



By Hand

April 17, 2015

Governor Charles Baker
Office of the Governor
State House
Boston, MA

Re: Daly Field, Brighton: A new public/private partnership

Dear Governor Baker:

We strongly urge your administration not to dispose of seven acres of valuable public parkland along the Charles River in Brighton, MA, known as Daly Field.

In 2012 legislation was enacted which authorizes, but does not direct, the Commonwealth to lease this parkland for 20 + 10 years to a private entity, Simmons College, via a newly created organization called the Allston Brighton Friends of Daly Field (“ABFDF”). Once leased, Simmons College will construct a state of the art college athletic facility for the use of their multiple collegiate teams. They will provide access for the Brighton High School football team and the Allston Brighton Little League, with public access allowed in any remaining time.

While opposing the disposition of this valuable public parkland, we asked two simple questions. What is the value of the land? What is the level of public access?

Under the prior administration, the Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR) and the Department of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM) conducted an appraisal of the land. Nowhere in the appraisal can you find a dollar valuation of the land. Instead, the “no net loss” appraisal simply indicates the value to the public of the improved land despite, the public’s curtailed use hours, is greater than its value in its current, dilapidated condition.

As a result, Simmons College will pay zero for this land! They will make a one-time payment of \$500,000 to neighboring Watertown to improve their river-front, but this is analogous to a standard developer’s mitigation fee. The Commonwealth will receive no annual lease payment. This field is not close to the Simmons campus, and Simmons’ use is not water dependent. When asked why they do not seek a blighted urban site close to campus, the response was the land was too costly. Apparently if you come to the Commonwealth, you can get parkland for free.

In terms of public access, we share the view of Brighton’s able legislators who believe Brighton athletes deserve a well maintained field. However, despite Simmons’ declaration of substantial general public access, the initial site plan provided zero public parking spaces, on a DCR parkway with no public parking and no public transit. After much negotiation, a mere ten

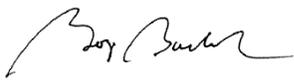
reserved public parking spaces have been included. While Simmons and Brighton High School would be shuttle-bused, how would others access the field? This will truly be Simmons' field, allowing modest public access.

Governor, you have inherited this problem, it is not of your making. However, it falls to you to correct this. We urge you not to execute the lease. We are prepared to work with you and Brighton legislators and community leaders to resolve this matter.

This proposed lease to a private party results from the underfunding of DCR and its inability to maintain the field. The citizens of Brighton have amply demonstrated the importance of this field to their community. If DCR reprioritized its capital expenditures to include partial funding for Daly Field, we would work with the Commonwealth to seek additional private funding to complete the project. In the end, the field, which is public trust land, would remain in public hands, with full public access. This is the type of public-private partnership that is in the public interest.

Please do not execute this long-term lease. We stand ready to work with you.

Sincerely,



George Bachrach, President
Environmental League of MA



Robert L. Zimmerman, Jr., Executive Director
Charles River Watershed Association

Arborway Coalition

Berkshire Environmental Action Team (BEAT)

Brookline GreenSpace Alliance

Charles River Conservancy

Esplanade Association

Franklin Land Trust

Friends of Alewife Reservation

Friends of Robinson State Park

Friends of the Blue Hills

Friends of Wompatuck State Park

Green Decade Newton

Green Futures

Hilltown Anti-Herbicide Coalition

Lake Onota Preservation Association

Massachusetts Association of Conservation
Commissions

Massachusetts Bicycle Coalition

Massachusetts Climate Action Network

Massachusetts Rivers Alliance

Nashua River Watershed Association

OARS - For the Assabet, Sudbury, and Concord Rivers

Southeastern Massachusetts Pine Barrens Alliance

The Trust for Public Land

WalkBoston

CC: Steven Kadish
Secretary Matthew Beaton, EOEEA