

WORKING DRAFT
TOWN OF IPSWICH
PEATFIELD LANDING
LAND USE AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

Located at 21 Peatfield Street
Ipswich, Massachusetts
Assessors Map 42C Parcel 18

Adopted _____, 2017

Adopted by the Ipswich Conservation Commission
With acceptance of:

Ipswich Board of Selectmen

Ipswich Department of Public Safety

Ipswich Department of Public Works

Ipswich Department of Parks & Cemeteries

Ipswich Department of Planning & Development

And with public input by

Members of the Ipswich community

At an advertised public meeting held on _____



Preface

The Peatfield Landing is a .41 acre parcel, known as Assessors Map 42C Parcel 18. The property was taken for non-payment of taxes by the Town of Ipswich Collector of Taxes in 1968, and subsequently deeded to the Town of Ipswich, to be managed and controlled by the Conservation Commission in March, 1972. It is located at the southeast terminus of Peatfield Street adjacent to the Ipswich River with an address of 21 Peatfield Street. It was formerly the site of a boat house known as Goodhues Boathouse at Pier 1 and a boarding house, but there are no longer any structures on the property, only remnants of the former structures. It is a small undeveloped parcel in a densely built downtown neighborhood immediately adjacent to the Ipswich River offering a quiet respite, and protecting the natural resources and habitat of the riverfront, as well as providing educational opportunities, and river access for passive public recreation from the adjacent right-of-way. A combination of sources were used to compile the information for this Land Use and Management Plan, including input from town staff and volunteers, as well as comments from the public at a meeting held on February 15, 2017.

Taking all of this information into account the following document lays out the details of the values for which the property is being protected (Section I. Introduction); how best to manage the property to achieve that protection (Section II Property Management); and what action will be taken to maintain those values on the property (Section III Property Maintenance).

This Plan is intended to be a working document. Once it is adopted by the Conservation Commission the “on the ground” experience of the land use and management may reveal that adaptations and changes to the Plan are necessary and advisable. Therefore this Plan should be used as a working document and changes to it should be considered in the future as warranted by use, experience, and conditions. Peatfield Landing is a unique riverfront property adjacent to the Ipswich River, protected by the residents of Ipswich through its Conservation Commission, proximate to other protected open space conservation land across the river, for the public’s enjoyment and for the benefit of flora, fauna, soils, and waterways in perpetuity. Balancing the multiple objectives of protecting this property for future generations is a welcome challenge we strive to achieve.

I. Introduction

A. Property Ownership

The Town of Ipswich Collector of Taxes took the premises at 21 Peatfield Street, known as Assessors Map 42C Parcel 18, in 1968 for non-payment of taxes (see Southern Essex Registry of Deeds Book 5561 Page 381), and it was subsequently transferred to care, custody and control of the Town of Ipswich Conservation Commission on March 16, 1972 (see Southern Essex Registry of Deeds Book 5853 Page 041). The property has informally been referred to as Goodhue's Landing as it was once the location of a boathouse known as Goodhue's Boathouse and a boarding house, as well as Peatfield Landing as it is located at the end of Peatfield Street adjacent to the Ipswich River. It will now formally be designated as Peatfield Landing per the Conservation Commission approval to adopt this name for the property.

B. Site Location and Description

The property is located at the southeastern terminus of Peatfield Street, at 21 Peatfield Street, and is bordered to the east by the Ipswich River, to the south by First Street, and to the west by private residences. It is a .41 acre parcel with a portion of the northwest corner of the property that is paved and graveled, and where timber remnants of the former house foundation are visible. There is space for approximately four to five vehicles to park in the graveled area. The remainder of the property is mowed lawn maintained by the Town's Parks and Cemeteries staff, with vegetated fringes of trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants, including invasive species, along the east, south and western boundaries. Peatfield Landing is accessed by vehicle from Peatfield Street; by foot from either Peatfield Street or First Street, where there is an opening in an old, rundown wooden fence that runs for a portion of the southern boundary; and by the Ipswich River to the east, where there is a put-in/take-out spot immediately north of the property beyond the end of the paved portion of the Peatfield Street right-of-way.

This parcel is under the formal care, custody and control of the Ipswich Conservation Commission, and pursuant to the March 3, 1975 Annual Town Meeting, Article 22, is subject to protection against reversion from conservation purposes provided by Article 97 of the Massachusetts Constitution. The property contains the following beneficial characteristics:

- It provides wildlife habitat and natural resources along the riverfront and riparian zone stretching nearly 135 feet of frontage along the Ipswich River, as well as within the vegetated borders of the remainder of the property;
- it maintains open and undeveloped land in a densely built neighborhood providing river vistas in a parkland setting, with river access at the end of the adjacent right-of-way in a downtown location of Ipswich;
- it is located directly across the Ipswich River from land protected by conservation restrictions held by the Ipswich Conservation Commission at The Ipswich Museum Whipple House and Whimbrel Meadows Condominiums, as well as the undeveloped rear portion of the Town's South Side Cemetery.

a) Vegetation

This parcel is mostly mowed lawn with a vegetated border on three sides including the eastern boundary, which is riverbank frontage and riparian area along the Ipswich River. The over story is predominantly hardwood Maples; the shrub layer consists of Staghorn Sumac (*Rhus Typhina*); climbers and vines include Wild Grape (*Vitis riparia*), Virginia creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*), Periwinkle (*Vinca minor*), and English ivy (*Hedera helix*); and herbaceous plants

include; various goldenrod species (*Solidago sp.*), greater burdock (*Arctium lappa*), and various aster species (*Aster sp.*). There is also a single specimen linden tree (*Tilia ×europaea*) that is proximate to the river on the northern border. Included in the vegetative borders are invasive plants including; Japanese knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*), oriental bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*), Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*), multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*), Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*), glossy buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*) and various honeysuckle species (*Lonicera sp.*).

b) Soils

The Peatfield Landing is located at the boundary of two soil classification units of the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) for southern Essex County. They are: Shaker fine sandy loam characterized as deep, nearly level and poorly drained; and Melrose fine sandy loam characterized as deep, nearly level, and well drained.

c) Wetlands

The entire eastern portion of the Peatfield Landing property is within the floodplain of the Ipswich River and some areas, particularly the southeast corner, which is within the FEMA flood zone, are affected by periodic flooding. The entirety of the property is within the 200' Riverfront Area of the Massachusetts Rivers Protection Act, which is under jurisdiction and authority of the Ipswich Conservation Commission.

d) Wildlife

The riverfront, riparian, and upland portions of this property provide appropriate food, cover, and nesting to make it suitable habitat for a variety of birds, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians, although limited in scope due to the size and location of the parcel. Several bird species are likely to utilize its resources including; woodpecker, woodcock, herons, kingfisher, ducks, barred owls, eastern screech owl, red-tailed hawks, and other species of songbirds and gamebirds including Wild Turkey. Other wildlife likely to find shelter or food there at some point in their life cycle include; wood frogs, green frogs, turtles and salamanders; and small mammals such as; raccoon, eastern cottontail, red squirrel, fisher, beaver. In all likelihood coyote and deer also utilize this property. It was reported by a neighbor that a coywolf was observed and photographed on their property on First Street adjacent to Peatfield Landing.

Peatfield Landing is situated on the impoundment (pond) created by the Ipswich Mills Dam located on the Ipswich River 0.2 miles downstream of the property. The Town of Ipswich is studying the feasibility of removing the Ipswich Mills Dam to restore natural river ecology and remove liability. The current study is a collaboration between the Town of Ipswich and a number of partners including MA Division of Ecological Restoration, US Fish & Wildlife Service, NOAA Restoration Center, and the Ipswich River Watershed Association. Horsley Witten Group leads the consulting team investigating the impacts of removing the dam, which has outlived its economic and commercial usefulness. Among other things, the study is evaluating the effects of removal on; the surrounding infrastructure; ecological restoration of the river; historical resources; aesthetics; and ongoing maintenance and liability costs to the Town as owner of the dam. The results of the feasibility study will also provide information on expected changes in water level at the Peatfield Landing property.

C. Historic, Recent, and Intended Property Uses

Because of its historic significance, the neighborhood where Peatfield Landing is located was designated as the Ipswich Mills Historic District in 1996 by the National Park Service on the National Register of Historic Places. The river along this stretch was once known as Mill Pond of the Ipswich Mills during its industrial/manufacturing heyday. The neighborhood was once home to a large number of Polish immigrants who lived here in tenement housing, and worked for the Ipswich Mills, a textile manufacturing operation formerly located downstream at the current site of EBSCO Information Services. The first homes in the neighborhood were built in the mid to late 19th century, followed by a more extensive development in the early part of the 20th century by the Ipswich Mills, to create housing for immigrant workers. A grocery store, a social club, and a restaurant were all part of the neighborhood fabric, and because of the geographic and social makeup of the area, in many ways residents lived an isolated existence from the rest of the town. Predominantly Polish and Greek immigrants, it was also home to Irish, English, and French Canadian laborers. As far back as 1891 Peatfield Landing was the site of Goodhue's Boathouse known as Pier 1 Canoe Depot, where residents could rent canoes, smoke cigars, and play billiards while relaxing by the river, as well as find accommodations in the boarding house. There are still remnants of some of the buildings associated with the Canoe Depot once located here. Prior to that, the property belonged to James Peatfield who deeded it to the Goodhue family in 1882.

Parking for four or five cars in the parking area has been designated for use during daylight hours for public use of the property, which includes walking, photography, nature observation, picnicking, and walking of leashed dogs. Access to the property is by vehicle or pedestrians from either Peatfield Street or First Street, and by non-motorized boats from the put-in/take-out river spot located at the end of the paved portion of the Peatfield Street right-of-way. There is no river access currently or planned from the Peatfield Landing property.

II. **Property Management**

A. Guiding Principles

The guiding principle and purpose of the Land Use and Management Plan for the Peatfield Landing is to preserve the property and its characteristics as described in this document for; natural resource protection; the future enjoyment of the public through passive recreation and educational opportunities; and the benefit of wildlife for the habitat it provides. Its beauty and quiet natural character, the peace that can be found there, and its importance to the Ipswich River, including flood storage are assets to be protected. The riverbank itself is also a protected asset of the property, as are maintaining the scenic vistas along the riverfront corridor. The property is to be owned and maintained in perpetuity by the Town as open space and conservation land, under the care, custody and control of the Ipswich Conservation Commission. Uses and activities consistent with these objectives and commitments will be permitted; all those not consistent will be prohibited as specified in more detail below. There will be no discrimination among users based on race, color, national origin, religion, physical ability, age, sexual orientation, and/or gender. Public use of the property is not limited to Ipswich residents.

B. Management Objectives and Oversight

This Land Use and Management Plan is intended to preserve the existing character of the property as public use land, while maintaining its value for natural habitats, and as Ipswich River watershed immediately adjacent to the river. Active management to support these objectives is intended and anticipated. The management activities and usage restraints that will be undertaken and enforced are those necessary to (a) protect the natural resources and their effect on water quality, particularly with

regard to the Ipswich River drainage, (b) maintain the wetlands and vegetated boundaries in their present locations and forms (i.e., clean, undamaged and as free as practicable from invasive or adverse vegetative species), (c) protect wetlands and other wildlife habitat values, (d) provide floodplain storage as a means of offsetting potential flood impacts to developed areas in the adjacent neighborhood, and (e) provide public access for passive outdoor recreational and educational opportunities. Public parking will be provided through an existing small graveled parking area for vehicles.

The Peatfield Landing was deeded to the Town and placed under the care, custody, and control of its Conservation Commission, which shall be responsible for its care and supervision, and shall exercise management oversight, with assistance from the Open Space Administrator through the Open Space Program. The Commission will also be assisted in its duties from time to time by the Town Departments of Public Works, Division of Parks & Cemeteries, Utilities, and Public Safety, as needed. A Stewardship Committee for the property may be established, as advisory to the Commission, consisting of representatives of those Departments, interested citizens, and/or members of the Open Space Committee, the Waterways Advisory Committee, or other relevant and interested Town Committees. If established, this group will meet at the call of the Commission Chair or designated Town employee as needed; to consider the condition and use of the property, organize any special maintenance or cleanup effort, and recommend changes to the Management Plan as warranted.

C. Permitted Uses

The Conservation Commission has concluded through its experience with other Town public access conservation properties, and through consideration and consultation with other Town Departments, and input from the public at a public meeting held on February, 15 2017, that the following uses are allowed:

- a) The property will be open from dawn to sunset for these permitted passive recreational activities; walking, jogging, wildlife observation, vista enjoyment, photography, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and access to the non-motorized boat riverfront put-in/take-out point on the adjacent right-of-way at the end of the paved portion of Peatfield Street.
- b) Parking for property visitors during open hours will be in the designated parking area on the property.
- c) Dogs are allowed but *must* be leashed and dog owners *must* bag and remove all dog waste from the premises.

D. Prohibited Uses

Through the same process described above for permitted uses on the property the following uses will **not** be allowed at the Peatfield Landing;

- a) Access to and use of the property between the hours of sunset and sunrise is prohibited.
- b) Fires and camping are prohibited.
- c) Hunting on the premises is not allowed due to State regulations regarding proximity to occupied dwellings and roads.
- d) Possession and consumption of alcoholic beverages on the property is prohibited.
- e) Motorized and motor assisted-vehicles and other powered equipment, including but not limited to motorcycles, motorbikes, All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs), Off Road Vehicles (ORVs), snowmobiles, scooters and any other motorized recreational vehicles are prohibited.
- f) Littering, the placement and/or storage of refuse or waste of any kind on the property is prohibited. Visitors must carry out all articles carried in, including trash and dog waste.

- g) Damaging or removal of vegetation or of signs, walls, fences or structures, or objects of any kind, are all prohibited.
- h) Access to the river directly from the property is prohibited, but is allowed from the river access point at the end of the paved portion of the Peatfield Street right-of-way.

Violators of these regulations are subject to punishment as provided by law. Ipswich General Bylaws Chapters 12, 13, 15, and 17, and Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 266 Sections 120, 120d and 122, and Chapter 40 Section 8C contain further details on prohibited uses on public parkland and property, and the applicable fines for violating these regulations.

It should be noted that for the purposes of property maintenance, inspections, upkeep, improvements and/or for the purposes of patrol, rescue, fire control and/or other public safety emergencies the Ipswich Conservation Commission and/or their duly authorized private or public agents or entities, the prohibition of motorized vehicles and river access does not apply.

E. Precautions and Warnings

Ticks, with the accompanying risk of contracting Lyme disease, are present in all vegetated areas in this region, and the Peatfield Landing is no exception. Mosquitoes are also infectious, disease-carrying insects and are common in this region and on the property. Simple preventive measures can be taken to protect against potential harm from these insects and users should acquaint themselves with those methods through internet research or with the Ipswich Board of Health. Poison ivy is also present in this area, as well as other brambles and vegetation that can cause injury and unpleasantness. Users should be familiar with what plants look like in various stages and should take every precaution to avoid contact. Staying on mowed areas and out of vegetated areas may reduce the risk of coming in contact with nuisance plants as well as stinging and disease carrying insects, and should be adhered to at all times. This will also eliminate the chance of trespassing on neighboring properties as well as adversely affecting plants, wildlife, habitat, and terrain on this property. Any wetlands present on the property are protected against entry and may be posted as such. Use of the property is solely at the risk of the user.

F. Public Parking and River Access for Non-motorized Boats

Parking for four to five cars has been designated with a sign posted in the gravel parking area for use by visitors to the Peatfield Landing during daylight hours. River access for non-motorized boat launching and landing is only from the river access point at the end of the paved Peatfield Street right-of-way, and not from any portion of the Peatfield Landing property.

G. Signage

An information kiosk will be located on the property, and lists permitted and prohibited uses, hours of access, additional river access locations, and precautions. Additional small signs may be placed on the property at wetland boundaries prohibiting access to them, or along the property boundaries as warranted.

H. Enforcement and Public Safety

The Conservation Commission with assistance from the Open Space Administrator will coordinate with and rely upon the Ipswich Police Department to provide surveillance of the property and enforce the posted regulations as needed. If visitors or neighbors to the property observe a violation of the regulations, which may or may not pose a hazard, they are encouraged to contact the Ipswich Police Department to report a potential violation. In the instance of conditions that do not require immediate

response, or that require maintenance attention (non-emergency) contact the Open Space Administrator or Conservation Agent at Ipswich Town Hall.

III. Property Maintenance

A. Maintenance Tasks

The lawn will continue to be mowed as it has been through the Parks & Cemeteries Division. No improvements other than minimal brush and vegetation trimming are anticipated on the property. Vegetation growing along the river access path from the end of the right-of-way on Peatfield Street will be minimally trimmed as necessary to maintain a clear, unobstructed path to the river. Property maintenance will be coordinated through the Conservation Commission and the Open Space Program soliciting volunteer assistance as appropriate and warranted from local community or volunteer groups and/or individuals, and any permits for work in jurisdictional areas of the Conservation Commission or Building Department and/or other permitting authority, local and/or state, will be secured first. If usage increases to the extent that wear and erosion of the premises becomes a problem, management options to be considered will include changes to walkway surfaces, and/or relocation as appropriate and feasible.

No forestry management practices are currently planned, however there may be a time in the future when the Conservation Commission or other Town Department may opt to engage professional foresters in approved forestry management assessments and/or practices for the purpose of improving forest health, particularly as it pertains to water quality in the watershed. Areas identified with extensive invasive plant infestation will be treated and controlled as deemed appropriate, taking into consideration scale of impact, available funding, and labor resources. The designated parking area will be maintained in a way consistent with other public parking areas in Town, including resurfacing and regrading as deemed necessary. Plowing of the parking area will not be prioritized during winter months, but will be tended to as time and resources allow during winter plowing operations throughout Town. Parking, informational, and directional signage will be installed, maintained, replaced and/or restored as needed in coordination between the Conservation Commission and Open Space Programs and/or their designees.

B. Maintenance Funding

a) Ordinary Maintenance

The Town has responsibility for routine maintenance of the property, and the Commission will exercise oversight, both administrative and regulatory as required, in coordination with the Open Space Administrator, working with the Seasonal Laborer through the Parks & Cemeteries Division for that maintenance. The Town will also solicit voluntary contributions and services of individuals, groups, and/or landscapers or other businesses in the support of ordinary maintenance activities (in a manner similar to support of roadway islands and edges). The Open Space Program, in partnership with the Commission, will seek out the assistance of the Department of Public Works, and Parks & Cemeteries to maintain the property in a routine manner, and will utilize volunteer resources as appropriate and available. Expenses to cover costs for routine maintenance will use Open Space, Recreation and Water Supply Protection fund monies, and/or other grant or contributed funds, materials or services, as needed, as allowed, and as available, including but not limited to budgeted funds through the Department of Planning & Development.

b) Extraordinary Maintenance

Maintenance that goes beyond routine upkeep (i.e., addressing erosion, replacement or repair of signs and barriers, resurfacing of parking areas, managing invasive species, etc.) will be the responsibility of the Conservation Commission, the Open Space Program, and/or their assigns. The Commission will seek out the assistance of the Department of Public Works, Division of Parks & Cemeteries, the Utilities Department, and/or outside contractors and/or volunteers such as community organizations or Scout groups in order to undertake these improvements, using Open Space, Recreation, and Water Supply Protection Fund monies or other grant funds as needed, or any other funds generated in other ways. Solicitation of in-kind services and/or materials from outside entities will also be considered as options for supporting extraordinary maintenance projects.

IV. Conformance with Existing Regulations

The Town of Ipswich adopted and amended regulations on August 1, 2002 governing the use of town-owned land, the documents being known as “Town of Ipswich Regulations on the Use of Unimproved Town Lands” and “Town of Ipswich Use of Town Land Regulations” (attached). Except as specifically stated otherwise herein, the Peatfield Landing shall be subject to these regulations. Ipswich General Bylaws Chapters 12, 13, 15, and 17, and Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 266 Sections 120, 120d and 122, and Chapter 40 Section 8C contain further details on prohibited uses on public parkland and property and the applicable fines for violating these regulations.

V. Attachments:

GIS ortho photo plan titled “Town Property at 21 Peatfield Street”
Topographic and Vegetation Plan (from USGS quadrangle)
Town of Ipswich Regulations on the Use of Unimproved Lands (8/1/02)
Town of Ipswich Use of Town Land Regulations (11/01/79, amended 8/1/02)

VI. Signatories

Conservation Commission

_____, Chair _____ (Date)

Board of Selectmen

_____, Chair _____ (Date)

Police Department

_____, Chief _____ (Date)

Department of Public Works

_____, Director _____ (Date)

Department of Parks & Cemeteries

_____, Director _____ (Date)

Department of Planning and Development

_____, Director _____ (Date)

This document will be considered adopted and become effective as of the last date of the signatures above