

Dear those interested in the Waban Hill Reservoir:

We want to update you on the status of the Reservoir.

The City has now taken title to the Reservoir. The land is also now subject to the restriction limiting its future use to conservation and recreation purposes, which was a condition of the sale. The Recreation Commissioner, Robert DeRubeis, anticipates having a formal celebratory opening in the fall, likely in October, when the preliminary work needed to make the Reservoir safe for access can be completed. This will provide an opportunity to notify the media and also involve the Mayor and all who played a role in this successful acquisition.

Working with funds voted by the Community Preservation Committee and then the Board of Aldermen, Commissioner DeRubeis anticipates taking some immediate steps to secure the Reservoir site. This most likely involves repairing any gaps in the existing fencing while other repair and maintenance work occurs on the site. (There will be no public access during this phase.) The next steps are to clear the overgrowth from the inside stone wall of the Reservoir, and then erect a temporary but serviceable black 4 foot chain link fence on the waterside of the path on the top of the berm as a safeguard against visitors into the Reservoir at the time when the site will be open for recreational use. The City will obtain the biannual safety inspection, and make preliminary repairs to points of access. The exterior fence will remain up for the time being. Some informational signs are likely to be erected to advise people of what is going on.

The next stage of work, more likely after the formal opening, would be to rebuild the water level gate valve to operate automatically to maintain the water level, restore such of the gate house as is needed for safety or access to the gate, and possibly further enhance access, including limited handicapped parking and perhaps removing some of the exterior fence.

In the meantime, the Commissioner will be sending out a request for proposal for a master plan for the Reservoir which will look at enhancements further out in time that are consistent with public access for walking around the top and enhancing the site in complementary ways. These might include a more permanent waterside fence, easier access for the disabled, a possible tot lot, water fountain or water feature, or other ideas to enhance the open space and recreational aspects of the site.

Everyone understands that the current plans do not foreclose further uses of the site consistent with the Conservation Restriction, but we feel these initial steps are important and appropriate to fulfill the intent of the Advisory Committee, the Community Preservation Committee, the Recreation Commission, the Mayor, and the Board of Aldermen, all of whom agreed that the site be acquired for public access along the lines laid out above.

We will plan an update on a more formal opening in September when we know more. In the meantime, we want to thank all of our colleagues in City Government and our state legislators for their help, as well as all of you who worked to bring us to this result.

Ward Seven Aldermen Lisle Baker, Ruthanne Fuller, and Marc Laredo