



July 4, 2017

Dear Newton Mayoral Candidates:

We are Newton residents who care deeply about Webster Woods, the largest contiguous parcel of open space in Newton. As you may know, most of Webster Woods is owned by the City of Newton and the state Department of Conservation and Recreation. Fortunately, these portions are permanently protected.

However, in the middle of these two protected, publicly owned portions is a twenty-two acre area of wooded open space now owned by Boston College. This privately owned area is an integral part of the woods, with numerous hiking trails running through it that are used regularly by many visitors and that connect to the publicly owned areas to the north and south. This area also contains a vernal pool, a rare resource in Newton, which functions as a breeding pond for tadpoles and salamanders.

Webster Woods is an open space gem. For many years, it has offered Newton residents and many others abundant recreational opportunities, such as hiking, jogging, cross-country skiing, and even cave-visiting. It also has high scientific value. As detailed by biologist Richard Primack, these woods have been used by nearby universities for studies of the biology of pink lady's slipper orchids, wildflower restoration programs, and the effects of climate change.

Given that the privately-owned area is right in the middle of these woods, any development of it would inevitably and seriously degrade the publicly owned open space on both sides and would undermine the public investment that has been made in this open space.

Due to the unique value of these woods, and the threat posed by the potential for future development by a private owner (especially after the expiration of the current restriction on all development that is not educational or religious), the Newton City Council, the Newton Conservators, and the Newton Conservation Commission have all strongly supported the City taking action to permanently protect the portion of the woods owned

by Boston College. And neighbors of these woods have pledged to contribute very significantly to the costs of such protection.

We ask that as a candidate for Mayor, you make the following commitment:

1. You state that it is a top priority of yours that the City permanently protect this area.
2. You form a citizen's advisory group to assist in this effort, and meet with the group on a quarterly basis.
3. Within two years from taking office, you negotiate an agreement with Boston College that includes permanent protection of at least the wooded area.
4. Within two and a half years from taking office, you submit necessary approvals to the Community Preservation Act Committee and the City Council to finalize and implement the agreement with Boston College.
5. If despite your best efforts you are unable to forge an agreement with Boston College, you fully support a taking by eminent domain that ensures no development of this area and continued public use of it.

We appreciate your consideration of this vital open space protection opportunity. Please confirm in writing your agreement with this request. We would appreciate a response within thirty days, and are happy to discuss this further with you if you would like.

Signed,

AnnaMaria Abernathy
Anna A. Allen
Rory J. Altman
Joan Balaban
Peter Barrer
Adrian Bradley
John Chadis
Sandy Chadis
Annie Cole
Josh Coval
Doug Dickson
Judith Di Leo

Bev Droz
Kat Eutsler
Deena Freed
Joshua Freed
Lynne Friedlander
Steve Garfinkle
Jeff Goldman
J. Christopher Hepburn
Katherine Howard
David Hruska
Kenneth Kimmell
Rebecca Kornblatt

Daniel Krasa
Jonathan Landman
Rebecca M. Mayne
Tatjana Meschede
Steven Miller
Lucy Ogburn
Willard Ogburn
Gordon M. Orloff
Carol Sklar
Phil Stern
Susan Stern
Beth Wilkinson