

Waban Hill Reservoir



Robert J. DeRubeis
Commissioner



In this time when the construction of multiple-unit residential projects dots the landscape, Newton was presented with a unique opportunity. The city had an option to purchase a diminishing resource, a parcel of open space. Not just any open space, but one with a scenic vista and a water element as well. Seeing this inimitable prospect, the city and in particular the Chestnut Hill neighborhood mobilized quickly to work on a plan to acquire the Waban Hill Reservoir, which had been recently decommissioned by the MWRA. The state legislature authorized the sale of the property to the City of Newton with the stipulation that it be used for open space and recreation.

The Waban Hill Reservoir Advisory Group (WHRAG) organized in January 2013 with the intention of identifying some long-term uses for the site. The group looked at the site with a vision for not only the neighborhood but also the city as a whole. There was consensus that the water element and its location along the Marathon route made for a unique opportunity that would allow many individuals to enjoy this urban oasis. The short-term vision after acquisition would be to open access and allow for walking and other passive activities as a master plan for the site would be developed. Some thoughts for the longer term that were envisioned by the WHRAG were the incorporation of a pre-school imaginative play area with a water element; an informal amphitheater; terracing of the berms; public art displays; seating at various locations and the possibility of an apple orchard.

Once the acquisition is complete, the property would fall under the jurisdiction of the Parks & Recreation Department. Our initial work would be to perform site restoration, which would make the site accessible to the public. There is a fifteen-foot wide path that traverses the entire perimeter of the reservoir. We would want to stabilize and more clearly define the path with the addition of stone dust, as well as placing an ornamental fence along the interior of the pathway to act as a safety barrier to those utilizing the path. To enhance the integrity of the dam, there is a need to remove the vegetation that currently inhabits the granite embankment of the drumlin. As part of ongoing maintenance, the department will mow the grass along the bermed perimeter and to the rear of the property. During the development of the master plan, it is our intention to preserve the area to a level that will allow the public to have access to the site, affording them the opportunity to enjoy the scenic vistas this property has to offer.

After much hard work and perseverance by many people, the vision became a reality when, on March 16, 2015, the Board of Aldermen voted 23-0 to acquire the Waban Hill Reservoir. This significant milestone is not an ending; it is a gateway to the beginning of an exciting journey to create a space that will be another gem that the City of Newton has to offer to its residents.

Robert J. DeRubeis
Commissioner
Parks & Recreation

Our deepest sympathy on the loss of Lucy, his wife of 69 years, to Lawrence Kaplan,
a longtime, valued member of the Newton Conservators board.