

Harbor Park Special Committee Statement March 2021

The Library Board of Trustees had a fruitful discussion regarding Harbor Park flooding, the seawall, and how the future of Montgomery Dam would affect the Park. As Trustees, we are the stewards of Harbor Park and are true stakeholders in any decisions. Any dam changes will certainly impact Harbor Park.

Environmental concerns, specifically sea-level rise, floodwater runoff, and fisheries restoration, are important, but are not the only considerations in our stewardship of Harbor Park. We will favor designs and concepts that save as much of the Park as possible.

While there is a tendency to view the Harbor Park seawall and Montgomery Dam as one project, they are, in fact, two separate issues which may, or may not, have one solution.

Our task is not to decide on the dam, but to set benchmarks for endorsing any plan for Montgomery Dam:

- **Historical aspects of Harbor Park** – It is important that Harbor Park be preserved as close to the original state as possible, including the pathways. The original Olmsted design transported visitors into a quiet, scenic park, secluded from the busy streets of Camden. The historical and scenic value of the Olmsted design cannot be overstated. It is a treasure. That said, the Trustees realize that some land may have to be sacrificed to sea-level rise, but wish to keep this to a minimum. The “soft” seawall or “stepped” design is a favored approach that achieves this. It should also be noted that the “sluiceway” wall and the Park end of the dam, part of the original design, are integral to the landscaping and structure of the Park and should be preserved.
- **Social aspects** – Harbor Park is important to all, residents and visitors, and should be even more user-friendly than at present. Safe enjoyment by all, including young children and those with disabilities, must be guaranteed in any plans for the future.
- **Aesthetic** – The look of the Park is also of vital importance, and our charge is to preserve this, too, for future generations.
- **Economic aspects** – The Park, Amphitheatre, and Library help bring visitors to Camden from far and wide, and Town businesses benefit.
- **Open decision-making process** – We urge the Town to actively engage with the public on these matters and to present alternative designs for Montgomery Dam, the mouth of the river, Harbor Park, and the head of the harbor.

In addition, the Trustees wish the following to be considered as priorities:

- All designs should include a depiction of the seawall. Any design concept also needs to address the area between the “ramp” and the boathouse end of the lower park.
- Designs such as Interfluve’s and Midcoast Conservancy need to show the HAT (Highest Astronomical Tide) line with projected sea level rise drawn.
- Conserve the natural features of the site to the greatest extent possible while reimagining the area with flood resiliency and sea level rise in mind.
- Plan for the long-term; allow for long-term maintenance.
- Any added features must increase usability and appeal of Harbor Park to the general public.
- Sea level rise is certain, and modification of the sea wall will need to be addressed. We favor the use of a tiered step design as it is both aesthetically pleasing and provides an area that is safe for public use.
- While it is important that the Town looks at funding this project through grants, this should not be the determining factor in a design choice.
- As this project will likely go out to a Town vote, we believe it is important that a final design be fiscally reasonable to garner support from the citizens of Camden.

As Trustees of the Library, Amphitheatre, and Harbor Park, our primary responsibility is to ensure careful and responsible management of these resources. The Trustees request that we be invited to all future meetings regarding the dam and to be notified of all communication regarding Harbor Park and this project. These notifications are best sent to **both** the President of the Board of Trustees and the Executive Director. We look forward to being part of the process to address sea level rise, potential changes to the Megunticook watershed and Harbor area and their future impact on Harbor Park.