

**Town of Milton, Massachusetts
Master Plan Implementation Committee
(MPIC)**
Cheryl Toulias, Chair
Richard Burke
Kathleen Conlon
Taber Keally
Elizabeth Miller

January 14, 2019

Select Board
Board of Park Commissioners

**Re: Waterfront Recreational Access Study at Milton Landing, Final Summary
Report dated June 1, 2018 (MAPC)**

Dear Board Members:

The Master Plan Implementation Committee (“MPIC” or the “Committee”) and the Town’s Planning and Community Development staff worked with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (“MAPC”) for approximately two years on the enclosed study and report on Milton’s waterfront. This letter of support offers background, the Committee’s comments, updates on pending follow-up study, and suggestions for next steps towards implementation.

Background

The MPIC was formed in 2016 following adoption of the Master Plan (2015), a plan that was the result of a two-year effort, \$125,000 investment, and the energy, time and ideas of numerous Milton residents. Included in its Top 20 Recommendations is increasing access to the Neponset River, including expanding recreational opportunities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and water users such as for kayaking and canoeing. Reference is also made to maintaining and enhancing the Farmer’s Market.

During the summer of 2016, the Select Board referred to the MPIC for review and recommendation a request from the Friends of Milton Crew (“FOMC”) to locate a second dock at the waterfront. The FOMC sponsors the Milton Public Schools’ crew program and a masters’ rowing program. Later, the project grew to include a study of Milton Village and possible mixed-use overlay zoning. The Committee is continuing to work on a zoning proposal, which we will submit to the Planning Board for consideration.

Public Engagement

Stakeholders were identified and outreach was done to garner broad participation in the waterfront study. The abutting property owners Charlie King, Michael Roberts, the Residents at Milton Landing (88 Wharf Street condominium association), the Farmer’s Market, the Milton Yacht Club (“MYC”), the FOMC, the Select Board, the Board of Park Commissioners, the Historical Commission, the Conservation Commission and the Milton Village/Central Avenue Revitalization Committee were invited to participate.

MPIC meetings were held monthly, with posted agendas and opportunities for public comment, and two public meetings that were recorded by Milton Access TV were held to present drafts of MAPC's report. Drafts of the report were posted on the town web site, and the public was encouraged to provide input at meetings, through surveys and through email. The recommendations in the draft report were modified to respond to input from the MPIC, elected board members, stakeholders and the public.

Key Findings and Recommendations in the Study

Below are the MPIC's comments on the key findings and recommendations made by MAPC in its June 1, 2018 report.

1. New Low Height Dock for Crew, Kayak and Canoe Users

MPIC Comments:

The FOMC has expressed interest in funding, design and engineering for a new dock.

Recently, and after MAPC had submitted its final report to the Committee, the FOMC and the MYC proposed and expressed support for a permanent shared dock with two sections at different heights to serve each organization's needs.

The existing floating dock was installed decades ago when the wharf shifted from commercial to recreational use. The dock was licensed by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection ("DEP") but, due to administrative error, the license was never recorded. Childs Engineering ("Childs"), a consultant retained by the Town at the Committee's request, has opined that the license is invalid and a new Chapter 91 license is required. The Town engaged Childs to determine what corrective actions are necessary to obtain a new license and to pursue those actions to ensure proper licensing. Childs advised the Town that the re-licensing process will take approximately six (6) to twelve (12) months.

At the Committee's request, the Town also engaged Childs to provide a design to rebuild the existing boat ramp so that it can be used with traditional vehicle-hauled boat trailers rather than the current rail and crib system. During the week of January 28, 2019, Childs will perform (a) a site investigation to determine existing conditions of the boat ramp and (b) a topographic study to determine structural element locations and slopes. Approximately four weeks later, Childs will deliver plans and specifications for a redesigned boat ramp.

In May 2018 the Town engaged Childs to provide hydrographic survey services for a section of the Neponset River in order to determine the existing depths of the river. This information is necessary to determine the best location for a new dock and to determine if dredging is required to achieve the required water depths. Childs determined that dredging is required. To further the analysis, the Committee recommended engaging Childs to explore options to dredge a channel, to provide dredge volume calculations, and to explore dredge spoil disposal options including the possibility of reusing some of the material on site for future construction projects, such as repairing the existing seawall. The Committee expects to receive Childs' report on dredging options shortly.

Lastly, at the Committee's request, the Town engaged Childs to obtain the local, state and federal permits required to conduct the dredging work after the Town determines which dredging option to pursue. Prior to submitting permit applications, the Town must engage a contractor to sample and test proposed dredge spoils by a qualified testing laboratory. Childs will request a soil sampling plan from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the DEP. Childs recently informed the Town that the permitting process is expected to take eleven (11) to eighteen (18) months.

For informational purposes, with the approval of the Select Board and the Planning Board, the Committee has agreed to pay Childs a total of \$37,400 for its services relating to boat ramp design (\$11,000), dredging options (\$4,300), dredge permitting (\$17,000) and floating dock permitting (\$5,100).

2. Optimize Storage

MPIC Comments:

The seasonal boat storage, parking areas, and general storage areas are inefficient for water-dependent users and hinder broader public access to the waterfront. The MPIC recommends constructing a consolidated, shared storage, equipment, locker and restroom area next to the historic building that housed the former police station.

3. Reconfigure Gravel Area

MPIC Comments:

The sense of welcoming and inviting public access to the river could be greatly improved with reconfiguration of the gravel parking area. This area could provide improved landscaping, seating, bike racks, seasonal storage of crew boats and an area for seasonal rentals of canoes, kayaks and paddle boards. Other potential uses identified include car-share parking spaces and electric vehicle charging stations.

4. New Waterfront Operations

MPIC Comments:

The Committee recommends that the Town rebuild the existing boat ramp so that the marine rail with associated winch house and cradles are no longer needed to launch boats with moorings in the river. This would allow the land area currently used for storage of these items to be used for other purposes as identified in the study. The MYC has indicated that boats can be stored on jack stands and blocks in a more efficient manner than the current system.

The MPIC has had much discussion about the use of the waterfront land area for the off-season storage of boats and the summer storage of trailers and cradles. There is consensus that the off-season storage should be limited to the area recommended in the MAPC report, and a prohibition of summer storage of trailers should be considered.

The Committee notes that there are different months of operation for various users of the waterfront. For example, the Milton Public Schools crew teams' season begins in March, while the MYC's boats are not moored until months later. A shared use of the docks and supporting facilities will require the Town to determine a structure and management plan that considers who owns the dock(s), buildings, and surface areas, who has rights to use them and who is responsible for maintaining them.

Currently, the MYC's boats are out of the water, requiring site storage, for nearly nine months out of the year, leaving the parking lots most available for additional uses besides boat storage in the months of June, July, and August. This is a limiting factor for exploring potential other uses of the parking areas at the waterfront.

Next Steps

1. Maximize access for multiple public water-dependent uses and events.

MPIC Comments:

Marine engineering is required and has been retained to further define, design and assign costs to rebuilding the boat ramp and to install new docks, as discussed under Key Findings and Recommendations, No. 1, above.

2. Promote public access to the riverfront through landscape improvements, lighting, signage, and pedestrian, cyclist and waterfront amenities.

MPIC Comments:

Surveying, civil engineering, landscape architecture and environmental graphic design services are required to advance design and detailing and to assign costs to land side improvements.

3. Optimize organization for non-water dependent support uses.

MPIC Comments:

The Committee recommends that the Town stabilize and restore the historic former police station building for public use associated with Milton Landing and consider constructing shared facilities for storage, equipment, lockers and restrooms next to the historic building, as discussed under Key Findings and Recommendations, No. 2, above.

4. Provide dedicated areas, clearly defined relationships and conditions for all current and future users that desire a permanent presence on the waterfront.

MPIC Comments:

The Committee notes that the waterfront area has multiple land owners and Town departments with responsibilities, and is subject to various easements and local and

state permits, as described in some detail in MAPC's report. The Town will need to craft new agreements that clearly define requirements, roles, and locations for multiple waterfront users.

5. Support vitality of Milton Village and function through shared parking and use of open space for events.

MPIC Comments:

With the removal of cradle and trailer storage, and perhaps boat storage, the land area dedicated to that use now could be repurposed for seasonal events and/or in support of parking for the Milton Village commercial district. Additionally, consideration should be given in conjunction with the potential mixed-use overlay zoning, of the use of limited areas for parking in support of adaptive re-use of historic structures within the Milton Village business district that have limited potential for on-site parking.

Partnerships and Collaboration

The Committee recommends that the applicable Town boards and officials take the following actions:

1. Continue to work with all water-dependent stakeholders and property owners to improve the use and stewardship of Milton Landing and define new agreements among the parties.
2. Pursue a new low-level dock or a combined dock with two heights.
3. Advance the Town's partnership with the Residences at Milton Landing (88 Wharf Street condominium association) to consider longer term improvements to the waterfront parking area that is owned by the Residences at Milton Landing and subject to an easement in favor of the Town – expanding a flexible area for all users of the waterfront, potentially including additional parking to support the Milton Village commercial district.

Regulatory and Permit Review

The Committee also notes that certain regulatory approvals may be required:

1. The implementation of the recommended waterfront improvements may require the identification of specific parcel ownership, easements, use agreements, permits and Chapter 91 licenses.
2. Depending upon the nature of the changes and improvements to be made, approvals may be required from the Planning Board (with respect to the special permit issued to the Residences at Milton Landing), the Conservation Commission, the Historical Commission (with respect to the former police station building), DEP, the Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management, the Massachusetts Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, and/or the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Recommended Approach - Spring/Summer/Fall

