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Contact:
Emily Norton
(508) 397-6830
enorton@crwa.org

Maddie Wolters
(781) 788-0007 X200
mwolters@crwa.org

CRWA Warns Boston City Council: Developing Frontage Road Will Endanger Boston Residents

BOSTON, MA, NOV. 29, 2018 — The Charles River Watershed Association today warned the Boston City Council that opening up Widett Circle to large-scale development will lead to increased flooding with the potential of endangering Boston residents and businesses in the flood-prone area.

The warning was delivered by CRWA Executive Director Emily Norton and Projects Director Julie Wood at the City's Planning, Development and Transportation Committee meeting considering selling off five city-owned Frontage Road parcels in order to open up access to development of Widett Circle.

"Frontage Road was historically under water," Wood told the committee, pointing to maps showing how the area was eventually filled in. "It flooded during the extreme storms last January, and it will flood again."

CRWA is proposing that instead of developing the area, it be restored as a wetland to cost-effectively reduce flooding, protect homes and businesses, and provide green space for Boston residents.

CRWA referenced climate change models that consistently predict increased and significant flooding in many coastal areas, including Boston. The National Climate Assessment released last week warned that "urban areas are at risk for large numbers of evacuated and displaced populations and damaged infrastructure due to both extreme precipitation events and recurrent flooding."

Norton urged city officials to set aside land such as Frontage Road and Widett Circle now, before it's too late. "Every new climate change report shows a more dire future for the Northeast, particularly related to flooding," she said. "We know the water is coming. The question is: will Boston city leaders ensure it has any place to go?"

About Charles River Watershed Association:

Charles River Watershed Association's mission is to use science, advocacy and the law to protect, preserve and enhance the Charles River and its watershed. One of our country's first watershed organizations, CRWA formed in 1965 in response to public concern about the declining condition of the Charles River. Since its earliest days of advocacy, CRWA has figured prominently in major clean-up and watershed protection efforts that have dramatically improved the health of the Charles.