

October 30, 2006

PROPOSAL Cheesecake Brook Greenway Improvements

Dee Spiro, Planning and Development Department, presented the project requesting \$393,673 in CPA funds to develop the southern portion of Cheesecake Brook for passive recreation and open space. She detailed the work done to date on Cheesecake Brook, including a comprehensive plan for the Brook funded with a portion of a \$185,000 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) grant and community involvement in the planning process. The neighborhood has shown strong support for this project and has been involved in the process. The project would include new fencing, gathering places, paths, a foot bridge over the brook, and management of plantings to encourage wildlife while providing access to the new open space, all of which were specific requests of area residents. Portions of the project would be funded by CDBG monies.

Guive Mirfendereski opposes this project because it takes place on land owned by the city prior to the adoption of CPA. He suggested that this is a capital improvement project. He also expressed concern that this land is not suitable as recreation space given its location and could be dangerous.

Alderman Ted Hess-Mahan, Ward 3, expressed strong support for this proposal. He stated that the brook is the spine of the neighborhood, and is surrounded by dense residential housing, a school, elderly housing, and many children. He expressed excitement over creating a recreational area that could be part of a chain of recreational land that leads all the way to the Charles River and beyond.

Curtis Betts, Friends of Albemarle, spoke in support of the project, especially because this project is part of the bigger picture of creating a linear park that starts in Newton and will go all the way to the Charles River and link to neighboring communities. He described the brook as a mini-Turnpike for the neighborhood, dividing residents on either side, and praised this project as a way to eliminate this divide.

Alderman Lisle Baker, Ward 7, expressed support for City Archives Preservation Project (previously presented) as well as the Durant-Kenrick Homestead (presented later in the evening).

Andreae Downs, League of Women Voters, expressed support for this project. The League would like to see additional information, including an engineering study to understand the condition of the channel retaining walls. The League would also like to know more about the plans for path placement and materials, and would encourage the thoughtful use of paths to minimize water displacement and loss of open green space.

Anatol Zukerman supports this project. While he believes the city should have maintained this land, he sees this as a great opportunity to improve the area, and suggested that the fence be removed and bridges be added.

November 14, 2006

PROPOSAL Cheesecake Brook Greenway Improvements

Dee Spiro, staff for Community Development Block Grant program (CDBG), answered questions about the Cheesecake Brook Greenway Improvement application. Moss wanted to clarify the nexus of CDBG funding and CPC funding. She is concerned that CDBG is funding only portions of the project and then looking to CPC to fulfill the rest, especially with Neighborhood Improvements. Spiro thinks Moss has a legitimate point. She explained that this is a new CDBG target neighborhood, and this neighborhood decided to spend their CDBG funds on just this one project. They have already used some of that money

to fund a master plan of the area. The CDBG funds will be used, regardless of CPA funding, to implement improvements at the western end of the project. CPA funds would allow the improvements along the rest of the corridor.

Moss asked if the neighborhood will get CDBG funds again. Spiro said that they might get more for 2011-2015, but not before. Moss asked if Ch. 90 money could be used. Spiro said that Ch. 90 money, which is for roadwork, could be used, but that it would take \$6 million to completely redo the area, and it's not a priority project. She also mentioned that there might be MWRA water main work done in this area in the future, and if that were done then they would ask for more improvements.

Moss said that she is bothered by the fact that this is an isolated parcel that will benefit the area houses, and she would like to see this addressed. Spiro said that the neighborhood chose this project with many residents giving input, and most of whom are not direct abutters.

McMillan asked which portions of the project would be categorized as recreation. Ricchi said that benches and pathways would qualify, but removal of invasive species, erosion control, tree management, etc. would be an open space expense. Kimmell asked about replacing the fence. Spiro said that is a problem, because it's not maintenance, but beautification. However, the fence abuts the street and cuts off any recreation potential, so changing the fence would create lands for recreational use, or alternatively protect the land for open space.

McMillan said that the 15% contingency would have to change, as it's higher than anything they've approved.

Kimmell discussed the wording of the statute and if it would allow for this project, given that it says land can only be rehabilitated if it is acquired by CPA funds. He said the argument for this one is that it's creating a recreational use since the area is currently inaccessible.

McMillan asked if they have raised money from the surrounding residents. Spiro said they had thought about it but hadn't done it, and the neighborhood is not the kind of place where you can raise a lot of money, with a high proportion of low and moderate-income residents. McMillan asked if the committee thought that they should push that. Spiro said that they are expecting the neighborhood to help with maintenance in the future. Bernheimer said that without some promise of maintenance funding for the future then it's not worth making the investment. Sacks said that this is a common problem and that the committee should make capital improvements where it brings residents together for maintenance. Alderman Ted Hess-Mahan said that it is part of a chain of the Cheesecake Brook, which does have community groups. Bernheimer asked if anyone had sought out other grants and if there is anyone who does that. Spiro answered that there is no one to do that. Sacks said that the best projects are the ones that come up from the community and build that community. Hess-Mahan said there is strong support for the project and has been at previous meetings. McMillan said that the committee would like to see community support spelled out concretely. Spiro said that they have looked into some other funding sources and will continue to push for some.

Jacobson asked if Spiro had addressed any of the League of Women Voters (LWVN) comments. Spiro said she was unclear about the comment about retaining walls. Andreae Downs of the LWVN said that they were referring to new retaining walls that would be necessary with the new grading by the sidewalks.

January 24, 2007

PROPOSAL Cheesecake Brook Greenway

Ricchi explained how CDBG funds are in the mix. Dickson thinks the project is more related to open space improvement, like the Flowed Meadow projects.

Dickson argued the project fits with CPA goals and is similar to previous efforts. Bernheimer has a problem with long term maintenance for this type of project. He believes the City does not budget adequately for it. He also noted there was no commitment from the community for it.

Dickson asked what the maintenance load is for this project. He thinks the project could wait a bit. McMillan thought the CPC is not ready to act on the application. The project should be put off until later this year.

March 28, 2007

Review of Proposed FY07 Projects:

PROPOSAL Cheesecake Brook Greenway – defer

May 30, 2007

PROPOSAL Cheesecake Brook Greenway

After discussion, the Committee decided to defer this proposal for the fy08 funding round, and directed Alice Ingerson to organize discussions among applicants for CPA funding for all projects along Cheesecake Brook, including the Depts. of Public Works, Engineering and Parks & Recreation, to clarify whether these projects should or can be submitted/funded/constructed in a particular order (for example, by addressing stormwater management along the entire brook first, before funding new amenities or access along particular segments).