

Alternative Proposal Would Daylight Town Brook Through Quincy Center

Proponents Seek Citizen Support

By LAURA GRIFFIN

Town Brook has been shunned like a ragged relative, hidden for the last hundred years beneath culverts, squeezed into pipes and buried in cement beneath Quincy Center, according to local environmentalists Steve Perdios and Pat Artis who believe that can change and become a unique attraction in Quincy Center.

Town Brook can be daylighted through Quincy Center rather than being re-routed along the Concourse, according to both Perdios, spokesman for the Quincy Environmental Network (QEN) and Artis who represents the Wollaston Garden Club. Both groups are volunteer organizations dedicated to the protection and beautification of the environment.

The groups jointly sponsored the March 29 presentation of a plan that proposes a daylighted Town Brook flowing in full view across the city's center through the Ross Parking Garage location to the Hancock Parking Lot. Some 100 supporters and observers attended the event at Thomas Crane Public Library.

The joint proposal was offered as an alternative to the plan outlined March 9 by Street-Works, the developer overseeing Quincy Center Revitalization.

In the Street-Works plan, Town Brook would run underground beneath the Ross Parking Garage and Hancock Lot acreage, but will be daylighted along the Concourse and a pocket park will be developed at the site of Quincy American Legion

Post 95 at Mechanic Street and Revere Road.

On Tuesday, Artis said that supporters would now undertake efforts to influence decision-makers at the local, state and federal levels and to show the value of their plan for Town Brook in the new Quincy Center.

Supporters of daylighting Town Brook will begin contacting state and federal agencies through letters, contacts and at meetings, according to Artis who said Monday, "The next step is to give citizen witness. We need to educate the politicians."

"By daylighting Town Brook, we make a better development. It would be something special, something unique," predicted Perdios.

From his opening statements to his final words, Perdios offered his support for the Quincy Center Revitalization and for Street-Works, but sought a new dialogue on the Town Brook issue.

"I would hope we have a real civil discourse," Perdios said. "We want the redevelopment to be successful. Nobody wants to see this

project go down the tubes."

Perdios acknowledged the QEN proposal had some downsides, including its cost, but said the benefits outweigh the drawbacks, and predicted that daylighting Town Brook would not only enhance the new Quincy Center, but, also, add considerable value to the center's economic development.

"We like water views. People flock to water views," said Perdios. "The Town Brook is a beautiful feature."

Perdios described the limits QEN faced in developing its plan which could only be proposed on the current city-controlled property and not involve the taking, purchasing or demolition of any existing building.

Despite those restrictions, Perdios said the QEN plan works.

"We're not asking them to reduce the building footprint (of the new developments) by one square foot, not by one foot," said Perdios.

However, the QEN plan does entail demolishing the Ross Parking structure ahead of schedule, eliminates approximately four parking spaces near the Hancock Parking lot and requires that one proposed structure be "nudged" over several feet,



TOWN BROOK FLOWS toward the ocean from this site at Miller Stile Road in Quincy Center. The brook begins in the Blue Hills, flows through Braintree and West Quincy before reaching Quincy Center and finally emptying into Town River at Quincy Point. (Quincy Sun Photo/Laura Griffin)

Town Brook Alternative (cont)

Quincy Sun April 7, 2011 (pp 2, 32)

according to Perdios.

Perdios also noted that Street-Works officials feared a deep chasm would be formed at the point where Town Brook rolls far below street-level.

Perdios said that could be solved by terracing and landscaping.

Near the conclusion, Perdios cited a chart developed by Street-Works which scored the QEN with a failing grade of 53 to an 89 for the developer's plan.

"Those numbers should be reversed," said Perdios after citing multiple failings of the Street-Works plan.

Several observers at last week's meeting worried about the cost, and others asked how the QEN plan would affect flooding.

Perdios said that allowing Town Brook to run its own course reduced flooding potential as the brook rises and recedes naturally.

Both Artis and Perdios did express disappointment that the Street-Works plan offers so little benefit for Town Brook.

"We've been working on this since the fall of 2008," said Artis while Perdios described his numerous meetings.

When City Council endorsed the Street-Works proposal and signed the Land Disposition Agreement for the two parking lots, Perdios expected an open discussion of the brook but said that never occurred.

"I feel we walked away

completely empty-handed. I don't believe there's any malice," Perdios said.

Carolyn Spicer, spokesperson for Street-Works, said in an e-mail there have been few changes since last fall.

"We have made some adjustments to certain features based on feedback received from the QEN, but the location remains essentially the same."

Spicer continued, "While QEN's influence can be seen in several aspects of our proposed plans including the increased amount of daylighting and enhanced amenity area, their preferred route was unfortunately determined to be unfeasible due to an inordinate number of constraints such as land control, constructability, and environmental impacts."

While Perdios has no estimates on the cost of the QEN plan, Street-Works officials estimate their plan will cost \$14.9 million and construction could begin in the second quarter of 2012. Perdios said that figure does not include the purchase and demolition of the American Legion post.

Street-Works began seeking the required approvals from nine agencies this week with its first review under the MEPA (Massachusetts Environmental Protection Act).

The Conservation Commission and Department of Public Works, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, the federal Environmental Protection Agency and Fish & Wildlife Service, and the state's Division of Marine Fisheries must also approve the plan.