



CHARLES RIVER

conservancy

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Lisa Peterson  
Chair, Community Preservation Act Committee  
795 Massachusetts Avenue  
Cambridge, MA 02139  
August 18, 2015

Re: CPA Open Space Funding for Hell's Half Acre project

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Dear Chairwoman Peterson and the CPA Committee:

On behalf of the Charles River Conservancy, I am writing to strongly support a grant of \$90,000 in Community Preservation Act funds toward proposed improvements to the eight-acre area along the Charles River known as Hell's Half Acre, as requested by the Cambridge Plant & Garden Club. This grant would match funds raised by the Solomon Foundation, which spearheaded the valuable Greenough Greenway project now under construction. We understand that the Hell's Half Acre portion is already designed and permitted. With adequate funding, work in this area could be done efficiently as an extension of the current project, greatly expanding the benefits of the new Greenough Greenway for the river and its many thousands of users.

As I'm sure you know, efforts started in the 1950s to secure public and private funding to make the area, dangerous at that time, accessible and appealing. My own experience with Hell's Half Acre goes back more than a decade. The Charles River Conservancy developed plans to restore Hell's Half Acre, but then the state funding for wetland restorations became unavailable. We also commissioned an inventory of plants. Our Conservancy Volunteers continue to work in this area both on trash collection and invasive plant removal.

The current proposal of a 1500-foot long path through the woodlands between the marsh and the river, in addition to restoration work, will literally open up a new world to our community, providing a unique educational and recreational environment in Cambridge that is not available anywhere else in the Charles River Basin. We are also pleased that the project will improve drainage and move the path in from the immediate shoreline, which is particularly eroded along that section of the river.

To help support and maintain this reclamation of Hell's Half Acre, the Charles River Conservancy will commit to holding at least two volunteer events each year for removal of invasive plants. With a new, wider path creating greater accessibility and appeal, volunteers and passersby will be much more motivated to enjoy this urban treasure and do their part to sustain it.

I hope you too will put your full support behind this effort. This is a once-in-a-lifetime chance to bring this much-needed improvement to this area. Mobilizing just once represents a huge savings. Hell's Half Acre will be safer and more attractive area for Cambridge.

Best regards,

*Renata von Tscharn*

Renata von Tscharn  
Founder and President

Cc:

Carol Sanchez, Commissioner, DCR

Martha Stearns, Cambridge Plant and Garden Club  
Herb Nolan, Solomon Fund

