



TOWN OF NATICK

From: Luba Zhaurova, Cochituate Aqueduct Study Committee (CASC) Chair
To: Matthew Gardner, Conservation Commission Chair
CC: Conservation Commission Members; CASC Members; Robert Bois; Joshua Ostroff
Date: November 30, 2012
Re: Recommendation regarding Cochituate Aqueduct Potential Trail

The Cochituate Aqueduct Study Committee has been formed in August of 2011 and met for a year following the charge¹ of the Conservation Commission to provide recommendation regarding the potential of the MWRA property to be used as a recreational walking, hiking or multi-use trail for the Town of Natick.

The Committee has determined that assessment of feasibility was needed prior to starting the project. In November of 2011, the Conservation Commission has approved the bid of the Weston & Sampson (W&S), following CASC recommendation, to conduct an Assessment of Feasibility Study of the potential Cochituate Aqueduct trail. Attached is the final report provided by the W&S (Exhibits A & B).

On October 9, 2012, the CASC conducted a public hearing, informing the public of the W&S findings and seeking public input. Attached are the minutes from the meeting (Exhibit C). Public comments on that night were generally favorable, with some concerns raised that could be addressed during the design phase.

Based on the W&S Report and the Public Hearing, the CASC believes that the development of the trail appears to be feasible, but given a wide cost range and options for the project, the Commission should first determine the budget and scope of the project prior to proceeding with the Design Phase. As mentioned in the report, "the costs assume a traditional public design, permit, bid and construct process, which carries the highest potential costs" and "the method by which eventual improvements are undertaken can dramatically impact potential costs." Additionally, a decision on whether or not to provide ADA compliance along the entire length of the trail or just portions of it will also dramatically impact the costs of the project. Given the above-mentioned assumptions, the highest cost estimate is approximately \$500,000, excluding section D (a town-owned property), and with the middle section B being the longest and incurring more than half of the expense.

The CASC recommends creation of the Cochituate Aqueduct Trail as a relatively low impact but highly identifiable trail with a good potential to connect to other open space on both of its ends. As 8M Permit states: "Permittee may use the land for the purpose of establishing, operating and maintaining a part of a regional passive, recreational trail system." With high value placed on connectivity of the proposed trail, the CASC recommends that Conservation Commission work with the Town officials to determine feasibility of using town-owned Pine Oak Wells Property to connect the trail westerly across the wetland to the Bradford Street and Wethersfield Neighborhood². Additionally, the Commission should establish a relationship with the town of

¹ The Cochituate Aqueduct Advisory Committee was created by the Conservation Commission with the following charge relating to the 8M Permit issued to the Town of Natick for the potential recreational use of the Cochituate Aqueduct Property. The charge to this committee is to:

- 1) Recommend to the Conservation Commission the potential of this property to be used as a recreational walking, hiking or multi-use trail for the Town of Natick;
- 2) Advise the Conservation Commission on matters relating to the design and construction of a potential trail;
- 3) Advise the Conservation Commission on a process to establish a potential multi-use trail;
- 4) Continue outreach efforts to inform the community about the project and gain input from abutters and residents.

² The State of Massachusetts regulations do not prohibit location of trails near wells.

Wellesley and seek other opportunities for connecting the trail southerly with the Wellesley's trail network, specifically - crossing over Route 9.

We hope this Assessment of Feasibility Report provides enough information for the Commission to proceed with the project and to contract with a firm for the design phase of the proposed trail.

Please let me know if you would like to seek more information.

List of Exhibits:

- Exhibit A: Feasibility Report, Cochituate Aqueduct Study; prepared by Weston & Sampson; dated November 29, 2012.
- Exhibit B: Cochituate Aqueduct Trail - Map 1 - Opportunities & Constraints; Map 2 - Existing Conditions & Site Analysis Plan; prepared by Weston & Sampson.
- Exhibit C: Minutes from the October 9, 2012 Cochituate Aqueduct Public Hearing.