



July 26, 2017

Dear Newton Mayoral Candidates,

The mission of the Newton Conservators is to promote “the protection and preservation of natural areas . . . for the enjoyment and benefit of the people of Newton for scientific study, education, and recreation.”

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The middle section of the Webster Woods, currently owned by Boston College, serves all of these purposes. University professors like Richard Primack have done research in the woods; our walk leaders such as Eric Olson have taken students and other residents of Newton into Webster Woods to learn about the plants and animals of the woods; and many of Newton’s citizens love to walk the paths through the woods. There are few other areas of the city where one can feel as much in a forest as here.

For almost two years, the Newton Conservators has worked with the Friends of Webster Woods to preserve this land. The Board of the Newton Conservators fully supports the letter sent to you by the Friends of Webster Woods on July 4. We hope that you will commit to the actions it proposes.

In addition, we would like to clarify our thoughts about what preserving “at least the wooded area” should include.

We believe that the city should take the following steps:

- Acquire outright, or through conservation restriction, the following areas of the Boston College property:

- (1) The wooded area west of the rear parking lot (i.e. the large wooded parcel that contains the Bare Pond vernal pool),
- (2) The rear MASCO parking lot that adjoins Bare Pond, and
- (3) The wooded area between that rear parking lot and the pavement adjacent to the western side of the temple building.

- Restore the rear (west-most) parking lot and its driveway to a natural condition. We believe that the extremely close proximity of this parking lot to Bare Pond threatens the vernal pool itself.

- Grant to the Newton Conservators or another organization a permanent conservation restriction on all city-owned land comprising Webster Woods.

- If the above land is not acquired by the city but is protected by a conservation easement granted by Boston College, arrange that Newton Conservators or another organization hold that conservation restriction.

We believe that including these areas in the acquisition and protection will best preserve Webster Woods, rectify an environmental error made when that parking lot was built, protect the vernal pool, and enhance the overall open space, without detracting from the development potential of the area around the building.

Furthermore, we hope that you will give consideration to removing and restoring the small parking lot immediately adjacent to Hammond Pond Parkway, and to replacing

the hazardous driveway access to the site with safer access via the signalized intersection and driveway that now serves the Towers of Chestnut Hill and the Shops at Chestnut Hill. While this would involve coordination with DCR, it is likely that all parties could agree to make this important safety improvement.

We request that you respond to this further clarification of the specific area of the property we think should be preserved.

We will publish the responses from all mayoral candidates on our website as we receive them. On August 21, we will send a message containing the responses (up to 1000 words per candidate) to all of our members.

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions—either at the PO box on this letter or at President@NewtonConservators.org.

All the best,

Beth Wilkinson, President

On behalf of the Newton Conservators Board