

Oral History and Community Memory: AMST 1903G

Interviewer: Sophie Duncan

Interviewee: Robert McMahon

Location: Roger Williams Boathouse

Date: 14 March 2013

Summary: Robert McMahon, Superintendent of Providence Parks Department describes the history of the parks around Mashapaug Pond in addition to explaining the challenges storm water has caused for Providence watersheds.

[Beginning of Recording]

Robert McMahon: So what's your course load this year? What kinds of courses are you taking?

Sophie Duncan: A little bit of everything. I think I'll probably be doing a lot with classics just because I enjoy it so much.

McMahon: Oh wow.

Duncan: I've taken a few classics courses but I've also, I'm taking this course and I've taken some Spanish, a class on Rhode Island's food system, so just some classes.

McMahon: Rhode Island's what?

Duncan: Food system.

McMahon: Oh wow. Who teaches that?

Duncan: That was Kathryn DeMaster. She just left.

McMahon: O.K.

Duncan: That was a fun one.

McMahon: Alrighty.

Duncan: So the way it will work is for the interview itself, I'll be holding this between us and it'll capture the sound. And there's couple of forms that you'll need to sign.

McMahon: O.k.

Duncan: I have two copies so you can keep one. It's an oral history, we can sign it at the end. It's just an interview agreement so saying you know copyright and informed consent that we're going to be using this and then things. It will be online afterwards. And then just a little bio that we keep when we archive it.

McMahon: O.k. good.

Duncan: And then I'll just move this [chair] so we can get good sound.

McMahon: Sure.

Duncan: And then I'll also be have to wear the headphones to make sure it's.

McMahon: You're picking up, yes.

Duncan: Recording because that would be so unfortunate.

McMahon: That would be a disaster.

Duncan: I know you hear the horror stories. And then also just when I start recording if you could say who you are.

McMahon: O.K.

Duncan: Because depending on how they decide to cut the audio tapes.

McMahon: Alright

Duncan: O.K.

[Beginning of Interview]

McMahon: This is Bob McMahon, Superintendent of Providence Parks in Rhode Island[2:40].

Duncan: And I am Sophie Duncan and we are here today on March 14 at 3:45 at Roger Williams Park. And just to note for the record that we have a lovely aerial map [of the pond] in front of us. And I would love just to start by asking how you first found out about Mashapaug Pond.

McMahon: I've been in the Parks Department since 1987 and we have 110 parks in Providence and we work with neighborhood groups all time. About twenty years ago, a group called the Reservoir Triangle association contacted me to see if we could work with them on acquiring some land around the pond for park uses. And over the years there have been a number of issues related to Mashapaug pond. For the last ten years or so the redevelopment of the Gorham site has been a major issue and has involved the parks department to some extent. And about 1995 J.T. Owens ball fields, which are located on the Western side, which were once owned by the state, D.E.M., were given over to the city. So since that time we've been responsible for the ball fields at J.T. Owens Park.

Duncan: And so when you first found out about the pond had you been to it before? Or when it was first raised formally as a parks department department issue were you aware of it?

McMahon: Certainly from just driving around the city and knowing what the water resources are in the park. Yes I was aware of it.

Duncan: And what are the water resources in the park?

McMahon: Well there's very few in the city. Mashapaug is the largest freshwater pond in the city. It's 80 plus acres, no, 67 acres? I forget offhand but its by far the largest one. [5:00]And it also became of interest to us because it's the water body that feeds the ponds that we're looking out at today. The ponds in Roger Williams Park are all man-made ponds. And there once was a brook that flowed from Mashapaug down through an area of the city and fed what is now Roosevelt lake, near the Casino, Roger Williams Park Casino. That was and is the primary water

source. That brook has since been covered over and channeled into a big pipe, a concrete pipe, so you really can't see it anymore, but it still provides the water from Mashapaug Pond to our ponds here in the park. We have a lot of water quality problems here in our park ponds. Mostly from storm water that brings Phosphorous into the ponds. Mashapaug Pond, as it turns out, is the major source of Phosphorous for the Roger Williams Park's ponds. My continuing interest is that if in order to have clean water in Roger William Park's ponds, we need to also address the storm water related pollution problems in Mashapaug Pond as well.

Duncan: Can you tell me what it means about the Phosphorous for those of us who are not as familiar with science?

McMahon: Sure. The ponds in Roger Williams Parks are relatively shallow, I indicated they are man made. In the summer because they are shallow, they heat up. When you have nutrients of which Phosphorous is a major one, coming into that kind of a condition, shallow warm ponds, it promotes the growth of algae. O.K.? When you have the water covered with algae it becomes a nuisance instead of an attraction. So the ponds in the park were originally designed to be a landscape asset but in the deep summer months of July, August, and September, they are covered in algae. The primary trigger for that algae is Phosphorous and the Phosphorous is coming from storm water. Because the park and the watershed that Mashapaug Pond is in are all heavily urbanized and so storm water comes off the streets, parking lots etc. and so when it goes into the storm drain it is loaded with Phosphorous.

Duncan: Coming from Mashapaug Pond when did the Phosphorous start?

McMahon: It's been coming ever since both areas were heavily urbanized. The pond water quality problems here at Roger Williams Park have been around for decades. They seem to have gotten increasingly worse over the last decade because seemingly we seem to have a longer, hotter summer period than we used to have, which seems to be promoting the aggravation of the algae problem in the park. Now, as you can see, looking at Mashapaug Pond in front of us, it is heavily urbanized, around it. So it has been a problem for quite a while.

Duncan: Given the urbanization of it, can you talk a little bit about the role that Parks Department has seen with Gorham and kind of how that's played a role in the water quality?

McMahon: It has a totally different issue. The water quality problems related to the former Gorham site involve heavy metals and severe chemicals that relate to the process that was used in plating. The Gorham factory once made silverware and so they had to plate all of that. They dumped the chemical residue into the groundwater on site as well as into this cove area behind the Gorham site.

Duncan: So where is this cove because this is an aerial view, what area of the pond? So it's between Adelaide and Atlantic? Just can you help orient me because I am a bit disoriented?

McMahon: Sure. [Pointing on the map] We are looking North. O.K. This is Narragansett. This is the train. This is Narragansett Avenue. This is Reservoir Avenue. This is Adelaide

Avenue, as you indicated. This is now a shopping center and a high school. So this shows the old footprint of the factories that were once on there.[10:00].

Duncan: So that's a completely separate problem?

McMahon: Right because the pollution from that is localized in the groundwater at the site and it this area here [points to Gorham site on map]. And that's, they're working with D.E.M. The former owners of that site, the Gorham site, is company called Textron and they are responsible for cleaning up that site, which they are slowly but surely under D.E.M. jurisdiction.

Duncan: So that doesn't impact at all the Roger Williams?

McMahon: No. Nope. Nope.

Duncan: Can you talk a little bit more about the brook and the process of why the brook was covered up?

McMahon: I don't know why it was. I think it has to with Route 10 which was developed alongside this area of Providence back in the mid '60s. Route 10 pretty much went through the area where the old brook was and so in order to accommodate the highway they just stuck the brook into a large concrete pipe. You couldn't do that today of course but back in the '60s they could. If you want to take a break for a minute, I have another map which I can show you a little bit better that relationship if you want.

Duncan: Yes, no we can pull it out right now.

McMahon: I want to just, I'll bring it over. [Goes and gets map folder]. This is just the park pond. [Finds map and lays it on table]. So we are on Pleasure Lake in the boathouse here and this black line shows you the watershed for the Park ponds in this part of Providence and we call that the lower watershed.

Duncan: What determines that as being the watershed boundary?

McMahon: Well in typically in a natural area it would be the topography. [Draws hill with lake at base on scratch paper] So for example if you have this hillside here and there is a lake there, the watershed for this lake ends right there because the water that hits this hill flows in this direction.

Duncan: So it ends at the top of the hill where it would flow down.

McMahon: Right, so it's governed by topography. That typically would determine the watershed, but in an urbanized area it isn't quite that simple because a lot of the area has storm drains in them and the storm drains don't necessarily follow the natural topography. They go to different areas of the city. So, seemingly, this area of the city would drain into the ponds but they don't. The storm water goes into larger drain pipes which then go elsewhere. The way this watershed works is that all the water in this black area, outlined by this boundary.

Duncan: And that's for Spectacle, Tongue, and Mashapaug?

McMahon: Right, eventually ends up in Mashapaug and then goes through the Mashapaug Brook Pipe which then feeds into Roger Williams Park.

Duncan: Oh and I can see Route 10 right there.

McMahon: Yes, right. The brook used to go along here, but now the Route 10 goes through here, so they changed it. I can probably, I don't have a color version, but I can pull it up on the computer and show you better, but anyway.

Duncan: Thank you so much. That was really helpful.

McMahon: What this says though is that for a cleaner Mashapaug Pond it isn't enough just[15:00] to address storm water around this immediate area. Whatever goes into Tongue and Spectacle eventually comes through under Route 10 and into the pond right about here. So for a cleaner Mashapaug Pond.

Duncan: Wait, wait. Wait, what's right there on the pond?

McMahon: It actually, here's the boat ramp. There is a pipe that goes under the ball fields that drains into the pond [clock in background] and that pipe brings the water from Spectacle Pond into Mashapaug Pond. So that's what I was trying to locate.

Duncan: Oh. O.K. In order to fix the problem with the Phosphorous that would require starting with Spectacle and Tongue and then?

McMahon: Right, but you know that's a big challenge because you're talking about: most of the area is Cranston, not even in Providence. We need to cooperate with the city of Cranston as well. In terms of tackling the problem in Mashapaug Pond, we are going to probably start with the Huntington Industrial Park, which is there now on the Western shore of the pond. Only because it'll be easier to organize these people and show them what they can do on their land to reduce the amount of runoff going into the Pond. As you can tell from this aerial, there is a lot of asphalt. And guess where all that asphalt drains storm water. Right into the pond. This particular aerial probably is from the mid '60s, but I'm not sure, but these parking lots probably are not as intensely used now as they were back then because there isn't the same number of employees working in these buildings. There is a lot of unused asphalt, so our hope is that we can convince the owners of this land to convert some of those asphalt parking lot areas into natural areas, where the storm water can drain into, into natural grass wells, and then get into the groundwater before it gets into the pond.

Duncan: And what would that process look like or what that entail? Like, what would you have to do to make that happen?

McMahon: Physically or institutionally?

Duncan: Both.

McMahon: Well institutionally it would require that we work each individual owner and but ultimately to build them on their property. But institutionally requires sort of a process to let them that the pond is really an asset, could be an asset. It isn't now, but it could be an asset. So we have to convince them that it is in their best interest to have cleaner water. One way to get cleaner water is to deal with the storm water coming off of their property going into the pond. Then the design of these wells and water retention areas and so forth. It's pretty accepted practice now what they entail and I can show you some designs before you go today.

Duncan: You mentioned that the Pond isn't an asset and I was wondering why you think that is and whether you think it ever was, and now it's not?

McMahon: I don't think it's ever been considered a natural resource asset for the city. Prior to the industrial park being built it was a lot of high density housing that was there. I mean, it was a neighborhood at least, but even the neighborhood, the pond was not developed as recreational area. It was just in the backyard so to speak. It was probably used and enjoyed by the kids who lived in that area but it wasn't considered a city, city asset. There was no city attempt to provide access to it, encourage boating, whatever. Then, the city eventually took all that land, back in the days when they were condemning land and redeveloping it and so forth, took all that land and decided to make it an industrial park. So what do they do? They turn their backs on the water. So the front doors of all of these buildings face on this street here.

Duncan: What street's that?

McMahon: Could be DuPont Drive. Let's see. DuPont Drive sort of goes all over the place. But rather[20:00] than incorporating the Pond into the industrial park as something to look and enjoy at, they basically did two things: they turned their back on it in terms of how they developed the land. And number two, they said, "Oh that's a good place to deal with the storm water, we can just use it to take care of the storm water." It was really again a very unfortunate, you know, view of the world back then.

Duncan: So when did the effort to start creating these parks around the ponds start?

McMahon: Primarily around 1990, which was about the time we started working with the neighborhood to buy this land down here which is now Murphy-Trainor Park which is pretty much what we call a passive park. There's paths through it but there's no like basketball or baseball or anything like that. It's just pathways and some open area and some woods area. It was zoned for a residential development to kind of match what's over in these streets here: Walter Street, Westmore Street, etc. But we worked with the neighborhood, took us two or three years to get D.E.M. funding to purchase this land. Then shortly after that, as you know, we bought the former Garvin property as well over on this strip as well.

Duncan: Was it harder or easier to do Murphy-Trainor Park or this Community Boathouse?

McMahon: Well buying land is always difficult. I would say the Murphy-Trainor one was more involved because it was more expensive and we needed to get a lot more money to buy it.

Duncan: What type of resources were available that allowed you to buy it?

McMahon: We had a city bond issue back then and we had a state bond issue which allowed us to buy and to develop it.

Duncan: Then the Community Boathouse came next?

McMahon: Yes.

Duncan: That was in 1996?

McMahon: Right.

Duncan: Since 1996 what's kind of the story about the Community Boating Center?

McMahon: It operated for...I'm trying to remember when we actually built the pavilion and garage that houses the boats. I would say 1998 or so. Then it operated as a seasonal canoeing area for maybe six years before the algae problems in this area of the pond got so bad that D.E.M. forced us to close it down.

Duncan: What's happening with Community Boating Center now?

McMahon: Nothing because you have the Phosphorous problem and the algae problem.

Duncan: When it was in its prime and people were going to it about what was the attendance like and how heavily was it used?

McMahon: It wasn't heavily used, but we used it primarily to put kids out on the water who normally wouldn't have a chance to have a boating experience in Providence. It was primarily geared towards kids.

Duncan: What about JT Owens Park?

McMahon: It's the home of the Elmwood Little League and they have about 800, not 800, maybe about 700 kids who play baseball there. There's, it doesn't show all the fields but there are three, four fields there actually. Two baseball fields, a softball field, and what they call a tee-ball field. So it's a very active organization, heavily used in the summer.

Duncan: So do you think a lot of the activity there was, How long has JT Owens been around?

McMahon: It's been around since at least the early '60s.

Duncan: So you weren't part of the process to get it-

McMahon: Nope.

Duncan: To become a park?

McMahon: No as they say it was run by, owned and run by the state, and they transferred it to the city around 1995.

Duncan: And then, how did you get involved in the Parks Department?

McMahon: I have a degree in city planning and was a city planner in Massachusetts for several years. And then worked for a firm up in Cambridge, Massachusetts doing research consulting for federal agencies, primarily EPA. I have a fairly extensive water quality experience from that. Then moved back to Providence in the early '80s and started an organization called Keep Providence Beautiful[25:00] which then eventually morphed into something called Groundworks Providence. I came here in 1986 to work in parks. I did not have any day-to-day or operational background in parks. I sort of learned on the job.

Duncan: What type of, have you seen a change in the types of projects over time or has it all been pretty consistent?

McMahon: No it's, anytime you work in a city you have to get used to change and accommodate change because the population is not as stable as it is in a normal suburban community. People come and go in the city. They move in, they move out. Recreational interests change. Recreational needs change. A lot of those changes then force you to readapt the parks to something different. So, when I started there was no such interest nor did we have any community gardens. Now we have nine parks with community gardens. Nobody was interested in walking and now we have maybe twenty parks with walking paths so that people can just walk and get some exercise in those parks in the morning or late afternoon. There were no farmers markets back then. There were no water spray parks. We have a bunch of those now so people can beat the heat in the summer without us having to build pools. And also because people have no other place to swim in the city. There is no clean water. More interest in soccer than in little league baseball. Little league baseball is on a slow decline whereas soccer is on a slow rise, rapid rise I should say. So there's been a lot of changes in recreational needs and interests, yes.

Duncan: For Mashapaug Pond do you see any potential to increase the recreational aspects of it given its current challenges that it faces as a pond that you can't swim in?

McMahon: Well I hope it can return to boating at least, at some point. I mean, we did an intense study on the Roger Williams Park ponds to isolate the sources of Phosphorous in the ponds, sub-watershed by sub-watershed. At some point we'd need to probably spend the money to do that as well, to say, "Well gee, if we dealt with the storm water from industrial park, how much would the reduce the Phosphorous coming in?" Is there a way, you know, we'd have to more studies to look at, is there way to treat the water coming in from Spectacle Lake to reduce the Phosphorous coming in there. Is there a way to treat the sediment that's in the pond to reduce

the amount of Phosphorous that's released during the summer months. There is a process called internal recycling of Phosphorous. So imagine you have Phosphorous that's been coming in suspended in water over the years. Eventually that Phosphorous settles to the bottom to the sediment. In summer months when dissolved Oxygen is at its low point and there is a certain amount of depth in the ponds, that Phosphorous is released from the sediment back into the water column and that helps stimulate more algae growth. But there is a way of dealing with that with a chemical that you spread on the bottom. Cover the sediment with this chemical every year and it binds the Phosphorous to the sediment so it isn't released. So we might experiment with that in this area around here to see if that makes any difference.

Duncan: Is that something that you're planning to do or?

McMahon: No money, no, no time at this point. We'd have to put together a massive effort to study it and to look at how to get money for it. The city is looking to a, something called a storm water district in the city to actually deal with storm water problems. Storm water has never been you know front and center as a pollution problem in most cities. Well at least in older, Northeastern cities, it is more of a problem in the part of the world where you come from. So they are thinking about a storm water district to raise money to deal with storm water as a pollution source. They've always dealt with storm water as a thing to get rid of as efficiently as possible[30:00] to the nearest water body. But now we have to think about, well how do we minimize storm water going in these things, into our lakes, and how do we figure out ways to reduce the Phosphorous. So, probably six or eight years down the road there will be something called a storm water district where we can collect money from every household and maybe just, you know, a few dollars a year, maybe it's fifty dollars a year from every household. It would be based on the amount of the storm drainage frontage on their property and how much impervious surfaces on their property that would determine the fee. But if you collected fifty dollars a year from every resident, residential household in the cities, as well as every industry, you're talking about millions of dollars a year that would be available for dealing with storm water

Duncan: Do you see in the meantime, in the six to eight years, any potential for Mashapaug Pond to become a recreation center despite the storm water problems?

McMahon: It's all a function of dealing with the toxic algae that occurs in the summer months. That's why DEM closed them. I mean, there was algae in the pond, but it was, you know, it got to a point where the algae was so bad it was toxic to touch. That's why they, you know, restricted the body. I'm not smart enough to tell you whether that's going to be solved, you know, soon. You, really, once that's under control then it could become more of at least a recreational boating area.

Duncan: I was just wondering because from my research I've seen some spurts of community activism and I don't know whether you had any interaction or what that's been like?

McMahon: Yes, there's off and on spurts of action and there's now something called the Environmental Justice League of Rhode Island and I'm sure you've talked with those folks. And so they're interested in now and they have EPA money, they're looking to organize the group of

owners in the industrial park and they're also interested in dealing with storm water run off from residential areas as well. So, yes, I definitely interact with them.

Duncan: Do you think that's been, they've been mostly successful?

McMahon: They are really just starting.

Duncan: O.K.

McMahon: They have mostly been focused on the Gorham site and its pollution problems and less so on the storm water issues

Duncan: I don't know whether you've had any experience or can speak to the different neighborhoods in the area and their relationship to the parks.

McMahon: Well, there isn't a great history of using the Boating Center so there isn't a great relationship there yet. There's heavy use in the neighborhoods of JT Owens. There's a fair amount of use of Murphy-Trainor by the employees in the industrial park because it's a place to run, jog, or walk down to and jog back at lunch time.

Duncan: I was just reading and I saw that sometime in the 1990s they used to have this big festival at Mashapaug that would draw around 7,000 people and I was wondering whether you just knew anything about that.

McMahon: I don't think it ever drew that many people.

Duncan: Oh. O.k.

McMahon: I am not sure where that number came from.

Duncan: It was an old Pro Jo article.

McMahon: Oh really.

Duncan: Yes.

McMahon: O.K.

Duncan: And then, I was wondering whether you could talk at all about the Urban Pond Procession.

McMahon: Yes that's another group of folks that are trying to promote interest in the pond. It's, you know, a very small but committed organization. They slowly are raising awareness about the Pond to neighborhood. So that's good.

Duncan: Have you been to the Procession at all.

McMahon: Yes. Yes, we in fact work with them to accommodate them. And they have started here traditionally in the past.

Duncan: Oh, so that's where?

McMahon: The Community Boating.

Duncan: O.K.

McMahon: Yes. And then marched to the park.

Duncan: Where do they march to?

McMahon: Roger Williams Park.

Duncan: Oh O.k.

McMahon: Yes.

Duncan: I was also just wondering, is it possible to walk around the pond?

McMahon: No. For lots of reasons. Privately owned, Privately own [points to places on the map]. There's like a ten foot stretch of land and width that goes along this edge that is state owned, but all the other land coming down to it is privately owned and it's steep sloped here.

Duncan: Which side of the pond is this?

McMahon: [35:00]This is the Eastern side.

Duncan: Oh, O.K., the Eastern side.

McMahon: So the streets are Adelaide, Alvin, Algonquin, and Crescent street. At some point there would be a walkway around this land because it's all publicly owned. And you know, one of the things that we are hopeful of doing over time, there's a thirty foot utility easement along here that Narragansett National Grid has. We'd like to work with them at some point to develop that into a walking path. And this is city owned.

Duncan: Where is that?

McMahon: At the Northern.

Duncan: Oh O.K.

McMahon: Tip of the Pond. So you could at least walk from here, around here, and all the way to JT Owens. [Points at map}.

Duncan: And then what about if that's all privately owned?

McMahon: All private house lots.

Duncan: Along Lakeview?

McMahon: Yes.

Duncan: I, in my research, had seen that Mashapaug was unique because compared to, I think it was, Spectacle, it doesn't have all the privately owned homes around it. And I was wondering whether you knew anything about that?

McMahon: I don't know how Spectacle was developed.

Duncan: O.K. Because that's not in Providence?

McMahon: Right.

Duncan: Also, I was wondering whether you knew about the history of the ponds that had been buried in the area.

McMahon: No. I don't. I've seen them in old geographic atlases in different little areas of the Southern end of the city but I don't know how they were buried or lost.

Duncan: I think that those were the majority of my questions and I was wondering if there was anything else you wanted to add.

McMahon: Well it shows you when the city has sort of, you know, turned their back on a natural resource, it's tough to bring it back. It's, you know, it was easy just to tear all the houses down and build this as an industrial park. It would have been very easy at the time to say, "You know what? Let's provide an access to the Pond and let's provide access along the pond." It would've been extremely easy back then, but now it's hard.

Duncan: Do you think that having the people and if something like the Urban Pond Procession grows large enough?

McMahon: Yes.

Duncan: That would make a difference?

McMahon: Yes. I think they, that and the Environmental Justice League. It's all about convincing these property owners that there is something in it for them and that the pond could be an asset rather than afterthought, which is what it is now.

Duncan: Well, thank you so much. I really appreciated this time. This is going to be slightly bizarre but I have to get thirty seconds of room noise, in case, for editing purposes[38:00].

[End of Interview]

McMahon: Sure.

Duncan: I'll just do that really quickly.

McMahon: O.K. Do you want me to sign any paperwork while [inaudible].

Duncan: Here is that and here is that and if you want to, here I got two of these in case you wanted to keep one for yourself.

McMahon: Oh. O.K.

Duncan: Then here is just the biographical information.

McMahon: O.K. Let me just grab a pen.

McMahon: Wow. Two pages here[41:35].

Duncan: Wow, I didn't even realize it was two pages. You can do my homework for me too while your at it.

McMahon: Yeah right.

Duncan: What made you decide to go into city planning?[41:55]

McMahon: You know I just sort of fell into it. I went to Brown many years ago and started as a math major. Did O.K. the first year. Got through Calculus pretty well. But I lived in a dorm where I saw all these other math people and I knew what was on the horizon. And I said, "There's no way that I'm ever going to get through all this theoretical math stuff," which is what it what it was back then.

Duncan: Yes.

McMahon: Or you went or you did applied math and these guys, you know, they spent their entire life doing applied math homework. So I said, " well I'm not going to be a math major." So I tried economics for a year and I didn't like it so I sort of ended up in political science, which was a worthless degree of course because what are you going to do with political science? So, I thought I was going to go to the University of Wisconsin and get a PhD in Political Science and then teach, but the Vietnam War happened, so I was going to get drafted. So I went into the navy instead, spent three years in the navy. Then, when I got out, I decided to come back to Rhode Island and decided, I don't know how I picked city planning. It just seemed like an

interesting program. It fed my, it met my urban interests in urban issues and so that's how I ended up with it.

D; What kinds of projects does Groundwork Providence do[44:07]?

McMahon: They do a lot of public landscaping projects and they work on brownfield sites. They also train workers in the landscape industry. When I was involved with them, it was mostly kind of a organization focused on making Providence a cleaner city. So most of the litter and trash problems in the city have finally disappeared, so Groundwork reinvented themselves.

McMahon: O.K. Let's see if I got most of this in here. I think I got the most important stuff[46:07].

Duncan: That's awesome.

McMahon: Alright. So now I got to sign this. Where do I sign? Interviewee signature.

Duncan: Yes.

McMahon: How many more of these do you need to do? These interviews.

Duncan: I only need to, we only, each student does two, because there was another semester.

McMahon: O.K. Yes.

Duncan: They'll be an audio tour and I think it will open in May. Then it should be open for the rest of the summer. And then, I actually had a couple more questions about that.

McMahon: Sure.

Duncan: So, for the project, we were wondering whether you had any advice about places to put the signs, because there is going to be a long with the audio tour a few signs just visual.

McMahon: For?

Duncan: For people to have the information about the audio tour. The way it works is that people can call in and listen to the different clips.

McMahon: O.K.

Duncan: And we were wondering because there is a lot of private property, what places would be appropriate for signs?

McMahon: Well, I would think something right at the little league field at the concession stand would be a good place. You could put it right on the building.

Duncan: O.K.

McMahon: You could probably put one at Murphy-Trainor Park somewhere. We could decide where that should go. How about the Reservoir Avenue School? And also Alvarez High School, which is now here?

Duncan: At the schools? That's a good idea, I like that a lot.

McMahon: Yes. I'm trying to find out where Reservoir Avenue School is here. This is it right here I believe. Yes, I believe that's it.

Duncan: Is the Community Boating Center area?

McMahon: Well you don't get enough traffic. You want to get people.

Duncan: Yes.

McMahon: And the other thing I would suggest would be sort of a mini-mart in the neighborhood, a place where people go. And say, "Hi, we're trying to raise awareness of the Pond, which is over there, you mind if we put this sign up for a certain period of time. So someplace along Reservoir Avenue might be good. Look at what places people visit.

Duncan: Yes. Definitely. Also, I was talking to Holly about materials and what-not.

McMahon: Yes.

Duncan: I was wondering whether you had any advice about that.

McMahon: Well it depends if they are free-standing or how they are going to be fixed, or how they are going to work.

Duncan: Well, if we wanted to do free-standing, is that feasible?

McMahon: Yes. Although I think if, yes, you definitely would want to do free-standing down here [Points at Murphy-Trainor Park]. Only I think you would want, you know, to attach it to the building. And if you are going to have it in somebody's store, you would want to have it in something like this. Let me just say make sure I say goodbye to everybody. Everyone's gone.

Duncan: Yes.

McMahon: [inaudible]

Duncan: Oh, no definitely do what you need to do.

McMahon: [Goes and grabs glass frame] So you would want it perhaps in something like this.

Duncan: Oh. O.K.

McMahon: That you could ask the business center, "Can we put this in your store somewhere?"[50:03].

Duncan: O.K. And so is there something formal we need to go through in order to put like, if we wanted to put free standing in Murphy-Trainor?

McMahon: Well you would want to send me what the sign was going to say, how big it's going to be, what material it's made out of, and how long it would be up.

Duncan: O.K.

McMahon: Just the who what when where.

Duncan: Yes.

McMahon: You have my email, right?

Duncan: Yes.

McMahon: O.K.

Duncan: We will be getting back to you.

McMahon: Yes.

Duncan: Pretty soon about that.

McMahon: O.K. Alright.

Duncan: Yes, definitely. We're going to have some visual aids and so we were just curious about that. Thank you so much. That was really helpful.

McMahon: Who else are you interviewing, or did you interview?

Duncan: There's the last class, there's been lots of interviews. But I know this round.

McMahon: Well, you said you're doing two.

Duncan: I don't know who I'm interviewing next. So that's

McMahon: A mystery.

Duncan: To be decided. I don't know yet. But lots of different people like some other public health officials and then also a lot of neighbors and some people from Alvarez High School.

McMahon: Good.

Duncan: And then the Sophia Academy has been involved too.

McMahon: O.K. Yes.

Duncan: I know they're doing some oral history lessons.

McMahon: Good.

Duncan: Some of the people in my class are there.

McMahon: That's great.

Duncan: Lots of fun stuff. If I can get everything in my backpack that would be nice. Thank you so much though.

McMahon: Good.

Duncan: This has been really lovely. Where is my, there. [52:05]And would you like a copy of the transcript?

McMahon: Oh. Sure.

Duncan: Yes.

McMahon: Thanks. It's going to be interesting how they are going edit down the audio into a meaningful tour or is that someone else's job?

Duncan: Well I'm in the kind of visual presentation group so not quite my job but we will be working a lot wit the audio group and they'll be working with rest of the class.

McMahon: Because it'll be interesting to sort of listen to what you have and then decide, well, how are we going to organize this.

Duncan: It's especially interesting just because the Gorham is so.

McMahon: It will overwhelm the project, yes.

Duncan: And it's also controversial to a certain degree because it was the pride of the neighborhood but at the same time it's the reason why there's been some issues there too.

McMahon: Yes. It would be useful at some point to get more funding to do a thirty minute documentary you know, tv documentary.

Duncan: About the Pond?

McMahon: About what you're doing, yes, about the pond.

Duncan: No, I definitely agree.

McMahon: As it turns out the local PBS stations is right there on the pond.

Duncan: That would be even better.

McMahon: So Channel 8 and 6 is right there.

Duncan: I recently this amazing video from the 1920s, a silent film about the Gorham site.

McMahon: Oh really.

Duncan: It's just absolutely incredible.

McMahon: There's great footage there and there must be historical photographs eventually. Have you been to like, the Rhode Island Historical Society at all to see what they have? On Hope Street?

Duncan: I know a lot of people in my class have.

McMahon: Yes, have gone there.

Duncan: I've been to the archives a lot.

McMahon: What about the city archives on the fifth floor of City Hall?

Duncan: Yes, that's where I was.

McMahon: Oh O.K.

Duncan: That was a fun experience. They were really helpful. Thank you so much. It was so nice to meet you.

McMahon: Alright, now I saw you walking through the park. Did you take the bus here?

Duncan: Yes.

McMahon: If you want to wait a few minutes, I can at least drive you out to Elmwood Avenue. Is that where you took the bus?

Duncan: Yes.

McMahon: O.K. Sure. Just give me a couple of seconds.

Duncan: Totally.

[End of Recording]