

TOWN OF DEDHAM
COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS



Dedham Town Hall
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Dedham, MA 02026
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Planning Director
Jeremy Rosenberger

Senior Planer
Michelle Tinger

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**WIGWAM POND ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

November 21, 2022, 7:00 p.m.
Zoom and Dedham Town Hall
450 Washington Street
Dedham, MA 02026

Present: Dennis Teehan - Select Board
Jay O'Brien - Planning Board
Jim Maher - Open Space & Recreation
Erik DeAvila - Conservation Commission
Lisa Farnham - Parks & Recreation
Rebecca Bachand - At-Large
Gail Coughlin - At-Large
Ruth Helfeld - At-Large
Anthony Morganelli - At-Large
Finbar Heaslip - Student
Susie Plunkett - Student
Ex-Officio - Joe Flanagan, Department of Public Works

Staff: Jeremy Rosenberger - Planning Director
Michelle Tinger - Senior Planner

The Town of Dedham's Wigwam Pond Advisory Committee met at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, November 21, 2022, via remote participation and in person. Members of the public were advised that they could access the hybrid meeting:

1. Virtually through the Zoom software program, details of which were given on the agenda and the town website prior to the meeting. Secondly, members of the public can participate via conference call by dialing toll-free, **1-309-205-3325**. The meeting ID is **890 9373 7672** and the passcode was **738012**.

2. Town Hall, Room 302, 450 Washington Street, Dedham, MA 02026
Recordings of this meeting have been made public and are available on the Town website.

Introductions (Town, Advisory Committee, VHB)

Advisory Committee members and staff introduced themselves:

- ❖ Michelle Tinger, Senior Planner for Town of Dedham
- ❖ Jeremy Rosenberger, Planning Director for Town of Dedham
- ❖ Jim Maher – Representative for the Open Space & Recreation Committee; former member of the Parks & Recreation Commission; President of the Manor Neighborhood Association
- ❖ Jay O'Brien – Representative for the Planning Board
- ❖ Joseph Flanagan – Director of Public Works for Town of Dedham
- ❖ Tony Morganelli – Resident of Jersey Street
- ❖ Julia Mintz – Urban Planner at VHB
- ❖ Ken Shwarts – Director of Planning & Design at VHB
- ❖ Michael Kluchman – Senior Landscape Architect, Urban Designer, and Project Manager at VHB
- ❖ Gail Coughlin – Resident of Whiting Avenue; Historian
- ❖ Erik DeAvilo – Representative for the Conservation Commission; Vice-Chair of Open Space & Recreation
- ❖ Ruth Helfeld – Resident of Matthew Street; Landscape Architect for the Department of Conservation and Recreation
- ❖ Finbar Heaslip – Resident of Whitehall Street; Environmental Science Student
- ❖ Lisa Farnham – Representative for Parks & Recreation
- ❖ Rebecca Bachand – Resident of Greenlodge Street; Landscape Architect
- ❖ Susie Plunkett – Dedham High School Student
- ❖ Dennis Teehan – Representative for the Select Board

Icebreaker (led by VHB)

The Advisory Committee members were asked by Vanasse Hangen Brustlin (VHB) to share interesting information about themselves and their vision for the Wigwam Pond Public Access and Recreation Plan.

Members discussed various points that included:

- Accessibility: Many Committee members want to see Wigwam Pond become more accessible to the public, with improved trail access to nearby businesses, clearance of trash in the area, and connections to Fairbanks Park, Memorial Park, and Gonzalez Park.
- Natural Resources: Wigwam Pond is considered a natural resource by many members, a hidden gem that has the potential to serve the community and be preserved for future generations.

- Development: Some members want to see the area become more attractive as a walking area (similar to Jamaica Pond), points of access added on the industrial side to reduce littering, and connections to Fairbanks Park, Memorial Park, and Gonzalez Field.
- Environmental Conservation: Many members want to protect the natural habitat of Wigwam Pond and ensure that it is not disturbed. They would like to see points of access, opportunities for youth groups to use the space, and the area cleaned up.
- Historical Significance: The historical significance of Wigwam Pond is noted by some members, and they believe it is essential to consult with the Indigenous community.
- Community Benefits: Many members believe that Wigwam Pond has the potential to serve the community in various ways, and they would like to see it become more accessible and beautiful for everyone to enjoy.

Advisory Committee Expectations and Responsibilities (Town)

Staff reviewed the charge, committee structure, responsibilities, expectations, and duration of the Advisory Committee. The Wigwam Pond Advisory Committee will collaborate with Town departments, elected and appointed officials, the consultant team, and the Dedham community to recommend a comprehensive, long-term vision plan for public access and recreation around Wigwam Pond. The responsibilities and expectations of the Committee include providing input and guidance to the town consultant, facilitating and encouraging public participation, attending Advisory Committee meetings and at least two public meetings, completing work outside of Committee meetings, and participating in the development of the Final Report and Recommendations. The Advisory Committee's duration is estimated to last approximately one year and will be dissolved upon submission of the Final Report and Recommendations to the Planning Board.

VHB provided an explanation of the planning, engineering, and environmental firm. Representing VHB for the duration of the Public Access and Recreation Plan will be Michael Kluchman (Landscape Architect), Ken Schwartz (Urban Planner), and Julia Mintz (Urban Planner).

The Wigwam Pond Advisory Committee discussed the possibility of having a Chair and Vice Chair. The Committee decided to table this topic to the next meeting so they could have time to think about this further.

Project Scope and Schedule (VHB)

VHB reviewed the scope and schedule of the project. The project started in September 2022 and will be approximately a year in duration. VHB reviewed monthly topics including Town Staff Meetings, Advisory Committee Meetings, Community Meetings, and a Final Summary Report. VHB emphasized a key role of the Committee will be to provide guidance and feedback and then go out into the community to share information and encourage additional feedback.

Mr. O'Brien asked how much science would be involved in this process and if the Committee and community will learn about topics such as drainage, pollution, invasive species, etc. Ms. Tinger confirmed that the Town has been working with ESS to develop a Watershed Management Plan that will investigate the ecological conditions of the Pond and how its health can be improved. Mr. Schwartz added that VHB has connected with ESS to stay informed on their work and preliminary findings. Mr. Rosenberger added that there are many environmental considerations to consider. Mr. O'Brien suggested a separate meeting to review this information and discuss the historical significance of Wigwam Pond and the surrounding area.

Mr. Morganelli suggested the historical significance be folded into the plan and that Indigenous people be involved in this process. This will encourage community education and present the opportunity to pay homage to Indigenous people. He also asked if the Pond was spring fed. Mr. Kluchman responded that there is a significant circuit stream that feeds the Pond, which then runs out towards Boston. Mr. Maher further explained that water that comes in from the Rustcraft Road side and over by the Plaza, which has a connecting brook that goes under the BJ's parking lot and into the Pond. Ms. Bachand also mentioned the large walking pipe which is in the process of failing.

Mr. Heaslip commented that if Native American artifacts were to be found at Wigwam Pond, this area would be deemed as protected land by the state or federal government. Ms. Coughlin noted that there is archaeological evidence of Indigenous people living in Zones 2 and 3, potentially for thousands of years. Archeologist Holly Herbster has completed several studies that determined there was a village in the area. At the time, the Neponset Massachusetts (now known as Massachusett Tribe at Ponkapoag) would travel along the Charles River into what is now Dedham, and they would stay in small family bands along Wigwam Pond. There are also rumors of a burial site; if we were to find human remains, work must stop immediately, and we must adhere to NAGPRA (Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act). Ms. Herbster has previously noted that because the area is so developed, a potential burial site may not be there anymore. Committee members suggested the possibility of private developers contributing to the Wigwam Pond access improvement efforts.

Initial Observations

VHB shared drone footage of the Wigwam Pond area. Mr. Maher asked if the raised waterway area between the Pond and the commercial/industrial area was buildable. Mr. Schwartz responded that one of the biggest challenges would be the invasive plants that are growing along the banks which must be addressed to increase access.

VHB presented a map of the surrounding area that indicated businesses and residential properties. Mr. Schwartz noted that the area to the west of Wigwam Pond was home to big box retail such as Best Buy, Market Basket, Bed Bath & Beyond, and more. He also noted a great opportunity to the south of Wigwam Pond, which is Fairbanks Park.

There is land owned by the Town between the Pond and the Park that can be a possible connection of these two locations.

VHB divided the area around Wigwam Pond into three zones: Retail, Mixed-Use, and Residential, each with different characteristics and land uses. VHB also presented maps of the following:

- Land Ownership: The map showed the locations of privately owned land and Town of Dedham owned land. Additionally, VHB showed the location of the paper streets on the east side of Wigwam Pond.
- Planned Future Development: The map showed the planned future development in the area, including 95 Eastern Avenue (Hotel), 110 Stergis Way (Office), 124 Quabish Road (Mixed Use), 200 Legacy Boulevard (Retail), and 750 Providence Highway (Retail). Notably, 124 Quabish Road committed \$50,000 to go towards future improvements for Wigwam Pond.

VHB also provided an assessment of Wigwam Pond's conditions. The assessment noted that the Pond has a maximum depth of just over 6 feet, and its sediments are rich in phosphorous. Invasive common reed (phragmites) is the dominant emergent plant species, and invasive fanwort is the dominant aquatic plant species. To address the plant material in the Pond, treatment with herbicides or by mechanical means (such as pulling at the roots) will be required to limit further growth of these species, improve access, and improve navigation in the water. Lastly, the Pond supports substantial populations of largemouth bass, pickerel, and bluegill.

Mr. Maher inquired about other contractors interested in Legacy Place Boulevard. Mr. Rosenberger stated that Nordblom still plans to move forward with their project at 110 Stergis Way; however, no other contractors have submitted official filings to the Planning & Zoning Department since the moratorium was lifted.

Mr. Morganelli asked if there was a natural way to reverse the growth of other species of fish, to which Mr. Kluchman suggested looking into phosphorous levels in Wigwam Pond and identifying sources of nutrients entering the Pond. Ms. Helfeld inquired about heavy metal testing and whether abutting commercial properties were in compliance with regulations. Preliminary discussions about potential access and public parking for the area are underway and it was noted that there are discolored retention ponds and outflows leading to Wigwam Pond. VHB also mentioned the possibility of partnering with LL Bean for a canoe/kayak launch.

VHB provided a site analysis including views, access, and topography, noting that access to Wigwam Pond is challenging. Mr. Maher asked about a potential easement across the A Tent For Rent, and Mr. DeAvila inquired about any potential Town access from Eastern Avenue. Planning & Zoning Department staff will look further into these inquiries.

Community Meeting (Town/VHB)

Community Meeting 1 was held on December 10, 2022 at the Dedham Middle School and via Zoom. Advisory Committee members were encouraged to share the information with their respective Boards/Committees. The meeting was recorded, and a survey was created to replicate the questions that were discussed during Community Meeting 1.

Mr. Heaslip asked about implementation, maintenance, and management once development begins. Mr. O'Brien expressed that the Advisory Committee's job is to ask these questions and discuss possibilities during this process.

Next Steps

Staff asked Advisory Committee to share information on Community Meeting 1 with other residents and provide staff with any feedback.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.