

RECEIVED BY 1976
OFFICE OF CITY CLERK

MAR 1 1 59 PM '76

CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

Mr. James Lee Sullivan
City Manager
Cambridge City Hall
795 Mass. Avenue
Cambridge, Mass. 02139

Re: Trees around Fresh Pond Reservoir

Dear Mr. Sullivan:

Yesterday I was advised that you will be meeting with the Water Board tomorrow evening, March 2nd, to decide on the fate of the trees still remaining inside the fence around the Fresh Pond Reservoir. I have been told that this will be a meeting which is not open to the public. Therefore I am writing this letter with my views for your consideration. I have already expressed them to Mr. David Wylie, before his term expired, to Mr. Frances Duehay and to the Neighborhood Ten Association, as have a number of other Cambridge residents.

On December 14th, when we first saw that all of the trees inside the fence, some of them at least 50 years old, and all other growing things had been ruthlessly leveled in the area between the soccer field and the pumping station, we were shocked and sad and angry. In this day, when so many persons are working hard to preserve our natural resources and so many others giving at least lip service to conservation, this seemed to us a deliberate and senseless destruction of plant life and defacement of what had been something of beauty and value to us and to many others. Instead of growing things, one could see only a chain-link fence and, beyond that a stream of traffic and all the ugliness of the business area on the opposite side of the parkway.

The growth inside the fence not only reinforced the shore but it has always harbored small birds, something of which we, as bird-watchers, have always been aware. During the past year we have been glad to see that it has been frequented by more and more of them. Without the trees and bushes there will, of course, be no birds there. In the protection of coves and bays along the shore we have seen over 20 different kinds of ducks and other water birds. I am sure we will not see any, except, perhaps, the ever present mallards and black ducks and the gulls, if all the vegetation is destroyed inside the fence - apparently the plan of the Water Board. In fact, Mrs. Garrett Birkhoff, who I understand is a member of the Water Board and who once saw us watching the birds, asked me at that time to write to the Board and tell them how many birds we saw, to encourage them to maintain the conditions which attracted the birds.

On making inquiry, we have been told that the trees and bushes have to go because their leaves fall into the lake and cause trouble with the drains. This makes no sense. I have never seen any undue collection of leaves in or on the lake. The only trash we have seen has been man-made and man-propelled: an old bicycle, plastic bottles, beer cans, etc., none of which fell from the trees. I am sure that if there has been trouble with leaves, as many were blown into the water from the many other trees in the reservation, outside

the fence, as well from the trees inside the fence. Is it the plan of the Water Department, therefore, to cut down all of the trees in the Reservation? Surely, with modern technology, the engineers can take care of the drainage problem, if, indeed, there is one, without further destruction.

I am told that at least one member of the Water Board has said that the trees inside the fence "are not worth saving". Why? Because they are not perfect, specimen trees or shrubs? There is an old dead tree in the northwest shore of the lake which, in summer, harbors the nest of downy woodpecker, and, for that reason alone, could be considered worth saving. Are only perfect, valuable trees and shrubs worth saving?

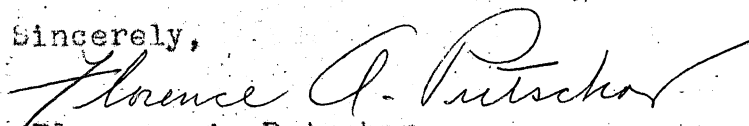
Another reason advanced for the tree cutting has been "security". Certainly thieves and rapists don't hide in the trees and bushes inside the fence. If the argument is that without the trees and bushes one has visibility, then I ask visibility of what? The open water? The next bend in the path? If it is the next bend, then what about the trees and bushes on the other side of the path? I would suggest that better surveillance would do more to discourage crime. Perhaps if the fines posted for various misdemeanors in the Reservation were actually imposed better surveillance would be economically possible.

I am inclined to think that one of the major reasons for cutting the trees is the fact that they interfere with the installation of the huge concrete blocks in which new sections of the chain-link fence are being anchored. If so, and it is the fence which is the concern of the Board, may I say that the foundation of the fence is not going to stop people from tearing the links apart, as they have done in the past, to gain access to the water. Once, when I saw children swimming in the lake and called the Water Department to say so, I was given to understand that they were not concerned. Their present concern seems to have followed a drowning last year but, as I say, the concrete foundations are not going to stop anyone who wants to make an opening in the fence itself.

I ask that you do all you can to protect the remaining trees and shrubs and, consequently, the bird and animal life around the pond and to preserve what beauty is left to Fresh Pond and to protect what beauty is left. Please prevent any further destruction. Rather, consider relieving the barren ugliness created by the earlier destruction by new plantings in the area from the soccer field to the pumping station.

I wish to say that I write on behalf not only of myself and my husband but also a number of other people in our neighborhood who love and use the park as we do.

Sincerely,


Florence A. Putschar

Copy to the City Council

5 S-84

3/1/76

Placed on File -