Restoring the Agassiz Road Duck House

- Parkway links the East and West Fenway neighborhoods
- City of Boston property
- Out of use since the mid-1980s
- Designed by architect Alexander Longfellow and built in 1897, the building previously served as a bathroom facility.
- Emerald Necklace Masterplan calls for the restoration of historic structures in the park system

Presentation by Erica Mattison, Fenway Civic Association
Residents Seeking Duck House Rehab

by Jim Cronin
Courant News Writer

Fenway residents voiced support to rehabilitate a former ranger station in the Back Bay Fens into a destination for park visitors.

Members of the Fenway Civic Association (FCA), along with elected officials and representatives of city agencies, presented ideas of how to renovate the granite Agassiz Road structure known as the “duck house” at the FCA’s annual meeting on November 6.

Residents said they would like to see something at the location to make the area more vibrant, attracting park visitors and regular park users.

These uses include a café, a bicycle rental shop, public bathrooms facilities, an art gallery with works from the Fenway Studios artists or a combination of different uses. Some suggested indoor seating and outdoor seating in the summer.

Agassiz Road building

Article Courtesy of Boston Courant

Duck House

Fens Users Seek Café for the Park

by Jim Cronin
Courant News Writer

A survey of Back Bay Fens users is making two things clear — they want a café and more safety in the park.

The Fenway Civic Association (FCA) is conducting an effort to convert the “duck house” on Agassiz Road, an unused former ranger station, into a destination for park visitors.

Ideas to turn the site into a thriving part of the Fens include making it a café with outdoor tables, a bicycle and other sports equipment rental shop, a shop for guidebooks who work in the park and nearby Victory Gardens, or an art gallery and gift shop. All users include a unisex, handicap-accessible public bathroom.

The FCA has started an online survey for residents to provide feedback on the best uses for the area, and has partnered with an Institute of Technology’s Center for Community and Learning Partnerships to track the results.

Audrey Emerson, design coordinator at Winslow, who is tracking the survey results, said a café is the most popular idea among the more than 150 responses.

Duck House

Continued on page 14

Vacant Fens Building May Get New Life

by Jim Cronin
Courant News Writer

Public officials and local real estate developers have joined neighborhood advocates to rehabilitate a long-vacant building in the Back Bay Fens.

The structure, located on Agassiz Road, has been closed since a fire damaged the roof and interior in 1996.

City Councillor Michael Ross met with City Councilor Norman Levenson, representatives of the city’s Parks Department, the Emerald Necklace Conservancy and the Fenway Civic

Department issued a Request for Expressions of Interest to gauge how many businesses would want to open in the former park ranger station.

Although the Parks Department has not received any official proposals for the Agassiz Road building, Andrew Prescott, chief wheel officer for Urban AdvenTours, which offers bicycle tours and repairs, said the company would propose establishing a bike tour and rental operation at the site.

Continued on page 13
Duck House Restoration Partners

Boston Bikes
Boston City Councilor Michael Ross
City of Boston Parks and Recreation Department
Emerald Necklace Conservancy
Fenway Alliance
Fenway Civic Association
Fenway CDC
Fenway Garden Society
Historic Boston, Inc.
MA Department of Conservation and Recreation
State Representative Byron Rushing
Samuels & Associates
State Senator Steven Tolman
The Copley Group
Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.

Wentworth Institute of Technology Center for Community & Learning Partnerships
What could be...

 Luxembourg Gardens, Paris, France  
 Botanical Garden, Lund, Sweden
Example of a Crêpe Stand in a Park

Luxembourg Gardens, Paris, France
The river may be dirty now...

Muddy River Restoration Project about to get underway will yield wonderful river views from the Duck House.
Ideas for use have included:

• Art gallery
• Bike repair/rental shop
• Café
• Garden supply shop

With minimal parking in the area, pedestrians and bicyclists are a likely customer base.
Site Usage

In November 2009, volunteers collected data for two days to identify levels of usage by:

- Pedestrians
- Bicyclists
- Drivers.

Special thanks to the volunteers who contributed their time to this effort!
Agassiz Road at Duck House

Pedestrian Count

Hour Ending

Friday 11/13 Pedestrians
Sunday 11/15 Pedestrians
Agassiz Road at Duck House
Bicycle Counts

Hour Ending

Friday 11/13 Bikes
Sunday 11/15 Bikes
Agassiz Road at Duck House
Vehicle Counts - Friday 11/13/2009

Hour Ending

Friday 11/13 Vehicles
Sunday 11/15 Vehicles
Friday 11/13/2009 (12 Hr)

- Agassiz Road at Duck House
  - Peds: 2149
  - Bikes: 205

- Surrounding Area
  - Peds: 2862
  - Bikes: 294
Before
Possible “After”
Recent Developments...
Long-Term Lease

Summer 2010: MA Legislature passes law enabling City of Boston to offer a long-term lease for the Duck House.

“AN ACT TO AUTHORIZE THE CITY OF BOSTON PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION TO LEASE CERTAIN REAL PROPERTY UNDER ITS CONTROL AND OWNED BY THE CITY OF BOSTON”
Feasibility Study

In December 2010 Fenway Civic applied Matching Partnerships Grant from the Department of Conservation and Recreation for a feasibility study to identify a variety of transportation-related improvement opportunities for Agassiz Road.

We were selected! We raised over $13,000 from the community, which was double-matched by DCR. The study will be conducted in spring/summer 2011.
Stay Tuned

For community events related to Agassiz Road and the Duck House.