduct a final "winter tree ID" workshop on Sunday, January 12. Interested persons can contact Sean for additional information.

Public Comment:

- Caroline Reeves/Muddy Water Initiative is working with two groups of student researchers who will present at the Symposium. One will focus on salinity

measurements, and the other will assess the impacts of the Charlesgate Farmer's Market. MWI is requesting partnership from other MMOC member organizations to support this work.

- Caroline also stated that MWI is seeking two documents as part of its work with Terraphase to complete a hydrological study of the post-project river. These include (a) "The Muddy River Restoration and Action Plan from 1997," purportedly by the Fenway Alliance, and (b) Report of the Boston Park Department, November 19, 1921 by A.A. Shurtleff in consultation with the Olmsted Brothers. If anyone has leads as to where these documents could be found, please reach out to Caroline.

MMOC Housekeeping:

- Save the date! The MMOC Retreat has been rescheduled to Wednesday, April 9 and will be hosted at Emmanuel College. Further announcements from the Operations Subcommittee are pending.
- The MMOC office move-out is underway and will be completed by February 15. Volunteers are needed to assist Matt in the inventory and packing up of our physical records. All materials will be moved to an accessible storage facility.
 - Conversations with the Massachusetts Historical Society – with the intent of providing a permanent archive of MMOC records – are being spearheaded by Arleyn Levee.
- Following motion by Freddie Veikley and second by Arleyn Levee, minutes for the MMOC meeting for November 13, 2024, were approved by unanimous vote (with abstentions from those who were not present for that meeting).
- Following motion by Parker James and second by Lisa Kumpf, minutes for the MMOC meeting for December 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.

Adjourned 7:25PM.