

Public Comments

Dennis Meadows; 12/21/21

Recently I offered to help Durham protect the College Brook by reestablishing the integrity of the full 75' buffer for the Brook where it runs along the Mill Plaza parking lot and entry road. My proposal was described in two letters posted to the Citizens Comments section of the Durham Planning Board's website for the Plaza proposal: 12/3/21 and 11/22/21.

Here I will explain my four main reasons for making that offer.

Restoring the buffer is urgent. It is easy. It is inexpensive. It is important.

#1 It is urgent. If the Conservation Commission's recommendation of January this year continues to be ignored, Durham will lose the possibility of restoring the College Brook buffer for another 50 years.

Fifty years ago, on February 21, 1973, the Durham Conservation Commission wrote a letter to the Durham selectman that is 100% relevant today. I quote from that letter, "[Construction of the new market building and parking lot now proposed, directly above the banks of the brook, will cause more erosion of soil and more silting into these adjacent waterways unless preventive measures are guaranteed as a condition for the granting of a new building permit.](#)"

The request was ignored, construction took place on the Plaza. It became impossible to protect the buffer, silting occurred, and Durham's Mill Pond filled in exactly as predicted.

Soon some version of the plans for a new Plaza will be approved. If those plans intrude on the Brook's protective buffer, it will again be effectively impossible for another 50 years to improve the environment along the College Brook.

#2 It is easy. Preserving the buffer now will impose very little inconvenience for CDA. Honoring the Commission's recommendation would require CDA to make only minor changes in their plans. They obviously expect to make enormous profits from the approximately 50

million dollars they have probably allocated to fund the construction effort. Preserving the full 75' buffer would only reduce those profits a little - mostly by the amount of lost revenue from renting out parking spaces.

#3 It is inexpensive. It would cost relatively little to create and maintain a buffer greenway. During the past three years I have personally organized the collection of over half a million dollars to pay for land, paths, and a bridge that now belong to Durham and enhance its wonderful environmental and recreational resources. The greenway buffer would cost very much less than what has already been spent, and financing it would be easy. I offered to help do it.

#4 It is important. College Brook runs through the heart of Durham. It borders the most intensively used area of our town. Preserving the buffer will protect the Brook, provide a quiet, beautiful, and safe passage between important neighborhoods, improve water quality, and complete a unique, miles-long walking path. Just imagine a restored College Brook bordered by a greenway where Durham's people can meet, talk, and walk.

But there won't be a greenway if everyone sits around and waits for someone else to take action. That's why I made the offer I did.