



Mystic River Watershed Association
your community · your watershed



March 9, 2012

**Policy Statement of the Mystic River Watershed Association
Regarding property known as the Silver Maple Forest located in the Town
of Belmont adjacent to the Alewife Reservation**

MyRWA Mission

The Mystic River Watershed Association (MyRWA) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of the Mystic River Watershed. The mission of MyRWA is to work to protect and restore the Mystic River, its tributaries and watershed lands for the benefit of present and future generations and to celebrate the value, importance and great beauty of these natural resources. This includes working to improve the water quality in the Mystic River and all of its tributaries.

Statement of Policy

The Mystic River Watershed Association strongly supports the preservation of the property known as the Silver Maple Forest and strongly opposes the ill conceived and poorly planned development of more than 290 housing units at this location that is presently proposed. There is substantial evidence that this high-density project will have a substantial and negative impact upon local flooding, water quality and natural habitat.

Although the Mystic River Watershed Association recognizes the need for and value of affordable and transit oriented development in the Watershed, the Association is convinced that this particular site is poorly suited for the housing plan proposed. The areas under consideration, Little Pond, Little Brook and the Alewife Reservation are very important components of the Mystic River system.

According to a February 2012 study completed by Horsely Witten Group:
The area in question is *"a sub-watershed of the Mystic River watershed. It drains approximately 4,500 highly-urbanized acres of Arlington, Belmont, Cambridge and Somerville. The urbanized watershed is characterized by high amounts of impervious surfaces (approximately 47%) and exhibits significant flooding problems."*

Serving Twenty-Two Communities

Arlington Belmont Burlington Cambridge Charlestown Chelsea East Boston Everett Lexington Malden Medford
Melrose Reading Revere Somerville Stoneham Wakefield Watertown Wilmington Winchester Winthrop Woburn

20 Academy Street, Suite 306 · Arlington, MA · 02476-6401 · (781) 316-3438 · www.MysticRiver.org

The report goes on to say that: *"The Alewife Brook Reservation is an oasis of natural open space within the watershed. It measures approximately 115 acres, largely composed of wetlands, and is owned and managed by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). The Reservation provides significant watershed functions including flooding controls, water quality treatment, habitat and recreational opportunities to surrounding residents.*

The area is a remnant of the Fresh Pond Marshes, a historically extensive wetland system that began to be filled during the 1976-84 period. A Silver Maple Forest is located to the north of the Reservation. This locally-rare woodland provides significant habitat values as a key open space area within the watershed."

Furthermore, Horsley and Witten draw an important conclusion. The report makes clear that, *"Due to the loss of the vegetation and the associated evapotranspiration, the project will generate significantly more water than in its current (natural) state. This is apparent in the project applicant's drainage report, which seeks to infiltrate significantly more water (140%) than naturally occurs. This will result in an increased water table elevation in the area."*

The Silver Maple Forest, as an important part of the open space and waterways of the Alewife Reservation, provides vital floodwater storage in the naturally pervious land and wetland areas within its boundaries. These functions help to ameliorate both flooding and water shortages in the adjacent area through the absorption of rain and snow melt and the slow release of groundwater in the soils. These and other remaining open space areas must be preserved to provide the natural flood storage within the Upper Alewife basin.

We recommend every effort be made to preserve and protect in its natural state this extremely valuable natural resource.

On behalf of the Mystic River Watershed Association,



EkOngKar Singh Khalsa, Executive Director

Serving Twenty-Two Communities

*Arlington Belmont Burlington Cambridge Charlestown Chelsea East Boston Everett Lexington Malden Medford
Melrose Reading Revere Somerville Stoneham Wakefield Watertown Wilmington Winchester Winthrop Woburn*

20 Academy Street, Suite 306 • Arlington, MA • 02476-6401 • (781) 316-3438 • www.MysticRiver.org