



December 14, 2009

Rep. William Straus
Sen. Anthony Petrucci

Re: H. 853

Dear Rep. Straus and Senator Petrucci:

Fenway Civic Association (FCA) is the Fenway's only volunteer organization that accepts no public or developer funds. Our mission is to promote a safe and vital neighborhood that serves the interest of our residents.

We are writing to express our support for H.853, *An Act to Protect Certain Public Parklands*, and for the inclusion of the Back Bay Fens within the list of parks protected by the Act. The hearing on this act will be held tomorrow before the Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture. The act is designed to preserve the amount of sunshine available in certain public open spaces in Boston and Cambridge, by prohibiting new construction that would cast additional shadow on these spaces during the majority of the daylight hours.

Our organization is fully in favor of providing these protections for additional parklands. We are grateful that Representatives Rushing and Walz have seen fit to add the Back Bay Fens to the list of parks protected by the bill. The historic, federally-landmarked Back Bay Fens was designed by Frederick Law Olmsted in the 1800s. Today it serves as the thriving, vital center, that unites the neighborhoods of the East and West Fenway. It gives something to everyone: young and old, residents and visitors alike. The Fens provides a venue for active recreation in the newly reconstructed Clemente Field. The Fens is also a haven for solitude and quiet contemplation in the midst of the city. Bird watchers, walkers, dog owners, and nature lovers of all stripes come to enjoy a peaceful communion with nature. The Fens provides a place for more than 400 city residents to explore their passion for gardening in the renowned seven acre Victory Gardens. The Fens' Rose Garden is tended to by volunteers who beautify it for the enjoyment of all. The Fens is also home to the City's War Memorials from Vietnam, Korea, and World War II. The multitude of users who actively enjoy this single important park are a testament to the park's status as the only open space area in this very dense and growing neighborhood.

Each and every one of these residents and visitors benefits from the sun which currently shines down on the park. Without legislative protection, this park is in great danger of being cast into shadow. Perhaps more than any other parkland being considered for inclusion in this Bill, the Back Bay Fens is surrounded by institutional, rather than residential, uses. These educational, medical, and museum institutions are under constant pressure to grow and expand. That pressure in turn threatens the character and livability of the park itself. We firmly believe that the addition of the Fens to the parks protection act is a necessary and vital step in preserving our historic and beloved park.

Please support H.853 with amended language to include Boston's Back Bay Fens park land.

Thank you for your consideration in protecting our park,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathleen M. Brill". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Kathleen M. Brill
Vice President, Fenway Civic Association

cc. Rep. Byron Rushing
Rep. Marty Walz
Elizabeth Corcoran Hunt