

# Neponset River Greenway Council discusses upcoming celebrations

**Mary Ellen Gambon**  
Staff Reporter

The Neponset River Greenway Council's (NRGC) 15 members met on Wed., Oct. 2 at the Area E-18 police station to plan the fall's upcoming community celebrations and discuss area issues.

It was Hyde Park's turn to host the meeting, as the venues rotate among the neighborhoods of Hyde Park, Mattapan, Dorchester and Milton.

Chair Jessica Mink of Roslindale announced that on Sept. 25, the Neponset River Greenway, a multi-use trail system along the banks of the Neponset River, was named one of six "Great Places in America in 2019" by the American Planning Association (APA). One of the reasons for the award was improving access to the trails for Mattapan residents, including the addition of a blue bikes station and affordable housing along the greenway.

"The public spaces recognized this year demonstrate the importance of planning in creating welcoming, multi-use spaces for the entire community to enjoy and come together," said Kurt Christiansen, APA president, in a press release. "The Neponset River Greenway is a national example of how improving accessibility to community assets can drastically improve the lives of residents and make communities more inclusive."

The area was once an industrial corridor with factories and a paper mill. Now it has been transformed into a publicly-accessible network of open spaces and trails where people can enjoy the environment and stay in shape, thanks to the efforts of environmental activists.

"On the second day after this section first opened, I saw a man in a wheelchair using the trail," Mink said. "This shows how accessible the area that was once hidden has become for residents."

She added that the Neponset River Greenway joins the Emerald Necklace, the Back Bay, Leventhal Park, Washington St., and Fields Corner as Great Places in America.

To celebrate this achievement, the NRGC is planning on holding an event on Sun., Oct. 27. A community walk will begin at Mattapan Station, with guest speakers at the Harvest River Bridge near Ryan Playground. The walk is about 1.3 miles and takes an average of 45 minutes to complete. Walkers can collect trash along

the way.

Member Lee Toma of Milton volunteered to lend his public address system. Several members volunteered to share the history of the organization, the development of the area's trail system and the building of the Harvest River Bridge, and the importance of the award. Members of the APA will also be in attendance.

Hyde Park leader and Neponset River Watershed Association (NepRWA) board member Martha McDonough said she would reach out to Keep Hyde Park Beautiful (HKPB) to join the effort. She also suggested borrowing bike carts for people who could not complete the entire walk to offer a transportation option.

Vivien Morris of the Mattapan Food and Fitness Coalition (MFFC) told the group she would reach out to groups like Mattapan Love and Mattapan Walks. She currently involved in organizing a six-team Mattapan walking challenge on Saturdays with MFFC.

Vivian Ortiz, a Mattapan organizer, offered to reach out to Boston Harbor Now to see if representatives would like to speak about the harbor's connection to the Neponset River.

Sarah Lensing, a planner at the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) the said she will give a presentation of the 125-year history of the river "and put it in a larger context."

Another event the group is planning is a pumpkin float in the spirit of Halloween. The DCR and the NVGC are joining forces for the annual event, which will take place beginning on Davenport Creek at Pope John Paul II Park in Dorchester at 5 p.m.

The pumpkins will be lit by NVGC volunteers with battery operated candles. DCR volunteers at the river banks will place them on floats to cast into the Neponset.

Volunteers offered to place flyers along the trails in all communities, as well as at pumpkins at grocery stores, farmers markets, local coffee houses and ice cream shops, and Lambert's.

McDonough addressed traffic mismanagement in Wolcott Square, which is comprised of several dead-end neighborhood streets near the Father Hart Bridge.

"The road was closed down at 6 p.m.," she said. "Traffic can be backed up through Readville and beyond going toward Truman Prkwy. There was no email from the City. The Father Hart Bridge was totally closed."



The Neponset River Greenway Council met at the E-18 Police Department Station in Hyde Park to discuss upcoming events, awards and cleanups.

PHOTO BY MARY ELLEN GAMBON

She added that she was approached by a state trooper, who told her the route was closed. "And there has been construction on the Dana Ave. Bridge, too," McDonough said.

McDonough added that the local businesses have been impacted because their parking has been shut down after 6 p.m.

"I talked to the guy who owns the liquor store," she said. "He just opened two

months ago, and he had no idea this was going to happen. Why is this coming in front of our businesses? These businesses do most of their work in the evenings."

State Commander Lt. James A. Bazzinotti of the State Police told the group that it is the construction company's responsibility for signage.

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