

For Immediate Release

Press

From Ellen Mass

Friends of Alewife Reservation Inc.

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Biodiversity Forum Planned

The Great Swamp Legacy Forum is planned for June 13th at 6pm at Lesley University's Porter Square campus at 1815 Mass. Ave. hosted by the Natural Science and Mathematics Department. Refreshments will be served.

While the city entertains large development plans for the greater Alewife region, there grows a vocal concern that the area will not be able to provide for the health and safety of citizens over the coming years as climate change becomes more severe. Anticipated impacts over the next 50 years include precipitation increases, extreme urban heat, storm surges and sea level rise, and increased pollution within the the low-lying flood prone areas of the Mystic River watershed. Without new health and safety regulations, new development projects approved under current zoning standards are likely to only worsen such impacts. In response, a Climate Safety Petition has been submitted to the Council by local residents to address these concerns. A hearing on the petition will be held June 27th at City Hall.

Sadly, City planning efforts have yet to garner an awareness of needed biodiversity or adopt natural system solutions which would highlight the necessity of maintaining maximum open space in existing floodplain areas, even as developers move ahead with additional construction (currently planned for 2000+ new units in the Alewife region by 2030). This natural resources approach that many municipalities are now learning about and implementing is a vast improvement over traditional methods of damming waterways, filling lowlands, and attempting to confine water within ever larger tanks and pipes, but such natural systems strategies have yet to be embraced by City planners.

At the same time, several Cambridge environmental groups such as Biodiversity For a Livable Climate, Earthos Institute, Sierra Club Boston, and Green Cambridge have conducted well-attended biodiversity conferences at Harvard and Tufts, making the city a center for new earth science solutions now being practiced on all continents. Increased permeable areas, green roofs, pathway swales, and rain gardens now offer an improved means of stormwater capture and remediation. In addition, large scale regeneration of climate-protecting native trees, shrubs, and grasses supported by healthy soils helps enhance natural habitats and promotes critical carbon sequestration. And a revitalized urban tree canopy can reduce heat effects through increased shade and moisture transpiration.

Forum speakers include: Adam Sacks, Biodiversity For A Livable Climate; Eric Grunebaum, Friends of Jerry's Pond; John Pitkin, Boston Sierra Club; Sarah Slaughter, CEO, Built Environment Coalition; Doug Brown & Mike Nakagawa, Cambridge Climate Safety Committee; and Andrew Hrycyna, Mystic River Watershed Association; Quinton Zondervan, Green Cambridge.

In addition to highlighting regional problems within the Mystic River watershed, the Forum will offer new perspectives on solving watershed-wide issues using modern scientific models and regulatory frameworks. New approaches are needed to prevent catastrophic climate change impacts in the future. We hope that you will join us for this important discussion and implementation session.

For more information, write us at: alewifegreatswamplegacy@gmail.com