

Mystic River Watershed Steering Committee
December 5, 2019
10 AM – 12 PM
Winchester Town Hall Waterfield Room
71 Mount Vernon Street, Winchester, lower level

Meeting Summary

Meeting in Brief

The Mystic River Steering Committee's December meeting began with a presentation from the Malden River Works project by Kathy Vandiver (MIT) and Amber Christoffersen (Mystic River Watershed Association), who described this unique partnership between a range of community stakeholders and design experts, and which is supported by MIT's Leventhal Prize. Slides from this presentation are available at <https://mysticriver.org/epa-steering-committee>. After additional brief updates and announcements, meeting participants broke into small groups to review the Steering Committee's priorities document, and to discuss how it should be updated for future years. A list of meeting participants can be found at the end of this document. For more information about the steering committee and current efforts to restore the Mystic River watershed, please visit www.epa.gov/mysticriver.

Next Meeting

The next committee meeting is scheduled for April 2, 2020 at Arlington Town Hall.

Welcome and Introductions

Patrick Herron (Mystic River Watershed Association) chaired the meeting, and welcomed attendees. He then thanked and introduced Beth Rudolph (Town of Winchester), who shared some of the stormwater and water quality initiatives currently underway in Winchester:

Winchester is completing a large infiltration system under one of their playing fields – they used an R-Tank structure, designed to mitigate downstream flooding. They also used an EPA 319 grant (for nonpoint source pollution management) to partner with MyRWA to do some green infrastructure projects along with that project. Winchester's proposal for a stormwater fee was voted down by town meeting this fall, unfortunately. They are now looking at other ways to design the program and hope to go back to town meeting in the spring with a new proposal.

Malden River Works for Waterfront Equity and Resilience

Kathy Vandiver (MIT and Friends of the Malden River) gave a presentation on the Malden River Works project, which intends to create a new public space behind the Malden DPW building on the Malden River.

- Malden River Works recently received the inaugural MIT Leventhal Cities Prize, which will provide \$100,000 for a concept design for the site.
- The prize team coordinating this effort is comprised of representatives of the City of Malden, Friends of the Malden River, Mystic River Watershed Association, MIT, and the wider Malden community.

- Malden is a majority-minority city with a large immigrant population and a long history of industry. The Malden River has been under-appreciated and often considered to be highly contaminated for many years. However, the Malden River Human Health Risk Study for Boating, conducted in 2016-18 showed that boating in the Malden is generally safe.
- Both Everett and Medford have recently developed riverfront public access sites along the Malden River, but Malden does not yet have such a site.
- The Malden DPW site was selected for the purposes of this project. By optimizing the DPW's use of the six-acre site, about two acres can be made available for public river access. A park/pervious surface on the site could also improve the DPW's resiliency to flooding, which is projected to increase in the future due to climate change impacts.
- Marie Law Adams, a member of the prize team and a landscape architect from MIT and Landing Studio, worked on a similar project in Chelsea, in which an industrial riverfront property was converted into a shared road salt dock and park.
- Currently, the prize team is working with a local steering committee to lead a community engagement process for the project. The two teams met jointly for the first time in October 2019.
- The concept design is due to be completed in February 2020. Fundraising, creation of a final design, and then fundraising for construction will take place through summer of 2021. The team is currently seeking additional funding sources for these later project phases.
- A public kickoff meeting on October 21 drew over 100 Malden residents and others. Attendees heard background about the project, were inspired by a guest speaker, and participated in conversations and a survey about their desired uses for the site.

More information about Malden River Works can be found at:

- maldenriverworks.org
- mysticriver.org/maldenriver
- leventhalcityprize.mit.edu
- Kathy Vandiver's full presentation can be found at <https://mysticriver.org/epa-steering-committee>.

Amber Christoffersen (Mystic River Watershed Association) shared some additional information:

1. This site was chosen because it's the only publicly-owned site on the Malden River.
2. A major issue is contamination on the site – there have been assessments on the site, but the project team will need to understand what the contamination levels mean for what can happen on the site, and what cleanup or capping will be necessary. On sites like this, some areas that are currently impervious will need to remain paved because of contamination issues.

Q: Does the Malden DPW have other sites?

A: No, though they have looked at some others in the past.

Q: What's the current status of the project? This is important to know as they look into Brownfields resources, since it's on an annual cycle, but it's also dependent on property ownership.

A: The team held a kickoff meeting on 10/21 to announce the project. The next public meeting will be on 1/31, and surveys will happen between now and then to get a sense of what the public wants to see on the site. They are still very early in the process. MIT is also looking at engaging businesses along the river. The property is owned by the Malden Redevelopment Authority.

Q: Does Malden currently have any Brownfields assessment money?

A: Not as far as Amber and Kathy know.

Patrick Herron noted that this is a really exciting time for the Malden River, which has been inaccessible to the public for 100 years. Attendees should feel free to be in touch with the project team if they have ideas for the project or any additional questions.

Mystic Region Project Updates

Mystic Mural Project

This item was postponed until the April meeting.

Mystic River Eutrophication Study Report (*Caitlyn Whittle shared a report from Mark Voorhees, both of EPA*)

The final report for the eutrophication management study is being worked on after receiving comments from the technical steering committee. EPA expects to receive the report by the end of the calendar year from the consultant ERG, and then plans to release it to the communities in January/early February after internal EPA and MassDEP briefings on the results of the study. Once the report is ready for distribution, EPA plans to send a notice of the report's availability with a summary of important results to the Mystic communities. EPA will be very interested in on any feedback on the study that communities would like to provide. EPA anticipates having more of a presentation on this at the April meeting. Patrick Herron added that there shouldn't be surprises in the report; results haven't changed since what has been shared in the past. Likely to show that reductions of about 60% will be required.

MassDEP is considering this body of this work to be used as an "alternative TMDL", and because this is a new category, the process is still in formation and there may be unanswered questions at this point.

In addition, next week, EPA is moving forward with the next round of municipal stormwater workshops with Cambridge, Watertown, Reading, and Lexington, which will follow up on earlier phases of this project.

Q: What does an alternative TMDL mean?

A: Same level of data collection and study rigor as a traditional TMDL, but requirements will be more flexible, in response to requests from the states. Less formality than a traditional TMDL.

Upper Mystic Stormwater Management (*Emily Sullivan, Town of Arlington*)

Resilient Mystic Collaborative, a MyRWA project, includes the Upper Mystic Stormwater Management Working Group – the “Upper Mystic” includes all communities above the Amelia Earhart Dam. Last year, Cambridge paid for a stormwater model to look at for the watershed. Based on that study, the working group applied for an MVP grant to ground-truth the model and refine it further. The consultants Kleinfelder, Stantec, and Wesson and Sampson are all involved in the process. Consultants are working on developing the model and identifying about six large-scale opportunities for green infrastructure, with Cambridge’s constructed wetland at Alewife as a model/example. In January, the working group will review what the model has found and move forward on some of the sites that are identified. Patrick Herron added that many of these projects have the potential to improve water quality as well as reduce flooding, by reducing nutrients going downstream.

Announcements, Updates, and Funding Opportunities

Caitlyn Whittle (EPA) shared that the Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration Grant Program 2020 Request for Proposals is now open; full proposals are due on **January 30**. Their focus is on water quality and river engagement projects. The application can be found at <https://www.nfwf.org/fivestar/Pages/fivestar2020rfp.aspx>.

Caitlyn also noted that regular grant emails haven’t been going out to the steering committee list due to an interruption in EPA contracts; those will be back soon.

Marcus Holmes (EPA) shared that proposals are also being accepted for EPA Environmental Justice Program Collaborative Problem Solving Grants; applications are due on **February 7**. Application information can be found at <https://www.epa.gov/environmental-justice/environmental-justice-collaborative-problem-solving-cooperative-agreement-0#tab-2>

Todd Borci (EPA) shared that a number of enforcement actions are being issued regarding compliance with the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (“MS4”) permit. Four communities that did not submit a complete Notice of Intent (“NOI”) have already received Orders, and now communities that do not have all three stormwater ordinances in effect as required by the 2003 MS4 permit are receiving orders from EPA. In the Mystic watershed, this has only affected the City of Somerville, which received an Order from EPA.

Patrick Herron (Mystic River Watershed Association) shared that the Trustees of the Natural Resource Damages Fund expect to release a draft restoration plan for the IndustriPlex site in Woburn by the end of the year. They will be soliciting comments from the public, particularly affected parties in Winchester and Woburn. The firm ABT Associates is working on this report and we hope to see the funds applied to projects beginning in late 2020. Karen Pelto, who was very involved in this group and retired in September, is still the point of contact for this process.

Committee Business: Updating Committee Priorities for 2020-21

The Steering Committee has a priority document; this was first written in 2009 and last updated in 2017. At this meeting, the group began the process of updating and revising these priorities for 2020-21. Meeting attendees reviewed a document listing the seven existing priorities and action items, then split into three groups to discuss:

1. Water quality action items, associated with priorities 1-5. This group reviewed the long list of water quality actions and specified which were done, ongoing, or incomplete.
2. Open space, and the action items associated with priorities 6 and 7. There are few action items for these priorities in the existing document, so this group focused on how the steering committee might update this document to better reflect our open space and river access priorities and goals.
3. A more holistic look at this document. This group discuss what's missing in the big picture, and how can we make the document more useful to ourselves and to outside sources.

Each group took notes, kept a list of participants (including those who wanted to stay involved with this update moving forward), and shared back some key takeaways with the group, which were:

- For the water quality group: the water quality list is so fine-grained – maybe too much so. It was helpful to have people in the group who were there 10 years ago. Most priorities are ongoing, though a few are done. Some of this work can be done by the stormwater collaborative instead of the steering committee; the document should be updated to reflect that.
- For the open space group: this category needs to be wholesale revisited. The group suggested reviewing communities' Open Space plans to see how they overlap and relate to the Steering Committee's mission. Sharing information about grant opportunities should be a priority, as should networking among agencies and municipalities. The Resilient Mystic Collaborative is currently doing specific project work; the Steering Committee could focus more on sharing resources, networking, and getting technical assistance, though perhaps we could also identify a few projects to track. The Steering Committee could also serve as a data and science clearinghouse, and perhaps identify relevant reports from universities.
- The big-picture group talked about the history of the document, the usefulness of the document, and about adding sections about water quantity/flooding and public access and boat launches. Steering Committee priorities should emphasize networking among members – connectivity is very useful, and this is also important as we demarcate between the Resilient Mystic Collaborative and this group, so they're not redundant.

Wrap-Up and Next Steps

2020 Steering Committee meetings will take place on the following dates. All meetings are from 10am-noon on Thursdays unless otherwise specified. The only location that has been finalized so far is for the April meeting.

- April 2 (location: Arlington Town Hall)
- June 4
- September 10
- December 3

Darya Mattes will send calendar invitations to the four 2020 meetings to the email list.

Name	Affiliation
Magdalena Ayed	Harborkeepers
Todd Borci	EPA
Amber Christoffersen	MyRWA
Eileen Coleman	Town of Burlington
Bill Copithorne	Town of Arlington
Mike Galvin	DCR
Patrick Herron	MyRWA
Marcus Holmes	EPA
Andy Hrycyna	MyRWA
John Livsey	Town of Lexington
Lise Marx	MWRA
Darya Mattes	Urban Waters partnership
Marian Miller	MyRWA
Nihar Mohanty	DEP
Hillary Monahan	MWRA
Karen Mullins	Town of Lexington
Catherine Pedemonti	MyRWA
Tony Rodolakis	Wood Environment & Infrastructure Solutions
Beth Rudolph	Town of Wincheter
Laura Schiffman	DEP
Jonathan Smith	City of Somerville
Mike Sprague	Town of Lexington
Emily Sullivan	Town of Arlington
Kathy Vandiver	MIT/Friends of the Malden River
Elaine Vreeland	Town of Winchester
Dan Wainberg	EPA
John Walkey	Chelsea GreenRoots
Caitlyn Whittle	EPA
Catherine Daly Woodbury	City of Cambridge