

FRIENDS OF THE QUINOBEQUIN BACKGROUND:

Formation of the Friends of the Quinobequin is an initiative of the Waban Area Council.

The Waban Area Council, still in its infancy, --having just been elected in November and sworn-in this past January-- is the neighborhood area council that has chosen to bring together the forces necessary to evaluate the current condition of the riverbank and parkland along Quinobequin Road in Waban and to restore them to their former pleasant state.

The Waban Area Council, as an elected body in Massachusetts, must operate under the Open Meeting Law, posting notice of its meetings that the public may attend and must hold its meetings in an ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant venue. Since we have chosen to organize Friends of the Quinobequin as a sub-Committee of our Council, **Friends of the Quinobequin must also operate under those same restrictions as our Council** and we will report back to our Council all action items taken by the Friends of the Quinobequin.

But, while that may be seen as a burden, it also offers us strength. The Waban Area Council can facilitate communication among the various City and State agencies that need to be drawn into support of our efforts. As an elected body, we are charged with communicating our neighborhood's needs to governing bodies. And the river, the parkland and Quinobequin Road itself offer great jurisdictional challenges for citizen participation. While residents along Quinobequin Road are citizens of Newton, the State Police patrol their street, which is under jurisdiction of the Department of Conservation and Recreation. The DCR also owns the parkland, but the City's Conservation Commission is charged with the administration of the Wetlands Protection Act, the Wetlands Regulations and the City of Newton Floodplain Ordinance to preserve and protect Newton's wetlands and floodplains. The Con Com is also charged with acquiring properties for the preservation of open space and wildlife protection, to maintain all Conservation Areas in a sound manner, to make the areas accessible to the public and to educate the public about open space issues. **We need to bring all these forces together and show our community intention to restore this area.**

As preparation for this meeting tonight, Alderman John Rice convened a meeting on March 6 with State Representative Ruth Balsler, State Senator Cynthia Creem, City of Newton Senior Environmental Planner Jennifer Steele, City of Newton Transportation Director, William Paille, Newton Performance Management Director, Aaron Goldman, Jerry Reilly, Maureen Reilly-Meagher and me. We were hoping that the discussion would help us to identify, with our legislators' support, the go-to people in the various State agencies who would point us to the resources we might need. My takeaway from that meeting was that there were definitely resources that we could access, provided that there was a swell of community support for the idea of restoring this area along the river.

The legislators made it clear that there had to be a convincing grassroots desire to restore the parkway! We must organize an eloquent advocacy for our long neglected environmental assets.

That is why we are meeting here tonight.

We want to hear your ideas and thoughts about what you want to accomplish. To help guide your thinking, we have unearthed a DCR plan first written in 2001 and finally docketed at DCR's request with the Newton Conservation Commission in April 2011 with public notice indicating that a plan had been filed with the City for public viewing before the meeting to discuss it. Although this plan was never presented, we believe that it shows what the DCR might be willing to do to help to restore the parkland to a more inviting and appealing state. We are not promoting this plan, but suggesting that you familiarize yourself with it and come back to our next meeting to discuss its merits and flaws. We can accept it, reject it, or tweak it. It is only a guide for us. But even though it is a good place for us to start, **tonight we want to hear everyone's thoughts and ideas.**