



TOWN OF SWAMPSCOTT

OPEN SPACE & RECREATION PLAN COMMITTEE

ELIHU THOMSON ADMINISTRATION BUILDING
22 MONUMENT AVENUE, SWAMPSCOTT, MA 01907

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DANIELLE STRAUSS, RECREATION DIRECTOR

September 29, 2014

School Building Committee Members:

By this letter, the Open Space & Recreation Plan ("OS&RP") Committee is presenting its concerns to the Swampscott School Building Committee on the potential impacts of the proposed district-wide elementary school on Swampscott's open and recreational space. In addition to the general concern of loss of open and/or recreational space, we believe that several specific goals and objectives set forth in the recently adopted OS&RP may be adversely affected by the proposed new building and parking area that is to be constructed adjacent to the Middle School on Forest Avenue and the related work planned at the neighboring Stanley School site. We believe that these concerns have not been fully evaluated – or in some cases not considered at all – in the development of the construction plan. We request that these concerns, in particular, the specific questions listed below, be fully addressed in the next public forum, scheduled for Tuesday, September 30, 2014, as well as in the next steps in the planning process should this proposal move forward.

Swampscott, as everyone is aware, is a small community with only a limited amount of open and recreation space. In the period of time since the preparation of the previous OS&RP in the early 1980s to the recent adoption of an updated OS&RP, the amount of open and recreation space has decreased, most notably with the construction of the new high school. Unless each of the Town Departments, Boards, and Committees is diligent in considering the impacts of any proposals it may put forth on the remaining open and recreation space, we run the risk of losing even more. We believe that the goal of local authorities should be to avoid any further incremental erosion of open and recreational space and to maintain or enhance the character of Swampscott's open spaces.

The OS&RP Committee is committed to working with all Town Departments, Boards, and Committees in the implementation of the OS&RP and looks forward to coordinating with the Swampscott School Building Committee in ensuring that open space and recreation concerns are adequately dealt with regarding any proposals for school property, including the current proposed district-wide elementary school. Below are the specific questions we have concerning the current proposal:

1. The proposed Rails-to-Trails pathway both transects and abuts the proposed construction of the new district-wide elementary school building and parking areas. In addition to being a separate goal of the OS&RP, completion of the Rails-to-Trails pathway is part of the overall goal of establishing a Green Corridor Network through the Town. This pathway can serve as important access to the proposed elementary school and middle school for walkers and bicycle users, reducing the expected traffic congestion problems during arrival and dismissal times. Has the planned Rails-to-Trails pathway been considered and incorporated into the proposed construction plans? If not, what steps can be taken to ensure that the proposed construction will not conflict with the pathway?

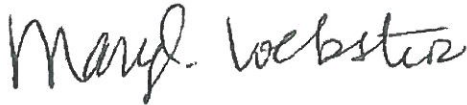
2. The “turnaround” behind the new proposed building appears to be in or near existing wetlands. Has the location of the wetlands in the area affected by the construction been identified? And have appropriate mitigation measures been established as required by federal, state and local laws and regulations and incorporated into the construction plans? Have the effects on wetlands for the “turnaround” as well as other aspects of the proposed project been fully discussed with the Conservation Commission?
3. Additionally, there are also several certified as well as proposed vernal pools on or near the proposed construction site. Vernal pools (a type of wetland) are unique wildlife habitats best known for the amphibians and invertebrate animals that use them to breed. These pools typically fill with water in the autumn or winter due to rainfall and rising groundwater and remain ponded through the spring and then completely dry out by the middle or end of summer. Do the proposed construction plans – especially of the new building and parking areas – incorporate measures to prevent any adverse impacts to these certified or potential vernal pools and to ensure compliance with applicable federal, state and local laws respecting vernal pools?
4. Considering the increase density of impervious surfaces on the site resulting from existing as well as the proposed buildings and parking lots, is there a plan for mitigating storm runoff pollution into the adjacent wetlands? Has the possibility of “green roofs” (one of the specific objectives of the OS&RP or other forms of “green infrastructure” to address stormwater runoff been considered and/or incorporated into the plan? Has installation and/or replacement of pavement with more porous materials (another goal of the OS&RP) been considered and/or incorporated into the plan?
5. Where will the staging for the construction of the new building be located? A review of the schematic plans of the new proposed district-wide elementary school shows that there is little space available for placement of the equipment and materials needed for the construction. Will the existing parking areas or abutting green space be used or affected?
6. During construction – which we understand is estimated to take at least 18 months—what recreational facilities will be available for the children to have gym and recess? Once the project is completed, where will outdoor physical education classes and recess for the elementary grades be conducted? The current plan for the children’s play area appears too small for the number of children attending the new district-wide school.
7. What is the complete plan for the Hadley and Stanley school sites?
 - a. The OS&RP Committee is especially concerned that existing recreational space at the Hadley School (the playground and playing field) should not be lost through resale of the property but maintained as open space, given that this is the only recreational space available for residents of that part of town (the surrounding area includes general park and beach space).
 - b. With respect to the demolition of the Stanley School and creation of playing fields on the site, any plans should ensure that the abutting Ewing Woods Conservation Land is not disturbed.
8. The planned demolition and field creation at the Stanley School site is being considered as part of the site preparation for the larger district-wide elementary school development. There should, however, be a

separate review to approve spending \$4 million on a turf field for field hockey (but with no bathroom facilities) at the Stanley School site, especially given that there is no state funding for site preparation at this location. If the construction at the Middle School is approved, is there the ability to modify the plans for the Stanley School site? The OS&RP Committee believes that separate public forums be held to receive public comment on the requirements and design of the open space and amenities at the Stanley School site.

9. The enjoyment and vitality of our natural spaces is directly impacted by night-time lighting. Artificial lighting can spill unnecessarily or shine upwards into the sky, affecting wildlife behavior, human ability to sleep at night, in addition to being a waste of energy. What is the plan for lighting at the Middle School and recreation area at Stanley? While lighting will be necessary for safety, it will be important to ensure we aren't "over doing" it in such a manner as to negatively affect the wildlife, or even our own enjoyment of the evening skies. What steps will be taken to control the distribution of light on the site and minimize its impacts on surrounding areas?

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Webster". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mary Webster, Chair
Open Space & Recreation Plan Committee

