



STONEHURST

THE ROBERT TREAT PAINE ESTATE

FRIENDS OF
STONEHURST/

ROBERT TREAT PAINE
HISTORICAL TRUST

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March 21, 2018

Dear Mayor and Members of the City Council and School Committee,

We appreciate your dilemma in locating a new high school building and campus but are strongly opposed to any plan to take acreage away from Stonehurst, the Robert Treat Paine Estate/Storer Conservation Lands or the Chesterbrook Woods parcel. We recognize your need for expansion, realize it is a difficult process and fully support your academic program. However, we contend that a decision to pursue protected lands and break a public promise would be a profound disservice to the people who live in Waltham today and generations into the future.

In addition to being a valuable environmental asset, the Paine Estate is an exceptionally important cultural landscape associated with Frederick Law Olmsted, a giant in America's historical, artistic and social history with worldwide fame and influence. Its H.H. Richardson-designed architectural masterwork is a popular event venue, small branch library, museum and National Historic Landmark.

The Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) funding agency recognizes the immeasurable educational value of resources like the Paine Estate, stating that "to the extent feasible, the site selected [for a school] shall be proximate to other facilities such as libraries, museums, parks, natural resources, nature study areas, and businesses which would enhance the proposed educational program." [emphasis added] It insists that the site selected for a new school shall "minimize any possible adverse educational, environmental, social or economic impact upon the community." Destroying essential community assets to build a new school or school campus runs contrary to the MSBA's educational and school-building goals.

The entire 109-acre Paine/Storer property is protected by National Historic Landmark status and conservation restrictions. It was donated for the public good with restrictions to ensure that the land be maintained "in a predominantly natural, scenic, green and open condition forever." According to the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition, the 25.5-acre Chesterbrook Woods that was historically a part of the estate is in all

probability protected by the recently strengthened protections of Article 97 in the Massachusetts Constitution.

As you know, the local, state and federal process to reverse promised protections on public land is "purposefully onerous." Even if Waltham were willing to attempt to unravel multiple historical and environmental protections, jeopardizing resources across the community and beyond, the MSBA is unlikely to fund such a destructive act.

Olmsted thought in terms of centuries, not years or decades. He recognized how wilderness is central to the American identity and had the foresight to protect our natural wonders and draw inspiration from "genius of place." His contributions to the American landscape range from our country's first national and state reservations at Yosemite Valley and Niagara to urban public parks in New York City, Chicago, Boston, DC and Montreal to the Cradle of American Forestry National Historic Site. Along with this impressive portfolio that includes the Paine Estate, his philosophy that national and city parks are social institutions essential to democracy has helped shape the very fabric of America. Olmsted's concept of national parks has spread to over 100 nations.

The Paine Estate is Waltham's Olmsted park, a place where he helped develop distinctly American organic design imagery and began his influential experiments in forestry. The woodlands of the Paine Estate are an integral part of the whole, providing meaning, nourishment and exercise to thousands of residents and other visitors each year, fulfilling Olmsted's dream for America.

The City of Waltham is so fortunate to be the steward of this extraordinary place that enhances its community by providing valuable educational opportunities and acres of unspoiled open space enjoyed and cherished by residents of all ages. We urge you to take into consideration the points we have made here and pursue other land within Waltham to build the new high school campus.

Sincerely,

The Friends of Stonehurst/Robert Treat Paine Historical Trust Board of Directors

[Friends of Stonehurst/Robert Treat Paine Historical Trust board member Dr. John Cox, who is also a member of the Waltham Historical Commission, did not participate in the Friends of Stonehurst discussion and vote on this matter.]

cc. Senator Michael J. Barrett
Representative Thomas M. Stanley
Representative John J. Lawn