

March 21, 2024 - Fresh Pond Reservation Master Plan Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

(Hybrid Meeting – Zoom, In-person)

Submitted: David Kaplan – May 16, 2024

Approved – May 16, 2024

Advisory Board Members in Attendance:

Janice Snow (Chair), Ann Roosevelt (Water Board President) David Kaplan, Candace Young, Susan Agger, Sophia Emperador, Janet Burns, Kathy Hess (joined late), Jennifer Letourneau, Adam Corbeil, Deborah Masterson

Others in Attendance:

Duke Bitsko (Hatch Engineering), Elizabeth Wylde, Omar Mejia (CWD), Emily Maynard (CWD), Anna Van Dreser (CWD), Tim Puopolo (CWD), Two unknown members of the public.

Meeting opened at 6:07pm

Meeting Minutes: D. Kaplan

Item 1: Review Agenda

No changes proposed.

Item 2: Meeting Minutes

November, 2023 Minutes: C. Young moved and S. Emperador seconded the motion to accept the minutes as presented. The vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.

Item 3: Annual Volunteer Report/Plans (T. Puopolo, CWD)

Ranger Tim Puopolo presented the annual 2023 volunteer report summarizing the activities and accomplishments of Fresh Pond Reservation volunteer programs. The presentation can be viewed https://www.cambridgema.gov/-/media/Files/waterdepartment/freshpondreservation/advisoryboardagendasandminutes/Minutes/2024/FPMPAB_2023_VolReport.pdf

The report was separated into five sections describing first the activities of the Fresh Pond Stewards Program, then Public Events, Group Day of Service opportunities, Partnerships, and Eagle Scout projects.

The Stewards Program involves weekly activities now managed by Ranger Omar Mejia every Thursday from 10 am to 12 pm seasonally, from July to October. Highlights included volunteer planting in the new “Pollinator Pathway”, a strip of former turf grass adjacent to Fresh Pond Parkway now being transformed into an upland meadow habitat. Public events included trash cleanups on the Watertown Cambridge Greenway, Concord Ave, and Black’s Nook. “Day of Service” programs are geared towards groups of 10 – 25 people to tackle large projects such as invasive weed-outs and pathway mulching in a short amount of time. In 2023, a total of 181 volunteers accounted for 332.5 work hours. Ranger Tim discussed our partnership with Earthwise Aware conducting citizen science activities documenting biodiversity in the Lusitania Meadow, and a “Neville Habitat Restoration Area Project” empowering Neville residents to plant and nurture native plants. Eagle scout projects included rebuilding the switch-back trail from Huron

Ave to the perimeter road near Glacken Slope and repairing sections of the Black's Nook observation platform.

One of the two unknown members of the public asked about adding a playground with a water feature in Kingsley Park at the Children's Playscape. T. Puopolo explained that there is a formal playground with water play at Glacken Field. J. Snow replied that the Master Plan dictates that the area needs to fit in with the natural environment. The other of the two unknown members of the public asked about adding a beehive to Fresh Pond to enhance pollination. J. Snow responded that beehives may not be appropriate for the Reservation and in conflict with the Master Plan.

J. Snow asked about the Eagle Scout work to rebuild the switch back trail and suggested that the creation of this trail was never approved and the long-term goal is for the trail to be removed. T. Puopolo explained that the trail needed to be maintained to reduce sediment washouts into Fresh Pond.

A. Roosevelt lauded Tim and the Ranger-led volunteer programs. She asked about volunteer outreach and recruitment and suggested that the program should be documented for future Rangers to replicate and presented to the City Council.

D. Kaplan thanked O. Mejia for his role in implementing the program, and introduced E. Maynard as the new Watershed Management Assistant.

Item 4: Huron Forest Phase 1 Project Update (Duke Bitsko, Hatch)

D. Bitsko presented a summary of upcoming Fresh Pond Reservation projects, including a proposal for a pilot study to determine the most appropriate way to approach a large scale restoration of the Huron Avenue Pine Forest. The presentation can be viewed https://www.cambridgema.gov/-/media/Files/waterdepartment/freshpondreservation/advisoryboardagendasandminutes/Minutes/2024/FPMPAB_HatchProjects_Mar_2024_final.pdf

D. Bitsko briefed the board on progress of the Little Fresh Pond shoreline and Birch Grove seating area reconstruction projects. He mentioned that CWD applied for a state Executive Office of Economic Development Inland Dredging grant for up to \$300,000 to further the design of and complete bid-ready plans and documents for dredging Black's Nook. CWD hopes to hear back soon on the award notifications.

D. Bitsko introduced a pilot restoration project plan for the Huron Pine Forest between Fresh Pond Parkway and Glacken Field which consists of 90% white pines 80 to 100 years old. He summarized soil and other analyses to explain the lack of pine regeneration in that space. No reasons were found why the soils could not support pine regeneration. The pilot project will create test plots employing different restoration strategies and controlling different variables to better understand the lack of understory regeneration. The project will also include monitoring the health of existing mature white pines, and ultimately use information gathered to create a more diverse habitat of native trees, shrubs and groundcovers mimicking a White Pine – Oak Forest plant community in a future, larger scale restoration project.

Discussion ensued on other reasons why there was a lack of pine and other understory regeneration. Thoughts included deer/rabbit browse, users straying from paths and trampling

seedlings, and the dense leaf litter (UMass pine expert, N. Brazee noted the deep leaf litter as a possible factor in his Huron forest visit in December). Test plots will attempt to control for and explain the impact of these variables. Hoping to partner with Earthwise Aware volunteer citizen scientists to help monitor the test plots.

E. Wylde volunteered to share a plant list of deer-browse resistant native plants to consider for the test plots. J. Snow discussed pH, lead levels, and iron results in soil samples. D. Bitsko will follow up to discuss and confirm the results with Pine and Swallow who initially took the samples.

Item 5: Friends of Fresh Pond 2023 Woodland Habitat Report (E. Wylde, C. Young)

E. Wylde and C. Young presented their volunteer efforts to restore a native landscape in the Lusitania Woodland Habitat Written report which is available at

<http://friendsoffreshpond.org/projectreports/woodlandrestdemprojectreports/whrp2023.htm>

In general, it was a good year for cultivating plants because there was enough rain at the right time. Significant browse remains an issue on ferns, in particular the Christmas ferns. E. Wylde stated that spraying “sort of” works, but caging and stem guards are more effective methods to guard against deer and rabbit browse. C. Young requested wood chips.

J. Snow pointed out the report’s extensive native plant list and commended them on their accomplishments.

Item 6: Annual Maynard Ecology Center Report (S. Agger)

S. Agger discussed Cambridge Public School programming at the Maynard Ecology Center MEC. Since September 2023, ~750 students were served by the program. Approximately 450 4th grade students studying Earth Science use the Reservation to study weathering and erosion and study stream tables in the MEC. Around 200 second grade students are studying rotting logs. About 100 sixth grade students come for Water Treatment Plant tours which Ranger Tim and lab staff generously support. Groups are split up where Tim will take half the group to Kingsley Park and Krystyna McNally, CWD Lab Manager gives the other half tours of the treatment plant. In the Spring, first graders studied birds with a focus on owls at the Reservation.

At last Fresh Pond Day, S. Agger was surprised at the number of very young children in the fenced in area. This year, she plans to better account for that in planning her activities. Last spring, she noted that 6th graders removed over 600 lbs. of garlic mustard from the Reservation.

A. Roosevelt asked if S. Agger sees students on a daily basis. S. Agger responded, yes from September to December, and again from April until the end of the school year. S. Agger also mentioned that the MEC accommodates private schools and their interests as well.

Since covid her units on water quality and testing were moved to the Charles River. She hopes to return to Black’s Nook for water studies.

Item 7: Watershed Manager’s Report (D. Kaplan, CWD)

D. Kaplan stated that D. Bitsko had earlier given a project status, and turned the discussion to the Landscape Management Report. V. Falcione discussed receiving permits to remove 5 dead hemlocks in the “Norton Grove” of Kingsley Park which fell victim to the Woolly Adelgid and

Elongate Hemlock Scale. Will cable a large red oak to mitigate a large crack. The Cambridge City Run at Fresh Pond Reservation is scheduled for April 7.

J. Burns asked about efforts to discourage use of an unofficial path from Neville to Black's Nook. V. Falcione has been covering it with brush to discourage it, but brush is consistently removed and the path heavily used. In the past, brush and large downed trees have been removed by neighbors and their contractors without the City's permission to maintain existing foot paths through the Huron Pine Grove.

J. Burns discussed unpermitted daffodil planting at Black's Nook. V. Falcione has been removing them as he sees them.

V. Falcione and A. Corbeil are experiencing similar problems with users cutting holes in plant protection and other fencing around Fresh Pond Reservation.

Item 8: Organizing an event formally designating Pat Pratt Oak Grove & Chip Norton Conifer Grove

Discussion around organizing a formal dedication event. D. Masterson asked and it was confirmed that family members will be invited. Agreed to start the program at 5:30, May 16th. A. Roosevelt will not be able to attend. The three memorial oaks in the Pat Pratt Grove are still alive, but one is not thriving and is being monitored. Brief discussion on the issue of recent white pine die-off and protecting the two groves in perpetuity.

Item 9: Buffer/Transition Zones within the Reservation (J. Snow et al.)

J. Snow discussed the value of ecological transition zones (ecotones) from one habitat type to another, in particular from a restored area to a landscaped area (e.g. Kingsley Park groves to grassed areas and Weir Meadow wooded areas to the grassed area. J. Snow suggested we create management strategies to ensure that the maintenance of landscaped areas to not negatively impact restored or naturalized areas.

Item 10: Preliminary Agenda for May 16, 2024

Discussed the next meeting's agenda and confirmed Fresh Pond Day will be June 22, 2024

Item 11: Public Comment

No public comment

D. Kaplan moved to adjourn, and the move was seconded. Meeting adjourned at 8:02pm