



276 Massachusetts Ave.
Arlington 02174
August 4, 1984

Mystic River Watershed Association, Inc.

Mr. William J. Geary, Commissioner
Metropolitan District Commission
20 Somerset Street
Boston 02108

Dear Commissioner Geary:

Thank you very much for your reply of July 18 to our letter concerning the multiple problems of the MDC Alewife Brook Reservation. In the meantime we have reviewed your letters to the Cambridge and Belmont Conservation Commissions, as you had suggested. Your letters are responding to their anxiety which had been caused by your meeting of June 5 with Cambridge officials on MDC/Arthur D. Little negotiations. The property of ADL, who plans to expand its facilities, is intertwined with the Reservation. The MDC is exploring the possibility of selling 7+ acres to, and swapping 3+ acres with, ADL.

You also state that the MDC is looking forward to the Mystic River Watershed Association's help in making the MAPC open space plan effective and that it is essential that we both, MDC and MRWA, participate in the Alewife transportation planning as well. Thus, we are pleased to bring the following to your attention.

A. The Open Space Study

As you will be aware the MPO allocated a modest amount of federal transportation funds for this study. Previously, MRWA had been instrumental in that funding. It is official DOT policy to achieve urban transportation constructions of highways and mass transit at minimum environmental, social and economic costs and maximum benefits. In the case of Alewife this means that the fragile open space be enlarged, enhanced and consolidated to give it the protection necessary to withstand and survive permanently the direct and indirect future pressure by much increased human usage, development and traffic.

To be specific, the open space study should formulate alternatives and investigate potential open space additions in simple fee or through conservation restrictions. Such logical possibilities include, e. g., the presently unused ADL land to the west, the Mugar property north of Route 2, the Blair - and Jerry's Ponds areas. The MAPC team has yet to address the problems of the future. So far it has produced six or more options to rearrange the Reservation, and the MRWA has made substantial recommendations for the study on July 25. The MDC has yet to help to get the study on the right track.

B. Reservation/Arthur D. Little

The MRWA is basing its suggestions regarding the exploratory negotiations on the Park Land Use Policy Document which the MDC formally adopted at its meeting on June 23, 1977. This Document discusses comprehensively the exceptions to the general policy of objecting to the sale of any park holding for any non-park or private use. The Commission has to determine that a parcel to be sold is inappropriate as park land now and in the future. "Park development is a slow process requiring very long term planning." The document reviews several examples to prevent any misinterpretation from lack of definition/consistency of what the Park Land Use Policy of the MDC is. It is apparent from the Document's discussion that the 7+ acres do not fall under the definition of such surplus land.

The history of the ADL east parking lot, which is included in those 7+ acres, may seem to warrant special consideration. It had been leased to ADL before 1977. That lease expired like that of other leased MDC park land after 1977. The exceptional patience of the MDC may have inadvertently mislead ADL in passing over the opportunities to acquire one or more of the properties along Route 2 eastbound when they came on the market in the past. The large scale of the planned highway improvements may well result in the occurrence of such opportunities in the not too distant future. ADL is a prosperous corporation. Thus, hardship is not a factor. Clearly, the purchase of built-up parcels is a logical possibility of which ADL might take advantage. The MDC cannot -- in conformity with the 1977 Document -- sell the parking lot as surplus. The MDC might possibly consider letting the ADL use continue temporarily, if ADL agrees to terminate the use at the earliest opportunity.

The swap of the 3+ acres of the Recreation against the western upland ADL vacant area does not appear to the MRWA to be in the public interest for two reasons related to the transportation projects. Firstly, the loss of the Yates Pond area east of the Bedford RR-ROW would remove the vital protection of the most vulnerable wildlife refuge area from the future urbanization and road traffic. Secondly, that direct and indirect impact on the Alewife open space is the very reason that the MAPC study is going on presently. Regrettably it has been going in the wrong direction. The Reservation will need both the Yates Pond area and the western ADL uplands addition to give it a survival chance. The MDC has yet to speak up in the support of its own metropolitan open space and park land mandate.

C. The Interim Access and Permanent Loop Concept

The MBTA has issued a Draft Environmental Impact Report # 4931 on the interim access from Route 2 in March, 1984, although the UMTA ruled in August 1977 that such crossing of the Reservation would require a full federal Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The MDC has participated in mitigating this severe impact instead of opposing it. The Massachusetts Audubon Society is supporting the MRWA in opposing such illegal planning effort. We are attaching this letter of June 20, 1983. It has remained unanswered. It is not readily apparent why you leave the fight for the protection of your Reservation to the weak shoulders of participating citizens. We are inviting you to join and lead that effort.

The MDPW has issued its first planning report in mid-May and proposed several alternative schemes. The favored concept is the Loop which permits two U-turns on Route 2. That alternative is the most destructive one for the Reservation.

A more active participation of the MDC in the permanent planning process of the MDPW seems to be in the public interest for the following reason.

The Alewife traffic has two components. The through traffic is destined to the Cambridge and Boston downtown districts. The state does not want it to increase and make their congestion worse. The traffic with a local Alewife destination arrives mostly from the west on Route 2. The MDPW proposals have the purpose of increasing the road capacities to accomodate that traffic component. That is why the Loop has become the preferred option. However, the future local traffic increase depends on the size of the development which will occur mostly in the North Cambridge area. Estimates of that development have ranged from 5 to 10 million square feet new floor space.

The city community development department has issued some years ago the so-called Fishbook which describes these plans. They are serving for the MDPW planning effort and the MAPC open space study. The head of the development department has stated on June 6 at the Alewife Advisory Committee that the Fishbook does not represent reality, but is rather an invitation to potential developers of Boston to consider Alewife. And she added that the Fishbook might have succeeded too well. The department were in the stage of reverting from development to planning. Thus, the future local traffic estimates will possibly have to be adjusted downward accordingly. This applies to the MDPW and MAPC studies.

The MRWA is being joined on the committee by the Belmont neighborhood who fears for potential by-pass traffic through its streets. The MDC is represented at the committee meetings by a very competent staffer. An MDC decision to become more active would be welcome under the circumstances. This greater participation will benefit the Alewife open space because of the reduced pressure of building oversized highways and unleasable floor space. Moreover, this active MDC participation will benefit Cambridge and private developers as well. For, in the end, everybody benefits from a positive result. And everybody is a loser, if the completed Alewife by the year 2000 does not work, if it does not attract people to work, live and relax there.

To destroy the Reservation and fail to strengthen the open space in the meantime for no good purpose would be an irreparable and unnecessary lack of common sense. The MRWA is suggesting to you, Commissioner Geary, to abandon Terence Geoghegan's abstention, turn the MDC around, and serve the metropolitan people.

c.c. to:

Sincerely,

M. S. Dukakis
E. M. Kennedy
T. P. O'Neill, Jr.
J. F. Kerry
J. S. Hoyte
J. M. Shannon
Geo. Bachrach
R. A. Kraus
J. F. Cusack
C. F. Flaherty
M-J. Gibson
Cambridge City Council
Arlington Board of Selectmen
Belmont Board of Selectmen
Cambridge Conservation Commission
Arlington Conservation Commission
Belmont Conservation Commission
Chas. Eliot
G. A. Bertrand


Herbert M. Meyer
President

MACC
Sierra



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June 20, 1983

Commissioner William Geary
Metropolitan District Commission
20 Sommerset Street
Boston, MA 02108

Dear Commissioner Geary:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me on May 31 to discuss the Massachusetts Audubon Society's Trailside Museum and Alewife Brook Reservation.

I wish to once again express my concern about the preservation of MDC's Alewife Brook Reservation as planning proceeds for the area around the Red Line Extension. Any proposed action, including development projects and road building, which may impact this 115 acre natural area deserves careful consideration. Citizens look to the MDC to protect this area. Therefore, it is vital that you act as an advocate for the preservation of the area as the DPW assesses the possibility of building an access road from Route 2 to the new MBTA parking garage.

We urge you to assume this role and become an active player in the planning process. It is important that the integrity of the Alewife Brook Reservation be maintained.

Thank you.

Sincerely,


Gerard A. Bertrand
President

cc: Hon. James S. Hoyte
Dr. Herbert Meyer

GAB:lr
6/83

S-484

Comm. from Herbert M. Meyer, Pres., Mystic
River Watershed Association, Inc. Re: the
M.D.C. Alewife Brook Reservation.

In City Council,

August 15, 1984

Placed on File