

# SENATE . . . . No. 428

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## The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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METROPOLITAN DISTRICT COMMISSION,  
20 SOMERSET STREET, BOSTON, December 2, 1947.

*To the Honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of Massachusetts in General Court assembled.*

Chapter 38 of the Resolves of the current year directs the Metropolitan District Commission to make an investigation and study of the advisability and feasibility of the acquisition by the Commission of certain public bathing beaches and other property in the Metropolitan Parks District, as follows:

*Resolved,* That the metropolitan district commission is hereby authorized and directed to investigate the advisability and feasibility of the acquisition by said commission for the commonwealth, as a part of the system of metropolitan parks under the control of said commission, of public bathing beaches and other property in the metropolitan parks district, with particular reference to localities in the South Boston district of the city of Boston known as Carson beach, M Street beach, City Point beach, Farragut beach, the Strandway district, Farragut road, Columbus park, Marine park, the Aquarium at City Point, the Columbus park, Marine park and L Street bath houses, and to localities in the Dorchester district of said city known as Tenean beach and Savin Hill beach. Said commission shall report to the general court the results of its investigation, and its recommendations, if any, together with drafts of legislation necessary to carry said recommendations into effect, by filing the same with the clerk of the senate on or before the first Wednesday of December in the current year. Said report shall include a statement showing the amount that would be assessed upon each city and town of the metropolitan parks district if such recommendations should be enacted into law.

The Commission was directed by the Legislature, in its 1945 session, to report on the advisability of trans-

ferring the city of Boston beaches bordering on Dorchester Bay to the Metropolitan District Commission. The beaches included in this earlier study were Carson Beach, M Street Beach, City Point Beach and Farragut Beach, "but not to include any buildings thereon owned by the city of Boston." This report was printed as House Document No. 137 of 1946.

The current resolve is much broader in scope, as bathing beaches and other recreational facilities in all the communities in the Metropolitan Parks District, as well as Columbus Park, Marine Park and L Street bath houses in South Boston, and other Boston recreational areas and facilities, are now included.

The Commission directed inquiries to all the cities and towns in the Metropolitan Parks District, asking if they were interested in recommending a transfer of any of their facilities to Metropolitan control. With very few exceptions, all cities and towns other than Boston reported that none of their bathing places or other recreational facilities were of a character they believed suitable for the general use of non-residents of their communities, and inferred quite plainly that they preferred to maintain their present facilities for their own residents exclusively.

The town of Arlington, while having nothing to offer among their present facilities, suggested the shore of Spy Pond as an opportunity for future development. The city of Medford recommends a limited transfer of the Wright's Pond bathing beach and bath house to Metropolitan control. The bath house now maintained by the city of Medford has toilet facilities and locker accommodations for 400 male and 200 female bathers. The Commission estimates a minimum annual operating and maintenance cost of \$5,000 for these facilities. The use of Wright's Pond is now restricted to Medford residents.

The city of Melrose suggests the building of a swimming pool which might be available to Melrose residents. The Commission has been authorized to construct one in the Middlesex Fells Reservation, near the junction of Main Street, Stoneham and North Border Road. This should

not be too far away for Melrose people. The city of Newton recommends without definitely committing the city, that Allison Beach, on the Charles River in the Nonantum section, be transferred. This area is only 400 yards distant from the Watertown bath house operated by the Commission. The town of Wakefield recommends the construction of a bath house at the northerly end of Lake Quannapowitt. The town maintains its own facilities, restricted to Wakefield residents, at the southerly end of the lake. The area at the northerly end would have to be dredged considerably to provide suitable swimming facilities, and, as it is now used principally by residents of communities which pay no part of the Metropolitan Parks assessments, the Commission is doubtful that the large expense involved in the construction and maintenance of the facilities the town of Wakefield recommends could be properly justified as a charge against the rest of the parks district. The city of Waltham suggests the taking over of the beach at Forest Grove, Charles River Reservation and the McKenna Playground Beach on another part of the Charles River. At Forest Grove two small bath houses are operated and four lifeguards employed by the city. There is no bath house at the McKenna Playground beach, suitable only for small children, where one part-time lifeguard is assigned. To operate and staff these facilities the Commission estimates an annual cost of \$4,500. The town of Weymouth suggests that along their water front of 12.5 miles suitable bathing beaches could be developed, and also recommends transfer of a 22 acre tract called Great Hill in North Weymouth, with a partial frontage on Fore River as suitable for Metropolitan control. The town of Winthrop recommends Metropolitan acquirement of the strip of land taken over by the town from the trustees of the Narrow Gauge Railroad, extending easterly from the Crest Avenue bridge to the government property at Fort Heath. They suggest that a sea wall could be constructed on the ocean side of this property, with a suitable walk and a safe bathing beach. The city of Woburn recommends a transfer

of Foley Beach, located at the southeast corner of Horn Pond adjacent to the Commission's Woburn Parkway. Two bath houses are located at this beach with some playground equipment and other facilities. The Commission estimates an annual cost for operation and maintenance of \$10,000.

The city of Boston recommends a transfer to Metropolitan control of all the beaches, bath houses, boulevards and adjacent sidewalks along the South Boston water front from the terminus of this Commission's present jurisdiction at Columbia Circle to, but not including, Castle Island. Tenean and Savin Hill beaches along the Dorchester water front are also included in their recommendations. They suggest, however, that the playgrounds and recreational areas at Columbus Park, Marine Park and Castle Island be retained in the city park system. They also ask that the portion of Veterans of Foreign Wars Parkway, under their jurisdiction between Centre Street and West Roxbury Parkway, and the Charlesbank playground between Longfellow bridge and the Charles River Dam, be transferred to Metropolitan control. The South Boston and Dorchester water front holdings of the city of Boston were cited for particular attention in the current resolve.

The strandway bathing area at City Point extends from the public landing to the entrance to Castle Island Road, a semicircular beach about 1,100 yards long. The Head House bath house serves this beach and has lockers and checking facilities for about 1,500 patrons. The M Street Beach runs from M to O streets, with no bath house at this point, but lifeguard service is maintained. The L Street bath house serves a stretch of beach about 500 yards long in three sections, one for women and girls, another for men and the third for boys. Lockers and checking facilities for about 5,000 patrons are provided. The central section of this bath house is open during the fall, winter and spring for cold-weather bathing, handball and other activities. Separate solariums for men and women are provided. The Columbus Park Beach runs

about 1,800 yards along the strandway from the McKay Housing Project to the foot of K Street. The Columbus Park bath house provides locker and checking facilities for about 3,500 bathers. The Savin Hill Beach adjoins the Commission's Malibu Beach (so called) in the Savin Hill section of Dorchester. No bath house is maintained here, since the old one was destroyed by fire several years ago. Lifeguard service is maintained and sanitary facilities are available in a near-by field house. Tenean Beach is located at the foot of Conley Street, Dorchester. It serves about 300 yards of beach front. The bath house provides 700 lockers for bathers. All of these bath houses are operated on a free or practically free basis, the charge for a towel being 1 cent, for instance.

The Commission in its earlier report on South Boston beaches attempted to determine as well as it could the proportional usage of the city recreational facilities in South Boston as between resident and non-resident visitors. The only factual material available was a 1939 survey of automobiles parked at the strandway to determine by car registrations the point of origin of these visitors. It was concluded on the basis of this count that about 30 per cent of the cars were owned by residents of cities and towns in the Metropolitan Parks District other than the city of Boston. The survey did not attempt to determine the overall percentage of non-resident users of these facilities in all categories, but acknowledged it would very likely be considerably less than the figure they got for non-resident automobilists.

The City Park Department maintains, however, that these facilities are used by non-residents of Boston to as great an extent as are the water-front beaches and boulevards maintained by the Commission in other parts of the parks district. The Commission cannot agree with this view, as no comprehensive study of all the many factors involved has ever been made, but it is, at least, quite likely that the substantial non-resident use of the strandway facilities is considerably greater than the non-resident use of locally controlled facilities in other cities and towns in the district.

The transfer of the South Boston and Dorchester beaches and bath houses to the Commission could be effected without too great difficulty, and their integration into our parks divisional set-up would not present unusual problems. It probably would be advisable to detach Old Colony Parkway and Quincy Shore Reservation from the Blue Hills Division and incorporate Nantasket Beach Reservation with the city of Boston property into a new division with a police and maintenance headquarters building to be constructed at a suitable location. This proposed division would have about four miles of active bathing beaches, twelve miles of parkway and nine buildings including six bath houses.

The Commission does not believe that the play areas at Castle Island, Marine Park and Columbus Park should be retained by the city if the transfer is made, as such an arrangement would create a division of responsibility that would not allow efficient administration. The Commission would also suggest that personnel now employed by the city of Boston to maintain and operate these facilities be transferred to similar duties in the city park department or other city agencies, in so far as it may be possible, in order that the Commission may be able to treat organizational and administrative problems involved in the operation of these facilities with as much freedom as may be needed to get effective results.

The Commission makes no recommendation on the suggestion of the city that the portion of Veterans of Foreign Wars Parkway between Centre Street and West Roxbury Parkway be transferred to Metropolitan control, but it does definitely recommend that the Charlesbank playground be retained by the city of Boston, pending the results of a study being made regarding the construction of a swimming pool by the trustees of the George R. White Fund.

The Commission estimates the cost of operation and ordinary maintenance of the South Boston and Dorchester beaches and other property at not less than \$300,000 per annum. This figure would cover policing,

lighting, operation and maintenance of facilities, etc., but does not include major repairs to buildings or structures, nor the construction of a new headquarters.

This expenditure would result in the following approximate annual assessments against the cities and towns in the Metropolitan Parks District:

CITIES AND TOWNS.	Per Cent.	Amount.
Arlington . . . . .	.019874	\$5,962 20
Belmont . . . . .	.015451	4,635 30
Boston . . . . .	.395866	118,759 80
Braintree . . . . .	.009611	2,883 30
Brookline . . . . .	.037676	11,302 80
Cambridge . . . . .	.054562	16,368 60
Canton . . . . .	.003111	933 30
Chelsea . . . . .	.016579	4,973 70
Dedham . . . . .	.008300	2,490 00
Dover . . . . .	.001290	387 00
Everett . . . . .	.024664	7,399 20
Hingham . . . . .	.005119	1,535 70
Hull . . . . .	.003392	1,017 60
Lynn . . . . .	.047763	14,328 90
Malden . . . . .	.025845	7,753 50
Medford . . . . .	.029080	8,724 00
Melrose . . . . .	.013218	3,965 40
Milton . . . . .	.011784	3,535 20
Nahant . . . . .	.001413	423 90
Needham . . . . .	.007926	2,377 80
Newton . . . . .	.045171	13,551 30
Quincy . . . . .	.041131	12,339 30
Revere . . . . .	.014892	4,467 60
Saugus . . . . .	.006643	1,992 90
Somerville . . . . .	.043906	13,171 80
Stoneham . . . . .	.005340	1,602 00
Swampscott . . . . .	.006782	2,034 60
Wakefield . . . . .	.008215	2,464 50
Waltham . . . . .	.019711	5,913 30
Watertown . . . . .	.017786	5,335 80
Wellesley . . . . .	.001436	3,430 80
Weston . . . . .	.002914	874 20
Westwood . . . . .	.002425	727 50
Weymouth . . . . .	.015114	4,534 20
Winchester . . . . .	.009207	2,762 10
Winthrop . . . . .	.008459	2,537 70
Woburn . . . . .	.008344	2,503 20

The Commission submits no draft of legislation, as it has not been able, with no funds provided by the resolve, to make the necessary extensive surveys and studies to gather adequate information on which to base definite conclusions.

Respectfully submitted,

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