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## M E M O R A N D U M

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**TO:** Honorable Mayor Lister and Members of the City Council  
**FROM:** Eric Spear, City Councilor; Chair, Sagamore Creek Land Blue Ribbon Committee  
**DATE:** May 27, 2015  
**RE:** Interim Report Back on Sagamore Creek Land Blue Ribbon Committee

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Please allow this memorandum and its attachments to serve as an interim report back to the City Council concerning the work to date of the Mayor's Blue Ribbon Committee on the Sagamore Creek Land. Since February, the Committee has been meeting to make progress on its charge from the Mayor: to create a plan for public usage of the city-owned land at Sagamore Creek. A final report back to the City Council is to be completed on or prior to September 21, 2015.

The Committee has adopted a *Vision and Guidelines* document on which it plans to continue its work moving forward. At this time, the Committee is seeking the City Council's endorsement of this Interim Report in order that the Committee can move forward with a more detailed plan for public usage at the parcel. Below is a summary of the process to date, a summary of public input opportunities, recommendations, and a discussion of issues the Committee would like to highlight for the City Council that were raised during the process. The Vision and Guidelines the Committee is seeking the Council's endorsement of, is attached along with a copy of this coming Monday evening's presentation.

### **The Committee's Process & Public Input**

- A. The Committee, which includes representatives from the community and the Recreation Board, Conservation Commission, and School Board has met six times to discuss and review the site's past usage and history; its environmental characteristics and natural resource value; its past use as a landfill; previous plans and studies associated with the parcel; and options for landfill reuses. In addition, we met with multiple representatives each of the City's School Board, Recreation Board, Conservation Commission and Sustainability Committee to discuss current uses of the site and asked the perspective of each on the future uses of the parcel.
- B. On May 7<sup>th</sup> Committee held a public input session on a draft vision and guidelines for a plan for public use of the city-owned property. Nearly 20 people made public comments on the draft document. As a result of the comments (including another 25 written comments from the website) and committee discussion some changes were incorporated in the document and the Committee voted to pass it on to the City Council.

- C. Many residents have attended the Committee meetings and others have submitted public comments via the online public comment form on the section of the City's website set-up for the Blue Ribbon Committee's work. At that web site, interested members of the Community can view presentations and documents reviewed by the Committee as well as link to each of the Committee's minutes and meeting notices. Materials reviewed by the Committee as well as a link to agendas and meeting minutes can be viewed at <http://www.cityofportsmouth.com/sagamorecreek.html>.

### **Interim Recommendations, Other Needs, Ideas, and Opportunities**

Three recommendations prepared by the Committee at this time appear below.

**1. Endorsement of Vision and Guidelines Document from the Blue Ribbon Committee on Sagamore Creek Land.**

The Committee has created a Vision and Guidelines document based on its work and feedback from the community. The document is attached to this memorandum and will be used to guide the next phase of the Committee's work of creating a more detailed plan for public usage of the parcel.

*A. Recommendation: To endorse the Vision and Guidelines document from the Blue Ribbon Committee on the Sagamore Creek Land.*

**2. Addressing Recreation Fields Needs for Organized Team Sports**

The Committee discussed and agreed with the conclusions of the Recreation Needs Study that additional multi-purpose rectangular and ballfields are needed in the City. However, addressing this need at the Sagamore Creek Land conflicted with the vision developed by the Committee as summarized in the Vision and Guidelines document. As a result the Committee has made additional interim recommendations to the City Council:

*B. Recommendation: That the City Council take action, such as requesting the City Manager to make a report back, which addresses the goals of the Recreation Need Study including resurfacing existing fields with artificial turf, (e.g. adjacent High School Athletic Complex); and to also make a report back that addresses the acquisition of land and development of recreation fields in the City.*

In addition to these recommendations, a number of important ideas, needs, and opportunities were raised during the course of the Committee's work, which are not included in the *Vision and Guidelines*, however they were discussed at length by the Committee meeting. A brief summary of those issues also appear below.

**Passive Recreation in the City.** During the Committee's work it became familiarized with the diversity of public undeveloped lands (most with conservation or wetland restrictions), which may be available to help meet the demand for passive recreation in the City. More access and

awareness to lands already owned by the City will better ensure there is no overuse of any one City property.

**Solar Power Generation.** During the Committee's work members of the community advocated for potential use of the cap for solar arrays to promote the City's sustainability goals. During discussion of the solar issue there were many questions raised about the viability of the opportunity present at the Sagamore Creek Land. In the draft guidelines, the Committee felt this exclusive use any portion of the land would preclude a number of other uses benefitting the public and in general did not fit with the Committee's draft vision. It also noted the solar panels can be placed in many settings such as roofs and on top of parking structures, which are preferable to preventing other uses for valuable waterfront and open space lands.

**Suggested Council Motions (from Recommendations above)**

- A. *To endorse the Vision and Guidelines document from the Blue Ribbon Committee on the Sagamore Creek Land.*
- B. *To request the City Manager to make a report back, which addresses the goals of the Recreation Need Study, including resurfacing existing fields with artificial turf, (e.g. adjacent High School Athletic Complex); and to also make a report back that addresses the acquisition of land and development of recreation fields in the City.*

cc: John P. Bohenko, City Manager  
David Moore, Community Development Director

# Blue Ribbon Committee on the Sagamore Creek Land

## Interim Report: Vision and Guidelines

### Vision:

The Sagamore Creek Land is a unique and valuable community resource that should be conserved and made accessible to all in a balanced manner that promotes waterfront access, protection of invaluable natural features, and permits recreation opportunities that complement one another and which are sensitive to the overall vision of preserving the site's character.

Proposes Uses and Activity From the Community	Does the proposed use/activity fit within the Vision described above	Explanation of the Committee's determination
1. Outdoor Classroom and educational purposes; including interpretation of historical, cultural and environmental resources	Yes	Many of the uses provided by the School Department representatives (at left) are currently taking place at the site. Given that the land is adjacent to the high school, the Committee determined that educational uses should continue and the parcel should continue to be used in ways that provide experiential enrichment.
2. Cross Country Trail System	Yes	This long established use has long benefited not only the Athletic program at the Portsmouth High School, but doubles as a trail network for the general public and has the added benefit of encouraging foot traffic to avoid ecologically sensitive areas.
3. Middle School Mountain Biking Program	Yes	The existing use has complemented the Cross Country and general public use and the current level of activity is in keeping with the vision described above.
4. Mountain Biking (General Public)	Yes	The Committee found that promotion of general mountain biking is consistent with the vision described above.

5. Community Garden	No	The implementation of a Community Garden facility and use has many challenges at this particular site including (access and water amenities). However, the Committee is supportive of this use if sponsored as an educational program adopted and managed through the School system.
6. Recreation Fields for organized team sports	No	The Committee explored at length the planning documents and input from the Recreation Board regarding the need for multi-purpose recreation fields for organized field sports in Portsmouth and agrees adding fields and capacity to meet demonstrated needs should be a high priority for the City Council. There are three reasons the Committee has found these uses inconsistent with the vision above. 1. There are many significant physical constraints that would limit the recreational value of the end product and consume large amounts of capital resources that could be better used in meeting the field needs in alternative locations. 2. Extensive alteration of the landscape to make the fields usable (grading changes, retaining walls, and extensive tree removal) that would negatively impact the natural resources present. 3. Development of access ways, field lighting, restrooms, and related amenities would negatively impact the character of the parcel.
7. Passive Recreation and Informal Recreation Uses (i.e., kite flying, sledding, bird watching, cross country skiing, Frisbee, picnicking) on the landfill cap.	Yes	Many of these activities take place at the site currently. They are consistent with the vision above.
8. Water Access for non-motorized water craft with defined entry	Yes	A major ongoing priority of the City as expressed in its planned documents and elsewhere is waterfront access. This parcel's unique and long frontage along Sagamore Creek is not only an invaluable vista for public enjoyment but holds the possibility of another low –impact access point for non-motorized watercraft.
9. Solar panel array	No	The Committee determined that solar panels in this location would preclude the use of the site for a number of other attractive uses benefitting the public. It also noted the solar panels can be placed in many settings such as roofs and on top of parking structures, which are preferable to preventing other uses for valuable waterfront and open space lands.

10. Access Improvements for pedestrians, vehicles, and bicycles; including universal access for people of all abilities. This item includes promoting linkages to other nearby passive recreation areas	Yes	Formalizing access to and providing signage at the site to ensure will ensure the public is welcomed and can safely access the Sagamore Creek Land. Access to the site is consistent with the vision above in that it can encourage access in ways that are sensitive to the natural resource values.
11. Disc Golf	No	The Committee discussed the potential for siting a disc golf course at the parcel. The Committee noted the installation of single-purpose structures as well as the risk to off trail activities that could threaten natural resources present. It was noted that some publicly-owned undeveloped lands (identified in the PULA study) likely represent appropriate opportunities for this use.
12. Dogs	Yes	The Committee discussed how the presence of dogs at the site were appropriate and welcome and recommended that they be on leash.

# Sagamore Creek Land

Interim Report: Vision and Guidelines

Mayor's Blue Ribbon Committee on the  
Sagamore Creek Land

June 1, 2015



## Tonight's Presentation

- Committee's Charge & Membership
- Process to Date
- Brief Orientation to the Parcel
- Description of Interim Report:
  - Vision and Guidelines
- Other Recommendations



## Committee Charge & Membership

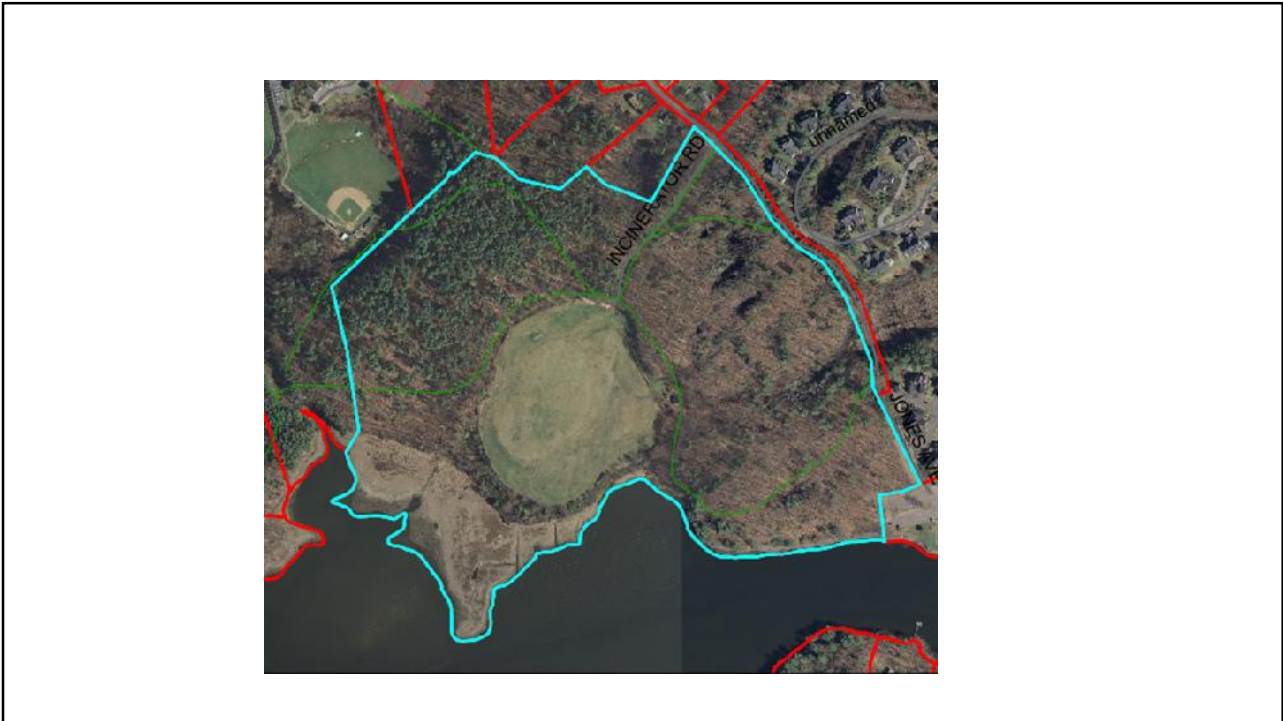
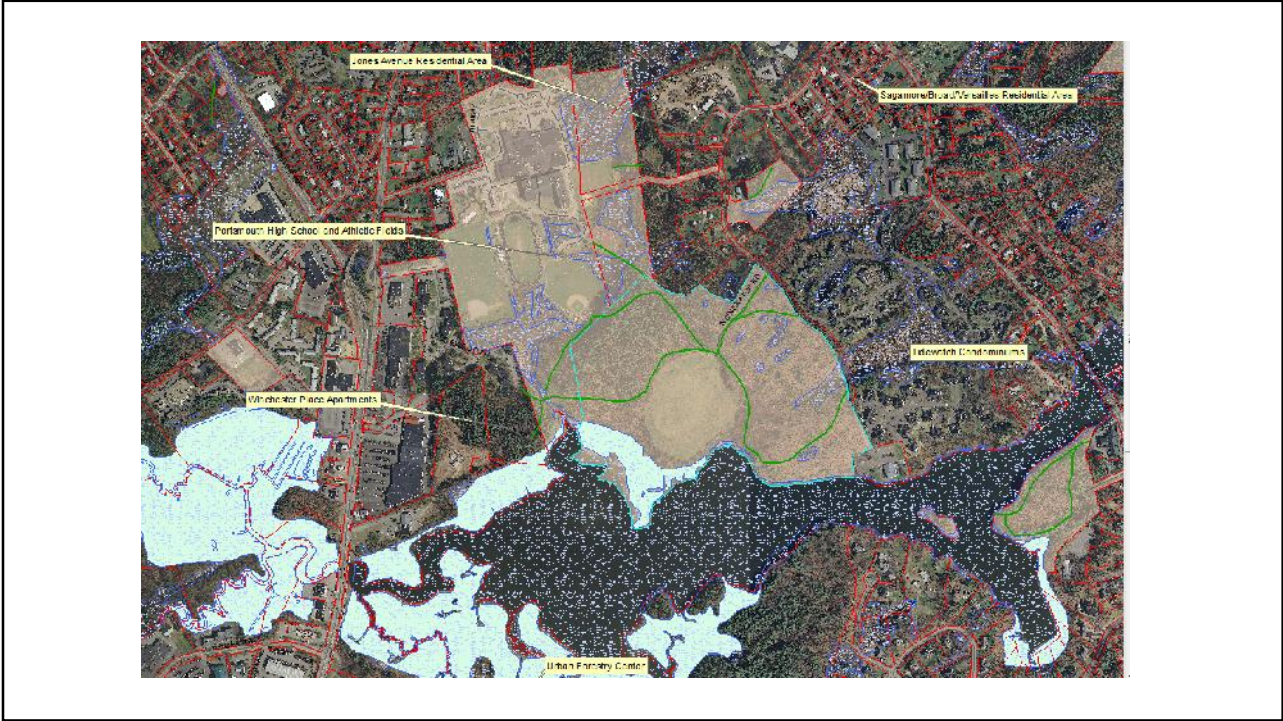
- To create a plan for public usage of the city-owned Sagamore Creek Land
- Report back by September 21, 2015
- Committee materials available at the City's website
- Membership includes:
  - Eric Spear, City Councilor and Chair
  - Chris Dwyer, City Councilor
  - John Mikolajczyk, Resident
  - Alison Pyott, Resident
  - Lennie Mullaney, School Board Representative
  - Kory Sirmaian, Recreation Board Representative
  - Allison Tanner, Conservation Commission Representative
  - Ex-officio, City Manager or his designee (non-voting)

## Process to Date

- site's past usage
- natural resource values
- past use as a landfill and landfill cap reuses
- previous plans and studies associated with the parcel
- Public comment opportunities at meeting and via web
- met School Board, Recreation Board, Sustainability Committee, and Conservation Commission Representatives
- formulated a vision and developed guidelines
- held public comment session & collected public comments









## Example: Peirce Island Master Plan

- 1999 - Plan Completed
- 2001 – New landscaped parking area next to pool
- 2001 - Shoreline Stabilization
- 2003 – Major aesthetic and capital improvements to outdoor pool
- 2003 – East End Trails Project completed
- 2006 – Boat Launch upgrades and installation of finger pier
- 2011 – Completion of signage upgrades
- 2015 – Ongoing upgrades and shore access improvements





## Vision

The Sagamore Creek Land is a unique and valuable community resource that should be conserved and made accessible to all in a balanced manner that promotes waterfront access, protection of invaluable natural features, and permits recreation opportunities that complement one another and which are sensitive to the overall vision of preserving the site's character.

## Related Findings and Recommendations

- **Passive Recreation in the City –**
- Other public undeveloped lands (most with conservation or wetland restrictions) for passive recreation in the City.
- More access and awareness to lands already owned by the City will better ensure there is no overuse of any one City property.



## Related Findings and Draft Recommendations

### • **Solar Power Generation –**

- Committee advocated for potential use of the cap for solar arrays to promote the City's sustainability goals.
- It also noted the solar panels can be placed in many settings such as roofs and on top of parking structures, which are preferable to preventing other uses for valuable waterfront and open space lands.
- The Committee plans to recommend that the City Council support current efforts to site renewable energy technologies.

## Related Findings and Draft Recommendations

### • **Recreation Fields for organized team sports –**

- The Committee discussed and agreed with the conclusions of the Recreation Needs Study that additional multi-purpose rectangular and ballfields are needed in the City.
- As a result the Committee is preparing to recommend the City Council move forward with key recommendations in the Recreation Needs Study:
  - Resurface with artificial turf existing fields in the City's inventory, including at the adjacent High School Athletic Complex.
  - City Council take action to find, acquire, and develop recreation fields in the City to address this demonstrated need

Sagamore Creek Land  
Interim Report: Vision and Guidelines  
June 1, 2015