



TOWN OF GREAT BARRINGTON MASSACHUSETTS

LAKE MANSFIELD IMPROVEMENT TASK FORCE

September 19, 2016

Dear Selectboard Members,

On July 27, 2016, the Lake Mansfield Improvement Task Force (LMITF) and the town's consultant Kyle Zick Landscape Architecture (KZLA), presented the plan for improvement in the Lake Mansfield Recreation Area and provided a fourth opportunity for public comment. LMITF, charged with providing the town with an improvement plan addressing the health of the lake and surrounding habitat, the safety of lake users, and recreational access, is requesting that the Select Board at its September 26, 2016 meeting, endorse and adopt the plan for improvement in Lake Mansfield Recreation Area to allow the detailed engineering design, permitting, and grant funding opportunities to be completed. By adopting this plan, the Select Board will provide the necessary direction to the town's staff and boards to implement the plan.

The proposed plan provides a comprehensive solution to a complex problem. The goal of the plan, and the months-long process LMITF and KZLA undertook with the community, was to develop a comprehensive solution for improvements in the recreation area, considering and balancing the complex issues driving management of the lake area. The plan presented to the Select Board was not only developed with community input, but also was endorsed by each of the committees represented on the LMITF (the Conservation Commission, Parks & Recreation Commission, and Planning Board).

Specifically, the improvement plan comprehensively addresses the four primary areas of concern within the Lake Mansfield Recreation Area:

- The lake outlet pipe, which controls the lake level and currently allows Lake Mansfield Road to be overtopped;
- The beach parking area, which allows enormous quantities of sediment and other pollutants to enter the lake water and degrade the water quality, which does not provide for handicap access to the beach area, and which is undersized for peak use times;
- Lake Mansfield Road from the beach parking area to the boat launch, which currently is subject to a wide range of traffic types and is physically deteriorated, with a road surface in poor condition, stormwater drainage that allows for ponding and icing on the road surface, and a road shoulder which has eroded into the lake leaving no buffer zone and little bank; and,

- The boat launch, which currently allows large quantities of sediment from the launch and Knob Hill to enter the lake, and is poorly defined resulting in haphazard parking.

The improvement plan balances the complex issues at the Lake Mansfield Recreation Area, specifically:

- Environmental stewardship, including improvements to stormwater management systems to improve lake water quality and improvement of habitat in the shoreline and resource areas;
- Recreational usage, including all-season access for walking, bird watching, swimming, fishing, boating, paddle-boarding, skating and quiet enjoyment of the space;
- Transportation usage, including linkage of neighborhoods north and south of the lake, biking, walking, and driving.

The pieces of the plan work together to create a comprehensive whole. It is essential that the Select Board be decisive in adopting the entire plan so we may begin the process of implementation. Taking action on only one element of the project will not, in the long term, cost less since each of the four primary areas in the Lake Mansfield Recreation Area require improvement to address environmental and infrastructure deficiencies. A Comprehensive Plan will be needed to acquire the required permitting needed from the Conservation Commission, MA DEP and the Army Corp of Engineers. Taking no action is not a no-cost solution. The road bed will continue to be undermined until we find ourselves in an emergency situation. Water quality will continue to be degraded, causing the deterioration of our valued community resource.

The extensive report considers alternative improvement scenarios, including their relative costs, eligibility for grant funding, and technical and permitting requirements. Having weighed the alternatives, the report sets forth a preferred alternative. In brief, the recommended improvements are:

- Replace the outlet pipe with a structure that can accommodate flood events and better regulate the water level. This may be funded by hazard mitigation funds.
- Regrade and improve the beach parking area to prevent sediment from flowing in the lake, to accommodate handicap access, and to accommodate both peak and off-peak use demands. The parking area will move away from the beach to accommodate the grades for handicapped access, to create more organized parking spaces, and provide for stormwater management. A grass-on-gravel area will allow for green space that can be used to accommodate peak traffic. These plans could qualify for funding through DEP.
- Stabilize the lake edge and improve the road to provide for a sound structural base and proper drainage. The road improvements must be completed within a constrained right-of-way to avoid extraordinary permitting requirements, blasting ledge, or acquiring property from adjacent landowners. A standard two-way road simply does not fit in this space, and a two way road that also accommodates bank stabilization, recreational users, and environmental benefits takes even more room. It simply does not fit, is unlikely to be permitted, and the very high cost would be borne almost exclusively by taxpayers. Therefore, the plan recommends the roadway be reconstructed and converted to one-way

northbound in order to use the remaining space to stabilize the lakeshore edge, provide for a multi-purpose recreation path, and provide for fishing access. This recommendation achieves the maximum benefit for the health of the lake habitat, the water quality of the lake, the safety of all users of the recreation area, while balancing the need for continued access to and through the recreation area, and maximizing the potential for grant funding.

- Improve the Knob Hill drainage system to allow for storm water mitigation. This would qualify for funding through DEP.
- Improve the boat launch to accommodate critical stormwater management improvements and better organize the parking. This plan could qualify for full funding from the Department of Fish and Game.

Next steps include detailed survey and engineering, comprehensive permitting, funding applications and, then, construction phasing. Design and permitting will take approximately two years, and construction will be contingent upon funding through either grants or Town funds.

The report provided concept-level cost estimates for the project with a total project cost for design, permitting and construction estimated to be \$2,180,000, as summarized below. As noted above, the recommended improvements would be eligible for a substantial amount of grant funding.

CONCEPT LEVEL COST ESTIMATE: DESIGN, PERMITTING & CONSTRUCTION

IMPROVEMENT AREA	DESIGN & PERMITTING	CONSTRUCTION
Lake Outlet	\$60,000	\$190,000
Beach Area Parking	\$50,000	\$550,000
Lake Mansfield Road (one-way)	\$250,000	\$1,010,000
Boat Launch	\$10,000	\$60,000
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>\$370,000</i>	<i>\$1,810,000</i>
TOTAL		\$2,180,000

LMITF wishes to stress that this recommendation is for a comprehensive solution for the Lake Mansfield Recreation Area. We acknowledge there is a petition requesting Lake Mansfield Road remain a two way road. Although we have the utmost respect for the individuals behind the petition, and we recognize that a one-way road will require a change in habits for all of us, the petition is a gross oversimplification of a very complicated issue. In the course of our work the possibility of a two-way road was carefully examined. The limited space available and the proximity of the resource areas does not allow for the construction of a two-way road that also meets our improvement or funding goals.

In closing, we respectfully request the Select Board endorse/adopt the comprehensive Lake Mansfield Recreation Area improvement plan as provided in the KZLA report. It is a balanced, expert report that is based on a thorough process that evaluated all of the concerns our community about this space. Your action is a critical step in advancing 10 years of community-led study to the implementation stage.

We look forward to discussing this with you at the upcoming meeting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Christine Ward".

Christine Ward, Chair

On behalf of the Lake Mansfield Improvement Task Force

cc: Town Manager
Town Planner
DPW Superintendent