

Green Forum - Ward Candidates

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SPEAKERS

Dan Berlin, Robert Logan, Robert Davis, Bill Hanley, John McLaughlin, Eamon Dawes

Dan Berlin 00:00

Hi everyone, and thank you for joining us tonight for the Waltham Land Trust's Green Possibilities Forum for city council candidates. As you may know, the Waltham Land Trust is a nonprofit organization that serves to protect and maintain Waltham's green spaces, and to advocate for conservation concerns in the city. We have over 350 members, and 250 stewards who help with trail maintenance and invasive plant removal. We're excited to host this forum to provide candidates with an opportunity to share their views about environmental topics with the voting public. Though we tried to schedule dates that weren't for all candidates, not all could make it and some will be submitting written responses which we'll post to our website along with the forum videos. My name is Dan Berlin, and I'll be tonight's moderator. I'm the Board Chair of the Land Trust, proprietor of Watch City Research, and a PhD student at Bentley University. Finally, it's important for us to mention that the Waltham Land Trust is a nonpartisan organization, which has organized these forums to provide Waltham voters with an opportunity to hear from the candidates about green issues. The Waltham land trust does not and will not endorse candidates for political office. Membership in the land trust or participation in this forum or any other events hosted by the land trust is not an endorsement of any candidate. And with that, we will turn it to our introductions and we will start with John McLaughlin.

John McLaughlin 01:30

Can you hear me all right, Dan?

Dan Berlin 01:31

Yes.

John McLaughlin 01:32

Great. Can you see me All right.

Dan Berlin 01:36

We can.

John McLaughlin 01:38

So I want to thank the Land Trust for this opportunity to speak to everyone tonight, I have the privilege of serving on the Waltham city council, representing Ward four. I've served on the council for a number of terms and have been in leadership in one form or another over that time. I currently serve on the Ordinance and Rules Committee, the Veteran Services Committee, and the License and Franchise Committee. I also serve as the chair of the Committee of the Whole and by way of that, the Vice President of the Council. I also am involved by way of my work with the council with the Massachusetts Municipal Association. I am currently the vice president of that organization that gives us insight through their work with the state. That helps me do my job with the city. I'm also president of the Massachusetts Counselors Association, and also was selected by Governor Healy, reappointed by Governor Healy, to serve on the LGCA the local government advisory commission. Think I'm out of time.

Dan Berlin 02:54

Great, thank you. Next we'll hear from Robert Logan.

Robert Logan 03:06

Hi, my name is Robert Logan, and I'm a candidate for counselor of Ward nine. I've been a lifelong environmentalist going all the way back to my years at Waltham High School, where I was the leader of the ecology club and was named environmentalist of the year. More recently, I served for many years in the Waltham City Council, where I was always a strong advocate for open space in the environment. I supported the acquisition of the UMass Field Station on Beaver Street. Here is what I told the Waltham Land Trust in their questionnaire in 2019. Quote, my vision for the future of that property is to have all the organizations now they just keep doing what they're doing. And all planning for that property must be collaborative and involve all stakeholders. They will also note that I'm a longtime member of the Waltham Land Trust, and volunteer trail steward. You can learn more about my campaign at logonforwardnine.org. And I would appreciate your vote on November 7. Thank you.

Dan Berlin 04:10

Thank you. Next will be Eamon Dawes.

Eamon Dawes 04:18

Hi, everyone, my name is Eamon Dawes, and I'm running for the ward nine city council seat. A big thank you to Dan and the whole Waltham Land Trust for putting together this event. And really giving all of our neighbors an opportunity to hear where us candidates stand on conservation and the environment. I'm a first time candidate, but even before this year, I got into politics through climate activism, you know, advocating for environmentally sustainable neighborhoods through green transportation, energy and housing options. You know, and we have some great natural resources here in Ward nine like the river, but we also have far less greenspace than the rest of the city. So we need to protect what we have and expand it where possible. You know Although we're not like Prospect Hill, we're not like Beaver Brook, I think that our position in the city gives us you know, even greater opportunity to make a big difference, making sure that we can have, you know, ensure that trees remain in development, you know, ensure that we can build environmentally sustainable, you know, infrastructure. I think it's all very important. Thank you.

Dan Berlin 05:22

Thank you. Next, we will hear from Bill Hanley.

Bill Hanley 05:32

Hello, Waltham, and hello to my neighbors in Ward three. I'm Bill Hanley and I want to represent you as the next Ward three city councilor. I think my leadership and management experience will make me a productive and accessible city councilor. My parents bought their first home on Seminole Avenue in Ward three and I took advantage of everything Waltham had to offer. I graduated Waltham high in 92, and Purdue University in 1996. I'm the proud husband of Christie Hanley, library teacher at Whitmore Elementary School. Our son Billy graduated from Waltham high with the class of 22 and our son Michael's a senior there now. Professionally, I've worked for Mass General Brigham for the last 25 years leading a team of software developers working to improve patient safety. I think with your Ward three vote, I'll bring common sense decisions and local solutions to the city council and I asked for your Ward three vote. Thanks for listening. And thank you for the to the Land Trust for hosting this forum. Thank you.

Dan Berlin 06:33

Thank you. Next will be we'll hear from Robert Davis.

Robert Davis 06:47

Thank you, Dan. Thanks for holding this. And my name is Robert Davis. I'm running for Ward seven. I've been in Ward seven my whole life, grew up here. Over on Fiske. Now I'm over on Andrea. And right next to Nipper Maher Park, which is one of the biggest parks in the city, which is great to have. I have a three, five and 11 year old. So having these big open spaces is definitely convenient for kids, which I like to see. Again, I just like to really touch on that. We definitely need better parks. We're definitely getting there. With the Fernald School, hopefully

something turns around with that. I like what the Forestry Division has with planting trees for residents that ask for it, that we need to expand on that. So with that being said, hopefully we move forward and we can make this a definitely a greener city.

Dan Berlin 07:45

Thank you. Okay, we are up to the questions and will have the same order for response for question one. I will read each question just once and then go through each candidate. In the coming years the MWRA will be digging a new tunnel through Waltham and building infrastructure at Lawrence Meadow, the property owned by the University of Massachusetts on Beaver Street. What are the opportunities to use the \$2 million set aside for the cleanup of Lawrence Meadow, and to ensure that this important wetlands area is protected, cleaned up, and made useful to the to the public in the future? And we'll start with John McLaughlin.

John McLaughlin 08:28

Thank you, Dan. And I didn't practice my opening. So I'm going to be shot if I don't mention my wife and my three kids. We've been in Waltham for over 25 years and in love living in the city. This particular project is obviously something that doesn't just affect Waltham, it affects the region. It's something that's not going to be done overnight. I believe the fact that this is going to touch the UMass wetlands that are at Beaver and Waverly Oaks is very important. When we were negotiating the purchase of the property, one of the things that we didn't want to take from UMass or purchase from them is the liability involved with that particular piece of property. The fact that the MWRA, who is in the business of clean water and providing drinking water, the fact that that's going to touch this particular area I think is great. That the fault of the contamination on the property lies both with UMass with experiments that had been done over the years with fly ash, and also when you look to the north side of the property with the Fernald the power station is as everyone knows is on that back section that abuts the wetlands and you know there's been contamination over the years that's come down off the hillside. So the fact that the MWRA is gonna I'm be involved with this major project that's going to touch on on that wetlands, I think is great. Thank you.

Dan Berlin 10:12

Great. Thank you. Next we'll hear from Robert Logan.

Robert Logan 10:21

Yeah, the Lawrence Meadow was not acquired by the City of Waltham when it bought the UMass Field Station, so the state still owns it. But it's my understanding this part of the deal with the state, the city agreed to set aside 2 million for the cleanup of the Lawrence Meadow, which was contaminated as a result of agricultural experiments conducted there years ago. Now the MWRA is going to be installing one of the vertical shafts for its Metropolitan Water Tunnel program there. And although this is state land, the Waltham community has an interest in seeing contamination remediated at the site, and that the wetland be preserved, restored, and preserved. As a city councilor, I would insist that the remediation be completed, before the

work to dig the vertical shaft was commenced, or at the very least, that the MWRA engineers provide proof to us that the work in the vertical shaft would not disrupt the contamination closet to spread or to make remediation more difficult in the future. And any case, I would push for remediation of the contamination to take place as quickly as possible, so that that site can be restored. And it can be a natural resource for the city.

Dan Berlin 11:42

Thank you. Next we'll hear from Eamon Dawes.

Eamon Dawes 11:52

Yes. Thanks, Dan. Thank you for flagging this project. I know there's been a few MWRA projects in the city presently. So being able to get a bit of foresight into what's coming next is certainly helpful. That, you know, when I look at this, I looked at the last few words in the question, how can we make it useful to the public. And really, this land is useful to the public as flood water storage, stormwater storage, from Clematis Book. You know, it's useful in the sense that it's, you know, providing an ecosystem to, you know, all the species that live in these wetlands, which are, wetlands are rare in Waltham. So as we look at toward the opportunities to do any remediation, you know, those really needs to be the goals we have in mind, you know, how can we use this as a part of our sort of larger flood infrastructure infrastructure, and making sure that it's a resilient ecosystem, before all the species that call it home. I would not be surprised, I think, as along with many folks on this call, you know, if there's contamination in that area, you know, we've cleaned up contamination on the Field Station and the Fernald just in the past few years. So I think it's no surprise that we have some of it there. And I think, you know, making that a requirement, and prerequisite for, you know, any development, any tunneling any work is very important. I know, especially with the Field Station, we've seen, you know, what happens when we push contamination remediation, you know, further along down the timeline that many people would like. So I think that it's a great that this, both the infrastructure project, and you know, and this wetland in Waltham can be highlighted, and bring some attention about to it. And I just think that we have to make sure that it can remain a useful environmental habitat. Thank you.

Dan Berlin 13:42

Thank you. Next Bill Hanley.

Bill Hanley 13:49

Thank you. Yeah, I mean, \$2 million, is quite a bit of money. But it doesn't really seem to be enough. I was surprised it was that amount of money. I think first and foremost, the funding has to go to prioritize the cleanup of the area, get it to a safe state, especially after construction of that shaft for that tunnel. I read that MWRA doesn't anticipate any negative effects of that construction. But you know, that gets me skeptical. That just the size of that overall Tunnel Project is unbelievable. There's really no public access to that land now, I drove by. Before this question, in my research, I just thought it was part of the Fernald property. But even though it's

state land, it's still in Waltham. And I think the taxpayers are entitled to some benefit of that land too. Obviously, as wetlands I don't know, you know, that it could ever be used for public use, but I'd love to see it made usable back to its original state, especially considering all the common construction at the Fernald. So I think it's going to be something everyone's going to have to keep an eye on for a while. Thank you.

Dan Berlin 15:07

Thank you. Next, Robert Davis.

Robert Davis 15:17

Thank you again. I mean, the project is gonna be a definitely a big project. The \$2 million, definitely seems like a small change compared to what we need to make sure that it's, finished to completion to where it needs to be for that tunnel. With that being said, again, \$2 million, is not much that we can do it with, specially when some of the streets that we have been done over cost over a million dollars that are small street additions, and fixing and drainage and stuff. So the \$2 million, hopefully, we can really stretch it to what we need to do, it's definitely going to be a planning board that needs to sit and really work as a team to get it to work. But the the property definitely needs to be cleaned up. Obviously, it's been contaminated for a long period of time. Luckily, the MWRA is definitely stepping up. And hopefully we can get something accomplished. But again, the \$2 million is definitely going to be just a small amount that we need to make sure that we can keep it the way it is. And hopefully you can stay that way.

Dan Berlin 16:26

Thank you. Right, we'll move on to question two. Thank you to the candidates for your great answers to question one. Question two - Very few of the open spaces in Waltham are protected from future development. What is your plan for ensuring that land designated as public open space such as land purchased with CPA funds is permanently protected from future development, such as with conservation restriction. And we'll start with Mr. Davis.

Robert Davis 17:06

Alright, thanks. So Waltham needs a planning board. We have a master plan, which is run by the counselors. We really need a planning board to really determined what we can do with the land that we have, the future of the city, and really get a good direction for us to go. And right now, there is no plan. And hopefully, we can get a board together to really put these conservation areas, these green spaces, these parks, additional parks, and really get a direction for the city. And that's my overall goal, hopefully to see.

Dan Berlin 17:52

Thank you. Next, we'll hear from Mr. McLaughlin.

John McLaughlin 18:02

Thanks Dan. You got me guessing when we're going to be up to bat. So I'm trying to be quick with my finger work. So some of my proudest moments on the council has involved open space and open space preservation. When I first came on board, I was very pleased to be involved with the purchase of the Fernald property from the state. I think he said that night, the most important part of that is we are in control of what happens at Fernald. I have no doubt in my mind that had we not purchased it, it would have been developed in a way that would have been detrimental to the neighborhood. You know, some of the other other purchases that we've had Arrigo Farm on Warren Street, which is the location of the city's tree farm right now. We just secured some additional dollars to repair the buildings on the property. But that was another great win for the city. Because you know that particular piece of property could have also been developed. And although not as dense as the South Side, you know, putting up buildings in that in that area, which has been a farm since the 1600s, would have been a sin. And then more recently, the purchase of the Field Station, the council had selected me to join the Mayor and City Solicitor Stanton in the negotiations with UMass. And I was very, very happy that we were able to get the job done on that, and that we're preserving not only open space, but also agriculture. I think that one of the ways that we can protect this long term is with conservation restrictions. I do think we need to look at each one individually because of the needs of the city. But again, I am very proud of the work that I've done with regard to preserving open space in the city. Thank you.

Dan Berlin 19:55

Thank you. Next we'll hear from Robert Logan.

Robert Logan 20:01

Okay. So, as you probably know section 12A the Community Preservation Act requires that a permanent restriction be placed on any property acquired using CPA funds to ensure that the property continues to be used for, you know, appropriate CPA purposes. But this requirement has not always been complied with in Waltham, and I would make sure that it is, and more. I would introduce a resolution to have the City Council review the status of all city owned land that was acquired for conservation or open space, including all such lands that were purchased using CPA funds, to determine which have been placed under a conservation restriction in which have not. And then I push to have all those lands not yet protected, be placed under a conservation restriction, duly recorded at the Registry of Deeds. We've seen before that article 97 of the state constitution doesn't always protect vacant land, owned by municipalities from being used for purposes other than open space. So we must act to ensure that all of our lands that were required for conservation or open space, are in fact, never diverted to some other use. Thank you.

Dan Berlin 21:20

Thank you. Next up Eamon Dawes.

Eamon Dawes 21:29

Yeah, this is absolutely clear cut in Mass General law that, you know, especially if anything with CPA funding, you know, it needs to have a conservation restriction. I have seen in the flurry of conservation restrictions recently come across the docket in city council. So I know the backlog, so to say, is being addressed, but it's something that's slipped through the cracks. And I think that we need to have a, you know, more modern process in, you know, City Hall when purchasing new parcels and a way to audit the existing ones. I think that lots of things are done sort of pen and paper or photocopies, and being able to sort of modernize, digitize automate, where we can, you know, it can really help prevent this happening in the future. And it's not only the CPA parcels that we can put conservation restrictions are on, but other you know, parks and open spaces that we have in the city that we want to make sure you know can stay for the public use, you know, we need to pursue conservation restrictions on those as well. Thank you.

Dan Berlin 22:36

Thank you. Next up, Bill Hanley.

Bill Hanley 22:45

Yeah, thank you. In Ward three were spoiled with a lot of open green space, most of it acquired from the from the state, we also have some DCR green space. So selfishly, it's a big reason Ward three is a desirable place to live. But as far as Conservation Recreation restrictions, I know it's a tough subject. It's hard to think so far ahead, but I would love to see these restrictions put in place. Same as what some of the previous candidates have mentioned. They have the potential to restrict land we might need in the future. But even with that in mind, any open space in Ward three CPA acquired or others I fully support Conservation Recreation restrictions. Thank you.

Dan Berlin 23:37

Thank you. Okay, we'll move on to question three. And again, thank you to the candidates for your answers so far. Question three - We are lucky to have many green spaces in Waltham. But there's a particular lack of it in the densely populated South Side area of Waltham. How could the city bring green space to this area? And we will start with Mr. Hanley.

Bill Hanley 24:07

Yeah, thank you. So I mean, the South Side is certainly much more dense housing wise compared to the north side. Seems that housing density is being targeted a bit more than than open space. But you know, there are definitely some projects going on right now. You know, planned demolition of the Fitch School to create a park, that's a step in the right direction. Really close to the river, the Watch Factory. I think that's going to add quite a bit of amenities to that area. My wife and I actually rented an apartment near there on Robins Street before we bought our house and we still comment how there's a lack of places to go in that area.

Koutoujian Park, being expanded by about 11 acres, including some dog parks and other trails and sporting courts and additional parking, something for everyone. It's hung up in some bureaucracy right now. But I think that's a great example of reclaiming old, I think it was an old dump, and creating some green space on the South Side. I fully support that. I think that's going to be a gem in the South Side, and then Logan Park needs a refresh, I think that's being looked at as well for refurbishment. And then speaking of that area, out on The Island, the old camp Forest Grove, which is currently DCR Land, always took my kids fishing there and hiking. There's already trails, fishing spots and some parking. So that's some green space that's underused. I'm happy to see all that. Thank you.

Dan Berlin 25:53

Thank you. To you Mr. Davis.

Robert Davis 26:05

Thank you. Yeah, so a lot of construction going on in city of Waltham, a lot of upgrades, a lot of things are changing, definitely. You see a lot of places being torn down and added to, I think we need to have, you know, a plan set for more trees. The Forestry Department, again, has a great program that you know, you can call up and get a tree planted, if it's available, and you can get that in. So these new construction sites, definitely commercial sites that we have going on, up on Fifth Ave. First, they have the plan there, you know, they want to put 40,000 square foot buildings for research and development, we definitely need to have more open spaces for people to get outside. They make accommodations for bikes and electric cars and all that. But again, I think they really need to make sure that we keep up with it and make sure that they have open spaces in places to be out to get people outside more and to have open areas. Previously, that was just mentioned, the old fishing part of the fishing island out there. I went out there when I was a kid. It's just that there's a lot of a lot of areas that can improve. But the dense areas are tough, especially if there's anything that's been, you know, from these developers being torn down and built back up that, you know, they need to make space to make sure that they have some green areas and you know, bring some trees back into the city. So it's not just a concrete utopia. Thank you.

Dan Berlin 27:33

Thank you. Next, Mr. McLaughlin.

John McLaughlin 27:47

Promise I'll get faster with this Dan. So yeah, I mean, the South Side, it's, as I mentioned, in the last question, much more dense than the north side. I think we, the council, the city, has been aggressive in preservation of open space. And I think we need to have the same effort on the South Side. A couple of the other councilors have mentioned some of the other projects that are going on there, the Fitch school property redevelopment will include open space, I think that's very important. It would have been very easy to, you know, go in and, you know, not very easy, but it would have been an option to develop the whole property and that's not going to

happen. Koutoujian Park, that work that's being done to clean up that area to expand the park. I think is key as those opportunities present themselves, I think we've got an appetite to continue to do that. A lot of times people talk about pocket parks, which again, are great. But if we can look to see as property becomes available, to see if the city can step in and even create new open space on the South Side. And that's going to be hard because property is very, very valuable on the South Side. But that's something that I would I would absolutely support. Thank you.

Dan Berlin 29:20

Thank you. Next, Mr. Logan.

Robert Logan 29:29

Thank you, because as a lifelong South Side resident I'm certainly sensitive to this issue. The lack of open space and trees on the South Side causes it to be an urban heat island. This negatively affects the quality of life in the neighborhood obviously, and the health of its residents and it's gotta be addressed. During my tenure in Waltham City Council, the City of Waltham acquired numerous parcels for preservation and open space totaling over 389 acres of land. Of course, I supported every one of those acquisitions. But recognizing that none of that land was on the South Side, I led the effort to acquire a portion of an abandoned railroad line, the old Watertown branch that ran right through the South Side. And I led the effort to acquire a portion of that when it was abandoned. It's now Chemistry Station Park that runs from Newton Street to Pine Street, I got the city to buy that, I pushed for the funds to build it. This property is surrounded by residences today, it was slated to become a storage yard for construction equipment right in the middle of all these residences, if you can only imagine how that would have with you know, just the the industrial nature of it and all the additional emissions from the heavy equipment how that would have affected you know, both the quality of life in the neighborhood and the in the health of the residents. So it's now an oasis of green in the middle of that residential neighborhood. When I left the council, I've been working to acquire a vacant riverfront property at 67 Crescent Street. It's a property that is cited four times in the city of Waltham master plan as an important target for acquisition for open space in increased public access to the Charles River. This property has been vacant for decades, and it's been for sale for many years. If I'm returned to the Waltham city council, I will renew my efforts to obtain that parcel as open space, and to look for other opportunities to acquire land for open space on the South Side, because I think the South Side really needs it. We need more open space and more trees. Thank you.

Dan Berlin 31:46

Thank you. Next Eamon Dawes.

Eamon Dawes 31:53

Yeah, always happy to talk about this outside. And you're absolutely right. You know, we have a lack of green space, we have a lack of trees. You know, I love hearing about the urban heat island effect. That's absolutely true. You know, it is hotter on the South Side in those summer

island street. That's absolutely true. You know, it is hotter on the south side in those summer days, than it is in North Waltham. And being able to help cool the neighbors not only reduces you know, energy costs, cooling costs, you know, but also keeps us all a bit more level headed. To have green space, we need trees, and we need to have a tree ordinance, we need to have them protected in our zoning laws so that we can maintain green space and tree canopy during development. I know there's a development going up across me. They've been building for a few months, and they've kept a birch tree right in the corner of a lot for months and months. But only a week or so ago, I saw they ended up chopping it down. I know MacDonald playground up on Newton Street had half a dozen big trees providing lots of shade to the playground and the sidewalk. You know, but when we did those playground renovations, all those big trees came down. So we really need to preserve those resources when we have them and have something you know, in writing in law to protect those trees. You know, I also think about what space can we be converting from pavement to green space. You know, those, you know, the parking lots for the Watch Factory there along Crescent Street, you know, are rarely full, you know. What can we look for parking restrictions, changing parking minimums, so that, you know, we can be converting pavement to green space? You know, the city bought that Bank of America building to turn it into parking, you know, what could that have been better served as green space as a pocket park? I know the city council looked into purchasing a pocket park back I think 2017 or so. But that, you know, that really hasn't played out. I know other folks have mentioned sort of this tree planting program. I think that's underutilized and under communicated in the city. So being able to communicate that residents might have a good spot for a tree, you know, in an increasing street trees are things we absolutely need in the Southside. Thank you.

Dan Berlin 34:00

Thank you. Okay, we're up to question four - The Riverwalk along the Charles River is a popular trail for residents and tourists alike. But some of the areas of the Riverwalk are experiencing an increase in illicit activities. What is your vision for ensuring the safety of people who want to use Waltham as Riverwalk? And we'll start with Mr. Dawes.

Eamon Dawes 34:28

All right. So a lot of this comes down to a you know, law enforcement jurisdiction problem. You know, that land belongs to DCR, it belongs to the state. You know, so Waltham PD, you know, often won't patrol it. I know, I think over the past summer I saw an article saying you know Waltham along with Watertown and Newton police departments are kind of working together to help patrol that but I saw in my research, I saw another article from several years prior. So this still is a continuing issue. You know, one thing that this is a result of is, you know, there's a lack of lighting. You know, this is along the Riverwalk is natural, you know, it's not like it is like a street. And, you know, we want to encourage folks who might be using that as a connection, you know, to go someplace safer and more well lit. So I think there's a lot of need for pedestrian improvements on Felton Street on Crescent Street, on Calvary Street. Some of the streets that parallel and that are, you know, are more appropriate to travel late at night. I know that sometimes on college campuses, you'll see sort of a, you know, blue emergency beacon, you know, being able to put these in our public places, you know, so that, that people, you know, who are victims or who witness sort of any illicit activities can call for help. You know, and sometimes illicit activities can be a smallest sort of littering, making sure there's adequate trash cans along the river, you know, help keep it clean, make it feel like a safer place, and

more taking care of place. So I think it really starts with having a conversation with DCR. I know that's been in talks, you know, it's something I'm going to do once I get into office, you know, to make sure that we have proper policing along that stretch, but also lots of safety improvements, you know, to make sure that folks who do want to make that travel, do you want to go along there at night, you know, have the safer options. Thank you.

Dan Berlin 36:27

Thank you. Next up, Mr. Hanley.

Bill Hanley 36:34

Yeah, thank you. I, unfortunately, I'm old enough to know that the Riverwalk has had these kinds of issues since it was built. You know, definitely a bureaucratic nightmare to solve these issues when the state, DCR, city departments, all have a part to play in it. I think Waltham could certainly increase police patrols on bicycles, the electric motorcycles, foot patrols. Waltham police, you know, know that area better than the State Police. Even maybe plainclothes patrols could help. And lighting, cameras, call boxes. You know, these things exist on other similarly similar property schools campuses. Again, I know it's difficult to implement with the state and city government relationships. And it's certainly difficult to enforce a dusk till dawn use. But I think one way we could maybe make some physical improvements, cutting back vegetation and things that maybe give some hiding places. We used to take advantage of the Sheriff's Work details years ago, and we had such a significant graffiti problem in that area. I always thought that was an untapped resource. I think that could help with landscaping, cleaning up trash, removing graffiti, and other physical maintenance tasks that could make sections of that Riverwalk safe to use. Thank you.

Dan Berlin 38:14

Thank you. Next up, Robert Davis.

Robert Davis 38:24

Thank you again. Yeah, the Riverwalk again been stated that it is state owned. So it was kind of hard for us to really put a real nail on how we're going to solve this problem. Again, call boxes, police details, all great, great scenarios. That's what I back behind that 100% and xthe next one is going to be the Rail Trail. That's going to be the next one that's going to have some issues with it. And I think again, lighting, police details, there's going to be a lot that's going to be needed. And hopefully we can work with the state and the state and get involved some and see what they can come up with to help alleviate some of this problem that we're having. Again, the Rail Trail is going to be the second issue that's going to come up soon. So once that project is completed through Waltham, thank you.

Dan Berlin 39:11

Thank you. Next up is Mr. Mel...

Thank you. Next up is Mr. McLaughlin.

John McLaughlin 39:27

Thanks, Dan, just trying to turn my camera on here. So the Riverwalk is a huge, huge asset to the City of Waltham. You look at what the city of Boston over many years has done with the Esplanade and the Charles River frontage, both on the city of Boston side and also on the Cambridge side. It's a huge advantage to have that and that being said, we've got some issues that need to be dealt with. It is true, DCR, that's their purview. I think, you know, I mentioned in my opening remarks, my involvement with the Massachusetts Municipal Association, I served on that organization with Brian Arrigo who's the former mayor of Revere. Brian is now the DCR Commissioner. So you've got a large city similar to Waltham, you've got leadership, and the DCR that I think is going to be open to making some changes there. And I've already had initial conversations with former mayor now, Commissioner Arrigo, that would address some of these things and I'm looking forward to doing more work with him. I think having more traffic down there, encouraging more traffic, meaning pedestrians, is going to help improve some of the problems down there hand in hand with more law enforcement and we'd have to work that out with the DCR and how that would work along with the Waltham Police Department. And then also it's been mentioned already, lighting. That to me is the easiest fix right now we could get some money out of this state that would improve lighting along along the Riverwalk. That would go a long way to address some of these issues. Thank you.

Dan Berlin 41:23

Thank you. Next up, Mr. Logan.

Robert Logan 41:29

Okay. So as everyone mentioned, the Riverwalk is owned by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, the DCR, the state, not the city of Waltham. So we don't have the same control over it as we would say Prospect Hill Park. But that doesn't mean that we as a community can't push for improvements to be part of the solution. But I think it's important for people to understand that we don't have a level of control over the riverwalk that we do have a city owned park. So we have to rely on the cooperation of the state agency. That being said, I was very happy to see this past summer during the warm months, Spring, Summer, into the Fall, that there have been regular patrols of the Riverwalk conducted jointly by the Mass State Police, the Waltham police, and the Watertown police, and I think was very effective. And I hope that continues. I noticed that the State Police patrolled on an ATV and I thought that was a very good vehicle for that application. And I think if the Waltham police want one that we should supply them with that because I think that would be good, not only in the Riverwalk, but maybe Prospect Hill Park and some other places. Some of the problems along the Riverwalk result of the growing number of unhoused people in our community. So you can do all the enforcement you want, but until the housing crisis is addressed, the problems will continue to recur. Meanwhile, any enforcement that takes place should be sensitive to the unfortunate circumstances of this vulnerable population. I want to note that along the Riverwalk, at every place the Riverwalk crosses a street, there is a an RRFB - a rapid flashing rectangular beacon. I was the one that brought in the matter to the request of the traffic commission that led to our RRFBs being installed at every one of those crossings to make the Riverwalk safer. And finally, I

just like to add that I'm a volunteer trail steward and a Scout leader and I participated with members of Troop 250 Waltham in the Waltham Land Trust birthday cleanup along the Riverwalk the last few years, and we picked up a lot of trash and litter. So part of the solution with those lies with those who use the Riverwalk. Thank you. Thank you. Okay, onto question five. How should the city deal with the ongoing rat problem in a way that won't harm Waltham's wildlife? And we'll start with Mr. Logan. Sorry about that. Okay. So, I just want to start off by saying I've checked with the city and they are not using the second generation anticoagulant rodenticides that are a danger to wildlife. So I think that's a first good step. The most effective way to reduce the rat population is to eliminate the food supplies. Take away the food, and the rat population crashes, there are some steps the city can do that can take in this direction. So first, I think all the open top litter receptacles in our downtown sidewalks and all our city parks, those should be replaced with Big Belly solar powered trash compactor, or you know some other rodent proof receptacles. They keep the trash in, and the rats out and they've proven to be quite effective in other communities at reducing the rat population. So I think that's one step that we can take. Make the code enforcement officer in public works that handles trash violations 100% code enforcement. Currently, that position spends 50% of the time on other DPW related activities like supervising street paving. So I think that position needs to be 100% code enforcement. I also think there should be a code enforcement officer devoted just to dumpsters. You go all over the city, you see overflowing dumpsters that are just like rat buffets. So that has to be addressed. And finally, I led the charge to get the blue recycling carts that everybody uses today, I brought in that resolution, it's time to have a discussion now about providing similar carts for trash. This would have to be implemented in a way to not negatively impact residents. You know, for example, free carts, extra carts, free pickup. But these are all real, concrete solutions that can be readily implemented in will have a serious impact on the problem. Thank you.

Dan Berlin 46:07

Thank you. Next up, Mr. Davis.

Eamon Dawes 46:15

Thank you, I went to talk the Land Trust hosted earlier in the Spring about, you know, rat poison and the effects of the environment. So it's definitely something that I've been learning a lot more about over this year. I mean, I really see a kind of a five step approach to this problem. Firstly, we have to get trash carts for you know, everyone in the city. You know, if you're a renter, you don't want to shell out the money for something for a place you may only be for a year. You know, if it gets damaged, you know, are you out to fix it? You know, we need sort of universal trash carts. And that also helps keeping trash a limit of how much trash you can go out. Because in Waltham, you can really throw out whatever you want. There's no limit. So I know that, you know, I talk with folks whose landlord may own a few properties in other cities and towns, you know, that will bring their trash to Waltham, because they know that they can throw as much out as they want here. So we need to have carts, we need to make sure that there's a limit on that trash. You know, we need proper trash cans on who Moody Street and our parks and our open spaces. You know, there are some of those Big Bellies, I see them by the senior apartments on Pine Street, I saw some at Gilmore playground, but it's certainly not universal throughout the city. And yeah, that we need more code enforcement, you know, a properly funded health department building apartments, CPW, you know, wherever those fines

and violations may exist, you know, both for residential and commercial. You know, for the rat traps themselves. You know, you get lots of landlords, especially here on the South Side who you know, might not care about their properties as much. So being able to have, you know, free rodent control, and have those be I've seen, like smarter traps, you know, electronic traps, you know, that really helped the city, pinpoint and identify where rats are at how many are being caught, that data is really helpful. And also, as we talked about, sort of getting rid of their food supply. You know, introducing municipal compost is a great way to get food waste out of normal trash and can help kind of make that whole waste stream much cleaner. Thank you.

Dan Berlin 48:23

Thank you. Next up Mr. Hanley.

Bill Hanley 48:29

Yeah, thank you. I mean, I think like any city our size, if we continually dig and build and grow our city, we're going to see rats. They are part of the food chain, but nobody wants to see them. In all my time as a member of the Board of Health, we've discussed rat control. So it's been a long time coming in. It's gotten progressively worse. I think a two pronged approach with innovative pest control and trash enforcement is key. I've even seen in my own neighborhood people aren't leaving just their plastic bags of trash at the curb. With all our recycling in the blue bins, we don't generate as much trash. I have a family of five and we don't generate a lot of trash. A ton of recycling, but not a lot of trash. So barrels with tight lids are becoming the norm and I think that that that can make a difference. It just needs to continue citywide. I think we need to hold property owners accountable for how their tenants dispose the trash. I think that's that's a long time coming, commercial and residential. And maybe it's even time to have a pest control specialist on the payroll. It's been a long time we've been talking about rats, we're now using contra pest snap traps. I like the use of dry ice in the burrows. There's a BurrowRx product that can be used. We're using carbon monoxide to humanely kill the rats underground. But again, I think we need to start dialing up the city's role in controlling that rats all over the city and in public and private property. Thank you.

Dan Berlin 50:12

Thank you. Next, Mr. Davis.

Robert Davis 50:22

Thank you again. As everybody else has already stated, I think universal trash cans throughout the city, just like we have recycling cans is going to be a good first step for the residential areas. Commercially, where these big commercial buildings are coming in, they pay into a traffic commission to do traffic studies. I think these big commercial properties that are ripping down properties and disturbing obviously the rat population and having them scurry all over the place, I think they need to do an environmental study and put a funding together for that to really start helping out with helping fund the city to take care of this problem and get you know, trash containers to residents or, or vice versa. Another thing is these a lot of open trash

containers in the parks. Obviously it's easier for the CPW to get around in empty them out, but again, they're just wide open at the top, they're not contained. Definitely have seen rats in some of our parks. And then the larger areas, we have to have a universal plan to you know, outdoor dumpsters that need to be secure, self closing some way to keep the trash at bay and have a universal plan throughout the city. Again, a planning board would help. Again, planning for the city. Something needs to be done. The Health Department, CPW need to work together and really figure out a way to with the counselors and get a get a plan together so we can combat this situation. Thank you.

Dan Berlin 51:54

Thank you. Next up, Mr. McLaughlin.

John McLaughlin 52:11

Thanks, Dan. So my fellow participants have stolen all my thunder on this. So I absolutely, we had a great dialogue back and forth about wildlife and rat pesticides and I think we're on the right track with that. We need to pay attention to what we're using so it doesn't harm wildlife in Waltham and elsewhere. And I say elsewhere because anyone that thinks the rat problem is a Waltham problem, it's not. It's a it's a city problem. You see it in Watertown. You see it in Boston. You see it in Newton. I think we've been aggressive in how we've addressed it, and we need to keep working the problem. As I say, one of the things that I think is very important is with construction that goes on in Waltham, we have to make sure that those sites are pre baited. That will help reduce, I believe, as much as the trash. The trash issue also important, I think it was a major, major win for the city that we went over to the blue recycle barrels that removed an enormous amount of trash from the trash stream. Now the next step is going to be to continue the enforcement with people not leaving tops off their bins on trash day, putting bags on the ground. That's something else. It's an enforcement issue. And I think the city's also addressing that. I think that's it. Thank you.

Dan Berlin 53:51

Thank you. Great, well, so thank you so much for to all of our candidates. And if you care to come on cam again. Thank you to all of our candidates for coming to tonight's forum. And thank you to tonight's attendees for viewing tonight's forum. We hope you found this forum educational and insightful. The recording from all forums will be posted to the Waltham Land Trust website as soon as we can. The written responses from candidates who could not make the forum will be posted alongside the videos. And please remember to vote on November 7. You can also request mail in ballots on the city website by October 31 or vote early on October 28 through the 30th at 260 Grove Street. Also please check out the website Waltham Land Trust website at walthamlandtrust.org for information about our events, including the Western Greenway 5k on October 29. Take a nice run through the woods of Beaver Brook North. Thank you for joining tonight's forum everyone. Thank you to our candidates. Goodnight everyone.