

Bartlet Mall Commission Meeting

Date: September 14, 2017

Time: 6:00-7:00pm

Location: Newburyport Library, Second Floor Conference Room

Attending Commission Members: Andrea Eigerman, Joanna Fernandes, Ellen Hanick, Karen Johnson, Constance Maass

Absent Commission Member(s): none

Community Members Present: Walt Thompson and Roth Schmidgall

Documents utilized: Notes from August 10, 2017 re: Bartlet Mall Restoration Efforts

Meeting Agenda

1. Call to order
2. Review and approval of August and July meeting minutes
3. Future Meeting Dates: choose November meeting and December “social” date
4. Brief summary and discussion of policy documents that guide us in caring for the Mall
5. General discussion of site restoration and priorities, including slope maintenance and signage
6. Briefing on meeting held with developer that may give funds to complete the Elm Allee
7. Bartlet Mall Day:
 - an update on where we are at and where we need help
 - raffle
 - we need volunteers for the day
 - art pieces – use for another day?
8. Maintenance issues and updates:
 - Recycling containers to be added to the Mall. Confirm we want the type at Cashman condominiums
 - Any update on OPWS clean up of Frog Pond
 - Sanding and painting of benches
 - Anything else?
9. Adjourn

Notes

1. Call to order

2. Brief summary and discussion of policy documents that guide us in caring for the Mall

Andrea provided a brief overview on policies guiding the Commission regarding the maintenance and care of the Mall: There are no federal restrictions placed on the Mall as a registered historic place, however, there are guidelines. (The Department of the Interior’s Technical Preservation Services provides standards regarding preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction in the treatment of historic properties, including those on the National Register of Historic Places: <https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/four-treatments.htm>. Roth Schmidgall noted that the Massachusetts Historical Commission may also provide more guidelines: <https://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/mhcidx.htm>.* There are, however, clear guidelines set forth in the 1998 Master Plan.

3. General discussion of site restoration and priorities, including slope maintenance and signage

Andrea shared the notes from the August 10, 2017, Bartlet Mall restoration efforts meeting with the group. A few of the primary concerns of the group that gathered in August were stabilizing the slopes and balancing the historic integrity of the landscape design with water quality.

Walt Thompson, former Bartlet Mall Commission Chair, and Roth Schmidgall, grounds specialist, the latter appearing on behalf of Charlie Griffin, both shared their thoughts regarding restoration of the slopes in particular.

Walt feels that restoration efforts that would result in a landscape similar to the one historically executed in the 1890's based on Charles Elliot's designs would be detrimental to the environment of the Mall. Walt's main concern is the water quality of the pond and what is best for the wildlife that utilizes the Mall (frogs, turtles, butterflies). He stated that cut grass does not filter the run off to the pond as well as un-mowed slopes. He referred to a number of studies, but provided the Commission with no documents. He is also concerned that clearing the edges of the pond of plants allows for geese to more readily enter the pond, with their refuse thereby feeding and increasing the algae. He does not want the butterfly garden he has been tending on the slope to be removed to restore the original design.

Walt voiced additional concerns not related to water quality: He wondered when the signs promoting restoration would be coming down; and, he also noted he would like to see daffodils stay.

Roth is a consultant, which Charlie Griffin requested attend the meeting in his place. Roth has over 20 years of experience caring for turf and fields, and for the last 5 years has been caring for the grounds at Wellesley College, that's athletic fields abut wetlands.

Roth agrees with Walt that the Mall is a sensitive area with environmental concerns. He stated that grass is best for erosion control, but whether it is cut or long is irrelevant. He also noted that having a grassy surface means that run off will be filtered 10 times faster than if there was no grass at all. He stated that the grass not being cut has resulted in invasive species growing on the slope, many of which are on the "prohibited" plant list. It is important to keep the grass cut in order to prevent further germination of such plants. They also must be managed in order to establish a dense healthy turf. (Information on prohibited plant list from MA Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs: <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/agr/farm-products/plants/prohibited-plant-list-faq.html>)*

Roth noted that he is in a network of people who can monitor water quality, evaluate soil samples, and create fertilization programs that are mindful of the environmental considerations of the pond.

Roth further noted that the way the daffodils were planted damaged the slopes. He also said as soon as they stop flowering in the spring to go ahead and cut them. That will not further damage the slope.

Roth asked how he might best be involved in the future. He would like to review the Master Plan and Management Plan documents for further guidance to put a plan together in consultation with the Parks Department.

4. Future Meeting Dates: choose November meeting and December "social" date

Commission members selected October 12 and November 9 as the next meeting dates, and December 7 as a “social date.” There is also a joint meeting between the Parks Commission and Bartlet Mall Commission on October 10.

5. Briefing on meeting held with developer that may give funds to complete the Elm Allee

Blake Wilcox, a local developer, is interested in donating funds to the Parks Conservancy to be used for the restoration of the basketball court and extending the Elm Allee at the Mall. The funds are tied to a development permit for construction in the South End that must first be approved outside of the Parks Department. Commission members offer no opinion as to Mr. Wilcox’s permit being approved.

6. Maintenance issues and updates

a. Recycling containers to be added to the Mall.

Andrea sent Molly Ettenborough, Recycling and Energy Manager for City of Newburyport, the images of the recycling containers consistent with the current trash cans at the Mall, which the commission approved for purchase and use at the Mall during the last meeting. Andrea has not heard back from Molly as of yet.

b. Any update on OPWS clean-up of Frog Pond

Phoenix Revolution is testing the water quality today.

c. Sanding and painting of benches

Andrea reported that the Parks Department denied the request to utilize community service workers to paint the benches at the Mall. Once we have selected a clean-up date, we will plan to paint the benches with volunteer help then.

7. Bartlet Mall Day

Commission members provided updates as to their commitments for the event.

8. Adjourn

* These websites and specific guidelines were not discussed at the meeting, but added in by Secretary for Commissioners reference.