

Attachment B

Interviews with Officials and Public Boards

October 21, 2008
Board of Health Meeting

Conducted by Kathryn Prybylski

Myles Burke introduced the presentation by highlighting the dense nature of the City and the small yards. He commented that parks and open space are highly important to the health and viability of city residents.

- Presentation about 2004 Open Space Plan and accomplishments since by KP and then asked BOH the question: As the City comes out of four years of significant parks and open space investments, which of the existing recreation fields, parks, or open space are now in most need of immediate improvements?

The Board of Health discussed various specific locations that the members are familiar with as well as maintenance issues with parks, trees and sidewalks near to their homes. In addition, Mr. Burke commented on the viability of locating the new police station at the Pemberton Park parking lot. Another member would like to include community health workers in programming in Open Space in the city. The comments are detailed below:

- Streets Butler and Margin were formerly squatter gardens but are now overgrown. The board would like to see that lot cleaned up again. One attendee commented on city liability issues and it would not conceivably be to their benefit to encourage use in an abandoned lot.
- Parking is still a problem on Mt. Vernon Street after the park completion. There was a major expansion to the park, but no added “no parking” signs or enforcement of not parking on the street.
- Would like to include community health workers in open space programming in regards to active living and healthy living. Milagro (representing the Mayor’s Health Task Force) commented that the MHTF is currently completing a parks and walkability study that can address this.
- Mr. Burke hopes that locating the new police station at Pemberton Park is sufficiently vetted before final decisions are made. He thought that the clean-up of the river and the park was a huge improvement to the area. He enjoys that park and feels that many people enjoy the river access there and enjoy the calm, relaxing nature of the river access and that the location is not optimal for a new police station. The board felt that the increased traffic, noise, vehicle pollution would ruin the idyllic setting on the river. In his opinion, the construction of a new police station there would also negatively impact the festivals that are at Pemberton. Mr. Burke feels that a police station should be constructed in a neighborhood and that Pemberton Park is not really in a neighborhood.
- KP asked the board what they thought about the use on the North Common since we have had many comments regarding the use there and



the impact on the grounds. Would the board be in agreement that Pemberton Park should be used more for festivals as opposed to the North Common? The board did not really have any comment on moving festivals to Pemberton Park, but is concerned with the back to back use that the North Common sustains. One member thought that the North Common festivals could be spread around the city. Also, the City should be replacing the dying trees and protecting the existing trees.

- Members would like to see more tree lined streets in the City. Many streets (specifically mentioned S Union) are devoid of trees. The Board recognizes trees as important to the community's health.



October 21, 2008
Conservation Commission Meeting

Conducted by Kathryn Prybylski

- Presentation about 2004 Open Space Plan and accomplishments since 2004 by KP and then asked ConCom the question: As the City comes out of four years of significant parks and open space investments, which of the existing recreation fields, parks, or open space are now in most need of immediate improvements?

The Conservation Commission talked a lot about connectivity, maintenance of existing park facilities, using new technology such as solar panels, and an overall desire for more trees. The comments are detailed below:

- One member asked if Canal Beautification could be included in the Open Space Plan. Maintenance of the canal, canal walls, sidewalks and trees should be a priority.
- Trail connection at the Boat House/Riverfront State Park area to the Industrial Park (Glen St) would draw more people to the river and the Boathouse. Additional connections and trails should include across Rt 28 to the Wall Experiment Station and then along the river bank to the parks.
- River access should be possible at the following stretches:
 - Behind the Boys and Girls Club to the Merrimack River
 - Water Department Land to the Merrimack River
 - Rt 28 to the Wall Experiment Station along the Merrimack River
- Further connections through the City to existing trails and along all the rivers
- The city should map all of its existing and potential trails to focus on potential connections and highlight existing trails.
- The Commission suggested a City-wide day of service that includes all the schools, scouts, after school programs as a way to foster a feeling of ownership of the parks by the community. The commission was concerned with discovering a way to establish a greater sense of ownership of the parks in general across the whole city. They felt that the involvement of young people is a huge step in creating better citizen stewardship of the parks and open space. Another idea was for young students to plant a tree and then take care of it throughout the year. Students can learn about nature and how to take care of their environment.
- The commissioners also recommended greater involvement of the neighborhood associations in stewardship of the parks.

November 17, 2008
Historic Commission Meeting

Conducted by Kathryn Prybylski

- Presentation about 2004 Open Space Plan and accomplishments since by KP and then asked discussed questions posed questions on priorities to Commissioners: As the City comes out of four years of significant parks and open space investments, which of the existing recreation fields, parks, or open space are now in most need of immediate improvements?

The commission had a few comments and questions on public open space that are outlined below:

- The ballpark on the North Common has been a source of contention for the Historic Commission as the ballfield was constructed on a temporary basis. The HC has continually been concerned with the non-permanent nature of the fence and structures associated with it.
- The HC had a question as to there is any other property that will be demolished or is under similar restrictions as the FEMA land that is now the site of Arlington Neighborhood Park. KP did not know of any, but that is out of her purview.
- The HC will be submitting a letter to the City and Mayor with the Prospect Hill Historic Society regarding use and historic intent of the North Common as well as ideas and concerns.
- The HC has a goal for increased tree planting on the North Common. The goal also includes greater protection of existing trees and removal of dead trees.
- The HC discussed the creation of a “Friends of the North Common” group to advocate for and undertake improvements to the North Common. They are working with the bordering North Common Historic District businesses and residences to create the group.
- One member asked about the trees mentioned in the 2004 Plan that were planted at Bellevue Cemetery and if Groundwork was part of that. KP did not know and did not want to claim they were “ours” but did highlight the other tree plantings that Groundwork has been involved in throughout the city. A second member, Sarah, mentioned a current initiative that the History Center has regarding cemeteries and that some mention of it could be made in the OSP.

November 25, 2008

Meeting with the Lawrence Redevelopment Authority; all three members were present as well as Administrator Anne-Marie Doherty and Planning Department Staff member April Lyskowsky Conducted by Kathryn Prybylski

KP gave a brief background of the Open Space Plan and the method for gathering input from residents, city boards and city officials and posed the same questions to the police department that were offered to those individuals and groups as well as an additional one:

- What role should the LRA play, if any, in defining Open Space priorities and/or investments in the City?

Board member Cuddy had a question regarding the improvements at the high school and if playgrounds and school grounds are included in the plan. He is concerned that the tennis courts and other facilities are locked on the weekends and they should be open to residents since tax payer dollars paid for the improvements. KP told him that yes, playgrounds can be included in the plan but that she had no direct knowledge of the policies at the school, but she had heard similar comments at the Open Space Plan resident meetings.

Mr. LaPlante commented that the LRA's specific mission in the city is to take blighted properties and renovate or improve them to active and usable lots. He thinks his role as they relate to the Open Space improvements could be to potentially acquire and develop property into open space depending on the location, economy and the wishes of the board members.

KP asked if they generally solicit input from the neighbors when they RFP or plan to RFP a property. Mr. LaPlante stated that usually they will hear from abutters and potential bidders, but they do not solicit neighbor input. Much of their property is turned over when an abutter or near neighbor comes to them and says that they have noticed a particular property and could they have it or develop it for a specific reason. An example he gave was the YMCA requesting a vacant lot that was owned by the LRA for additional parking. In general the LRA works with the Planning Department to establish RFP's and create use and improvements at specific properties.

Mr. Cuddy also offered the example of the Oliver School who wanted an adjacent property to use as a private playground or school yard.

Ms. Lyskowsky also wanted to know what comments we had heard from residents in the community meetings. KP stated that the most overwhelming concern was maintenance. Additionally there was a desire to establish a plan for the City's vacant and abandoned lots and alleyways as well as connectivity across the city using the parks. Mr. Cuddy commented that trail connections are really pleasant ways to traverse the City and referenced the trail system from Concord into Arlington and Boston.

September 24, 2008

Meeting with Dennis Dizoglio, Alan McIntosh MVPC

Meeting conducted by Kathryn Prybylski

Alan not only responded to the regional context regarding Lawrence's open space plan but also gave suggestions based on plans they have created and advised on in the past.

- Be practical-long lists of goals raise expectations
- Make plan short so people will read it

Dennis talked about their current planning initiative-the Priority Growth Strategy and what items it includes that involves Lawrence.

- Regional connections through Lawrence include the Shawsheen Trail through Lawrence, Andover, and North Andover; also the Merrimack Riverwalk
- Creation of an "Open Space Layer" for GIS mapping
- Also the Merrimack River Trail has a potential "easy" connection to the Andover side at Riverfront State Park

Other connections to other communities include the Methuen end and the railroad corridor that runs adjacent to Manchester Street Park. The railroad line is included in the I-93 transit study for possible commuter rail connection to New Hampshire in the next 30 years.

AM suggested looking for any future opportunity for more federal money for work like the Arlington Neighborhood demolition from the flooding. The city of Lawrence recently signed on to a regional hazard mitigation plan.

KP asked if they have any resources that we can use for the Open Space Plan.

Currently MVPC does mapping for communities who are contracted with them. Lawrence is not but MVPC does do aerial fly-over for the city. Lawrence can request mapping time-with eligibility for DHCD.

AM suggested integrating references to Smart Growth and LID practices. They(MVPC) can also offer some expertise in that area.

KP asked if there are any other planned but unbuilt park and recreation areas. MVPC replied that they are hoping to establish that in the Priority Growth Strategy and could be more helpful in 1-2 months as the plan is completed.



September 17, 2008

Meeting with Sue Fink, Acting Community Development Director

Meeting conducted by Kate O'Brien and Kathryn Prybylski

- What priorities do you think the City should have in the next 5 years for Open Space and park improvements?

The North Common needs an overhaul. There are not many amenities on the common. Some suggestions include:

- Picnic tables
- Domino tables
- Big chess set on common
- Bulb planting for spring time flowering
- Irrigation system for trees and grass

North common is center of the City, is very visible and very well used and loved.

Pathways and walkways need to be revamped. There are dead trees on the common that need removal.

- Where should carnivals and festivals be directed if not to the North Common?

Pemberton Park was built with the idea that is where festivals would go

In general, more parks should have plantings that include flowers and perennials. Flowers and plantings make parks more inviting.

Find partnerships for businesses and smaller parks. Create a maintenance fund that incorporates these partnerships. Focus in next five years on revamping and rehabbing existing parks and less on building new ones.

Capital improvements will probably be focused on hardscape and less on parks over next few years. Have to use the budget to support parks with funding dpw, purchasing new and better equipment. DPW is usually the hardest hit department.

Programming is needed in parks. Youth need more programmed activity. Suggestions included gardening, basketball competition and other organized sports. CDBG has availability of spending grant money on good park programming applications. Stewardship by the youth could be cultivated with park programming.

Educational programming in the parks could include pedestrian and bike safety and rules. It is important to incorporate safety of pedestrians and walkability to



parcs in the Open Space Plan. Additional walkability is needed with the high school in South Lawrence. There are many kids who walk to school.

Sue Sees North Common improvements as a phased investment.



September 16, 2008

Meeting with Frank McCann, Director of Department of Public Works

Meeting conducted by Kate O'Brien and Kathryn Prybylski

- What priorities do you think the City should have in the next 5 years for Open Space and park improvements?

Cronin park needs help. neighborhood is very dense and uses the park a lot. Neighborhood also has parking issues, so maybe converting it to a parking lot will help in the winter.

Building new parks is hard on DPW, but increasing amenities (swings, signage, tot lots) has been good. Frank is not a fan of food gardens, but likes flower and perennial plantings. Restroom facilities have been requested including Howard, Lorenz, Gagnon. Little Leagues and Neighborhood Associations have been looking for restroom facilities at parks. South Lawrence East got a nice overhaul, but the capacity to maintain it is not there.

Frank would like the city to do some work on the North Common. Needs include new walks, curbing, period lighting, watering/sprinklers, plantings including tree replacements. DPW does not have capacity to water the young trees though, so irrigation is key.

O'Connell/Shawsheen Rod also needs a facelift as well as a "theme." The gazebo is being torn down due to continual vandalism. Nilka (Alvarez) is a champion of the handball association that is interested in using the space there.

Important to keep purchasing maintenance free and vandalism resistant equipment like the same benches, tables and garbage receptacles. Should over-purchase to build a stockpile to replace items. DPW has space to store extra items.

Frank is concerned with the Manchester Street Park project not just because of the added maintenance but because it is an isolated area. Would like to see a police call box there for sure.

Using capital money to replace and repair fencing along the Spicket along Erving avenue next year. Would be welcome to a grant that addressed invasives (poison ivy) as well as the safety installation of guard rail and/or new fencing.

- What are your thoughts on the summer youth job corps program as stated in the 2004 OSP.

Frank could not say yes or no because the job program encounters union issues. If union laborers are laid off due to budget constraints, the City can't hire youth to fill their roles.

- Do you talk to other DPW's and how they function with similar budget shortfalls?



I don't talk to other DPW's. I have to constantly move resources and people around to keep department work done. He needs staff, however, to get that done.

Likes support of volunteer groups. DPW can respond to those requests easily. Court ordered workers and detainees are difficult because oversight is necessary; his department does not have the time to continually train new people.

The DPW Department has been able to purchase better equipment over the years and that helps keep the parks in order in the summer. He has bought larger mowers so it takes one person less time to mow a large area. Small pocket parks are harder to maintain because it takes small equipment.

Large events on North Commons cause strain to his department when they don't clean up fully.

➤ Concerns and ideas surrounding the Water Department Land on Water St/Riverside Drive

Used to access Water department there, but not anymore. Water Department workers are housed there and some at the DPW yard. That area used to have a ball field and folks parked at the water department. Any new use there would need parking addresses as there is no parking on Riverside Drive. Could potentially use across the street-at Ames and Riverside Drive. He sees that site as passive recreation and river access. The site does not flood.

Top priorities would be 1. Cronin, 2. O'Connell, 3. North Common

(Comments on FEMA land)



November 21, 2008

Meeting with Chief Romero, Deputy Chief Mike Driscoll and Community Policing officer Detective Tom Cuddy, Lawrence Police Department
Conducted by Kathryn Prybylski

KP gave a brief background of the Open Space Plan and the method for gathering input from residents, city boards and city officials and posed the same questions to the police department that were offered to those individuals and groups. The chief was very interested in learning what the residents discussed and brought up at the community meetings. Chief Romero, the Deputy Chief and Detective Cuddy made the following observations and gave general input in park developments.

- When building new parks or improving existing ones, they asked that the designers take into account the method of patrolling best suited and most utilized by the police force and that is from their cars or motorcycles. Police enter many parks (for example Scarito Park) on their motorcycles for general patrols, so path widths are not a huge concern unless they would restrict access in an emergency. However, much patrolling is also done from outside the park in a police cruiser. Police need to be able to see in to the park and find that “privacy hedge” type planting as well as coniferous trees with low branches makes parks conducive to criminal and clandestine activity.
- The police department has not had many false alarms from the police call boxes installed at Scarito Park or Arlington Neighborhood Park. They recommend including those in new park projects and improvements. Also, they recommended the call box with life raft (that are installed at the Boat House and other river access places) for the pond edge at the new Manchester Street Park.
- A couple of the officers would love to see the ice skating in the winter reinstated at some parks. It was remembered very fondly from their youth.
- The police department would love to see additional neighbor and neighborhood association involvement in “light” park maintenance such as trash pick up.
- Signage in the parks displaying the rules (specifically the park hours) is necessary for police officers to make an arrest. They made it clear that they don’t arrest everyone they find in a park after hours, but it would be helpful when they would like to make an arrest. Currently not all the parks have the signage displaying the hours. They also think additional signage should be posted regarding picking up dog waste. They referenced a recent trip to San Diego where there were bag holders on many city blocks for people to use a bag to pick up their do waste.

September 18, 2008

Meeting with Linda Schiavone, Director, Recreation Department and Nelson Ortiz, Coordinator,
Recreation Department

Meeting conducted by Kathryn Prybylski

- What priorities do you think the City should have in the next 5 years for Open Space and park improvements?

Thinking big: Dome over hockey rink, new gazebos

Other ideas include better trash receptacle that doesn't lose the bag.

Borgoin Square still has need for soccer field improvements. The City Recreation Department sees a high demand for soccer facilities across the city as well as for football space.

Kane Gym Site is used for ball field space but is also designated as overflow parking for the high school. The field is uneven and hard to use, there is enough space there for football or soccer or a combination field. Demand for the space is very high at South Lawrence East.

Frost ball field needs improvements. An added field there could increase rec teams in the City from 12 teams to 16 or 20. The field also has no lighting and needs an outfield fence. The Rec Department thinks that there would not be any neighbor concerns with the addition of lights at that field either.

Stockton Park needs significant help. The water feature does not work and the disrepair is especially unfortunate because it is such a visible park at a major intersection in Lawrence.

Below is a list created by the Recreation Department and presented at the interview:

5 Year park improvements request from Lawrence Recreation Department

Howard Park
Lights
Irrigation

Bruce Park
Lights
Irrigation

Gagnon Park
Lights
Irrigation



Playstead 1 and 2
Stone Dust infield
Netting

O'Neill
Stone Dust Infield
Fencing along first and third base side
Flag Pole at Center Field

O'Neill 2
Lights
Stone Dust infield

S.L.East
Fence dugouts
Clay infield on field 3
Netting at Field # 4

Hockey Rink
Resurface

1. Replace Boards
2. Paint lines
3. Replace spectator seating with elevated stands
4. Replace perimeter fencing (Approximately 600' of 10'high fence)
5. Repair penalty box area
6. Paint entire rink

Donahue Park Andover Street, Howard Park, Storrow Park, North Common, O'Connell Park,
West Street, Immigrant Place, Marston Street, McDermott Place, Rowell Park, Cronin Park

New playground equipment
Benches
Picnic Tables
Trash Receptacles
Bleachers in ball fields
Gazebo
Concession Stand at Howard Park
Mile Markers Howard Park



September 23, 2008

Meeting with Tom Schiavone, Acting Economic Development Director

Conducted by Kate O'Brien and Kathryn Prybylski

- What priorities do you think the City should have in the next 5 years for Open Space and park improvements?

Tom sees utilizing the space at Pemberton Park for a police station to be a high priority for the City. Currently that space (the adjacent parking lot space) is a “no man’s land” and is underutilized. The parking lot was built in the 50s for Essex Street use and was never used for that traffic. The area is development ready and a police station and improvement in the parking area there would only enhance the open space there now. There is also room in that plan for an outdoor amphitheater.

The next critical project for completion in the city is the Gateway project. Costs have gone up, but construction of the parking lot will begin soon. The park plan increased in cost from \$1M to \$2M and will be an amazing space, but it needs fundraising.

The Mayor has interest in seeing improvements at Howard Playstead beyond the PIP 1 improvements. Standard new park improvements should include bathrooms/concession stands that are open when the fields are being used. The tennis courts at the Howard are underused; the schools think they would be better served as basketball courts.

South Lawrence East ball fields have been improved but the users there want a concession stand and bathroom.

We discussed how concessions and bathroom would be controlled and Tom thinks that the Recreation Department should have control and distribute keys to these facilities.

GWL has heard walkability concerns from neighborhoods to parks-do you have any thoughts on the subject or have you heard any similar concerns? Tom had not until recently.

Tom would love to see a “Taste of Lawrence” event from the great restaurants in Lawrence. One could envision using pushcarts or setting up tables along Appleton Way – similar in size and scope of the Farmers Market.

The Water Street parcels adjacent to the Water Plant are large unused locations along the Merrimack River. The river bank there is a beautiful spot and is underutilized. Access to the river is possible and one could almost walk to the falls. The view to the other side of the river is the section with trails near Riverfront State Park. He thinks this section of the river adjacent to the Water Department should be a passive recreation site with walking and biking paths.

Tom has heard from Nelson and Linda (Recreation Department) that they would like lights at the Frost School ballfield. The addition of lights would increase the usage there from 12-17 teams at night.

Tom would like to see the trail connection from Arlington Park to the sidewalk along Hampshire St.

The Oxford Park site is a high priority for Tom. Canal St widening and the Spicket River Bridge should be done by 2010 to 2011. Pedestrian access to both sides of the Spicket Bridge is important and the greenway continuing under the bridge will be great aesthetically and create pedestrian access to the Gateway site. The Gateway project represents \$200M in investments in infrastructure in Lawrence: \$100M from Gencorp, \$45M from Mass Highway, \$25M in the park and parking and the remainder to the Canal St widening.



November 18, 2008

Meeting with Mike Sweeney, Planning Director

Conducted by Kate O'Brien and Kathryn Prybylski

- What priorities do you think the City should have in the next 5 years for Open Space and park improvements?

Mike had specific priorities in mind for open space and for specific planning in the City; they are outlined below:

- The City needs to actively plan a method of moving the City Yard off of the Spicket River. Moving the City yard is a large but necessary undertaking that requires momentum and planning. Mike feels that by some incorporation of moving the yard into the Open Space Plan will begin to lay groundwork for moving the yard. The City will need to acquire land or reutilize existing owned city land for the yard. He would like to see the Spicket River Greenway incorporated in the space the yard currently occupies.
 - Kate asked if he knows the current needs of the city yard-if an inventory of sorts has been created so that we can incorporate specific needs into the plan. Currently that type of inventory does not exist, but the physical space the yard occupies is a known quantity.
- Mike would like to see more planting (tree, perennial, flowers) on the North Common.
- The City should start to look for more corporate sponsors for park support. The city budget is not going to improve any time soon, so there should be a concerted effort to find support from businesses that can advertise via supporting neighborhood days or similar events for the community
- The former Kane Gym site is a stagnant site. Mike would love to see it utilized more for football and other team practices. He would really love to see it installed as a synthetic turf site. Currently many teams utilize a few fields that get really torn up from the use. He's concerned with the high level of play by the high school athletes and their coach has said that they are being injured because of the rough condition of the field.
- The City owns some land in Prospect Hill that could be feasible for dedication as open space. It is also adjacent to land privately owned that is not developable. Mike would like to absorb those properties together for potential open space development. The site is steep sided and constantly has water running out of it-some residents claim there is a spring.
- Mike feels that Den Rock Park has a lot more potential and needs more attention. He would love to see science teachers use the park as an outdoor laboratory.
- Kate and Mike want to continue their discussions on City land available for gardens and helping gardeners move off of contaminated land.
- Mike would also be open to discussing the City's official involvement in a Rail to Trails project. The City of Methuen has discussed signing a long term lease with the MBTA to develop a trail. He asked Kate to email the particulars to him and Tom Schiavone.

October 23, 2008

Meeting with Peter Takvorian, Lawrence Fire Department Chief

Conducted by Kathryn Prybylski

- What priorities do you think the City should have for Open Space and park improvements in regards to public safety?

Chief Takvorian is not sure he can make any substantive recommendations. His only concern would be that parks and open space facilities incorporate access for fire trucks as well as for other emergency vehicles (ambulances).

Fire trucks require 18' of clearance for fire access. Also, because Lawrence does not have its own ambulance system, full size fire trucks are deployed when ambulances are called. The firepeople can help the emergency workers with the individual or individuals injured and in need of the ambulance.