



Commonwealth of Massachusetts

## Summary Notes on Q&A/Discussion

### DCR Public Meeting MacDonald Park Improvements May 11, 2016

The summary notes below were prepared by Shadley Associates from the Q&A and Discussion session following the DCR public meeting presentation on MacDonald Park Improvements. They do not serve as a verbatim transcript, but highlight comments received and issues that were raised and replies provided during the Question-and-Comment and Discussion segment of the meeting.

Q: Once the phragmites is removed, what will be re-planted?

A: *We're hoping the existing seed bed will be enough to re-vegetate the area. If not, additional shoreline seeding/planting will likely occur.*

Q: Some people like the wooded path along the creek; especially runners who like dirt paths [in response to removal of the existing abandoned walkway along the creek near the Fellsway]. Please consider not removing it.

A: *It's possible that once the existing pavement, which is in very poor condition, is removed and the overgrowth cleared to accommodate the pavement removal, we can re-evaluate.*

Q: I'm interested in having better access for boats at MacDonald Park.

A: *The proposed design at the River Overview is an informal boat put-in. It will have a stabilized surface to the water's edge. You can either carry a boat, or use wheels to pull a canoe to the put-in. People can also access this area by canoe/kayak from another put-in on the Mystic River.*

Q: As a recreational cyclist, I am really excited about the improvements to MacDonald Park. Is it possible to increase the width of the existing walkway along the Mystic River Parkway? I like to bike along the parkway but it feels narrow when there are walkers and families with kids using the same path.

A: *The goal is to make all the park's walkways 8' to 10' wide which matches the original widths of the walks in the 1975 design by Carol R. Johnson Associates. The DCR has been working to increase trail width elsewhere along the Mystic River Parkway and Alewife Parkway to 10' wide and the DCR hopes to continue this goal.*

Q: I think adding wayfinding signage to the park is a great idea. Could additional signage showing offsite locations be added, such as Sullivan Square, and can the paths be striped for bicycle thru traffic?

A: *Signage noting offsite connections could be part of the overall goal but is not currently in the project. The DCR will look at it. The walkway along the Mystic Valley Parkway is intended for bicycle commuters.*

Q: I think having a hierarchy of paths is a good idea to differentiate commuter versus walking paths. Signage will help to direct people/cyclists.

A: *The walkway widths have been approved by the Medford Conservation Commission and match the original park plan. The thought is that commuters will take direct paths across the park rather than the meandering ones along the river.*

Q: The original park design had edible trees such as apples. Will these be maintained or will others be added to the park?

A: *The team is evaluating all of the existing plants. It's possible that future tree planting recommendations can consider edible species.*

Q: I'm interested in seeing an increase in trees that are particularly beneficial to birds such as oaks and maples. Consider Mount Auburn Cemetery as the standard. I enjoy birding but MacDonald Park is terrible for bird diversity.

A: *The team will evaluate plant species that are particularly beneficial to improving bird habitat.*

Q: Have you considered incorporating art into the park? The Medford Arts Council has money to spend on public art installations.

A: *The DCR supported MyRWA and sculptor Marie Sorenson's grant application to NPS and NEA for an art installation at MacDonald Park but the project was not awarded a grant. The DCR will continue to look for opportunities. Art that speaks to the native peoples of the region could be interesting and hasn't really been done in the area.*

Q: Have you considered play activities for teens?

A: *We can think about that and we will look at possible opportunities at MacDonald Park. We would like to do more to attract older children. One thing that is great about this park is that it has significant open areas where teens can throw frisbee, play catch, or toss a football around. There aren't many other public open spaces on the Mystic River where you can have a pick-up game.*

Q: Please do not build any sports fields at MacDonald Park.

A: *There is no intent for play fields at this park. This is intended to be a passive recreational park, with increased opportunities to connect with nature.*

Q: You've looked at creating a nice entry at the parking lot. Can you look at creating a bicycle-oriented entry at the west end of the park near the tower? There are a lot of people who come by bike from this end.

A: *The team will look at designing a bicycle entry at this location. For the master plan, the team is looking at other offsite connections as well as the entry on the Fellsway. We will have bicycle racks at different locations in the park.*

Q: Can you please review the schedule again?

- A:
- *The River Overview and the Park Entry will be brought to a bid level by June 30. The River Overview is mostly funded for fall construction. The Park Entry is not funded yet.*
  - *FY2017 starts July 1: if funding is available, it's possible the River Overview and Park Entry could be one bid package for fall construction.*
  - *The DCR has an in-house employee who will be working on advancing the design of the playground. The DCR is working on funding for the playground.*
  - *Other components presented will need future funding.*
  - *The intent is to gain Medford Conservation Commission approval for all the improvements shown, an approval that would last 3-5 years so we can obtain phased funding.*
  - *The DCR has requested money for the Mystic River and is waiting for state approval.*

Q: Can there be better crosswalks across the Mystic Valley Parkway? Many more residents will be moving into new housing.

A: *There is an “Access Plan” section of the Mystic River Master Plan that mainly talks about providing public access to the Mystic River. The DCR owns most of the land along the river and is working toward partnering with communities to improve access across non-DCR roads. The team will look at recommendations for improving access across the Mystic Valley Parkway. Signage at entry points will be installed.*

Q: I have a concern about the lack of maintenance that has occurred at the park in the past. Are there any plans to improve maintenance of the park, especially with new improvements?

A: *The DCR is thinly staffed right now and the Commissioner is trying to increase the DCR’s maintenance staff. For the first time this year, there will be a youth group training to assist with maintenance of DCR pathways. The DCR has an ecology division to deal with invasive plants and can assist with maintenance of the pollinator meadow. We are always looking for partnerships with local groups to assist with park maintenance.*

Q: Is all of the asphalt being removed and replaced, including removal of tree roots?

A: *Yes, the DCR has a contract with a paving company to replace the asphalt walkways. They have a state-wide contract and they do really great work. Tree roots that are impacting the walkways will be pruned when the walkways are replaced. Trees that are immediately adjacent to the path and are negatively impacting the pavement will be removed.*

Q: Is there any work on the bike connector in Everett along the Malden River?

A: *This is mitigation owed by the Gateway developer and currently there is work with Wynn Resorts as they are designing a connector between the Wynn site, along the Gateway property, to DCR land.*

Q: I love the playground. Is the existing parking going to accommodate all the new park uses?

A: *The team will look at the capacity of the parking area relative to possible increased park use due to the new amenities.*

Q: I don’t particular care for the two-sided seat wall at the River Overview sticking up, interrupting the flow of the lawn to the water’s edge. It seems a little cluttered in this area and I would consider the “ha-ha” design where the seatwall is one-sided and doesn’t appear to interrupt the lawn.

A: *The team will evaluate the design. There is a desire to increase amenities for the public in this space beyond the existing lawn.*

Q: It seems like there is a lot of pavement for the labyrinth.

A: *We are evaluating the options but the diameter of the labyrinth is 50 feet which is not very large overall.*

Q: Do you know what the long-term vision is for the MA State Police building and use? Maybe this could become a visitor’s center with restrooms.

A: *We are not sure what the long-term plans are for this building. The DCR owns this building and leases it to the State Police.*

Q: I don’t know what kind of accessible improvements you might be looking to do at the playground but consider Menino Park at the Spaulding Rehabilitation Center in Boston. The park is very popular among families with children with disabilities and there is parking.

A: *We will look at this park to see if there are components that might be incorporated into the playground at MacDonald Park.*

Q: It seems the City of Medford has been using the parking lot as a “snow farm” in the winter. Will this continue?

*A: DCR will look at the snow removal issues; we will also be relocating the week harvesting/dewatering operations from MacDonald Park after this summer.*

*Q: Getting people into the park is really important and getting locals interested in the park so that they feel a sense of ownership is also important. Right now, the access from Station Landing is confusing. If the structural report says the existing bridge is poor at the Fellsway, consider relocating it so it aligns with the Station Landing roadway crossing.*

*A: We agree that access to the park is important and the team is evaluating all possible connections around the park.*

*Q: How will you protect the wetlands and maintain habitat areas?*

*A: All wetlands will remain, but the invasive species, which do not promote biodiversity, will be removed. Future planting can supplement and improve wildlife habitat. The rain gardens being designed will also have wildlife value.*

*Q. Will the island be part of the invasives removal?*

*A. Yes.*