



Henri B. Marchand  
Director  
Office of Cultural Affairs and Special Events

**DATE:** January 31, 2018

**TO:** Kevin J. Murphy, City Manager 

**FROM:** Henri B. Marchand

**SUBJECT:** MOTION OF 1/30/18 by C. Mercier: C. Req. City Mgr. provide update regarding prior motion for Utopia Park including the status of it as well as the status of the Utopian Park Public Art, Hydro sculpture project.

Utopian Park was created as a focal point of the Hamilton Canal Innovation District (HCID) overlooking the apex of the Lower Pawtucket and Hamilton Canals. With canal walkways on two sides of this triangular park, it provides a highly visible and easily accessible green space within the HCID along a major entryway to the city and abutting the Lowell National Historical Park's Swamp Locks lock chambers and tour boat docks. It also provides a southern boundary to the Canalway Cultural District. The park was completed in 2015.

Over the last two years the park has been used not only by area residents and others as a passive place to relax but by event organizers to create active, unique special events.

The park was created with the intent of creating a piece of public art and in 2011 stakeholders' meetings were held and an artist selection process begun. As a result, artist Nancy Selvage was chosen to create the Utopian Park public art piece. The Cultural Organization of Lowell (COOL) was the lead organization and applied for and received grants to undertake the project. Planning continued through spring of 2013, however the project was put on hold due to budget issues. COOL has been able to sustain the original grants and in March of 2017 the project was re-activated when additional, private funds were secured.

Currently COOL, with support from the office of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (CASE) is working to finalize legal agreements and contracts for fabrication and installation, of Hydro with completion targeted for June of this year. Upon completion COOL would gift Hydro to the city. COOL and CASE have also presented the project for review to the Conservation Commission and Board of Parks.

Maintenance remains a challenge but it is hoped that with development of adjacent parcels that developers would play an active role in stewardship of the park.

While some minor challenges remain, we are optimistic that this signature work of art will become another stop along Lowell's public art trail and will welcome visitors to Utopian Park and along the Thorndike/Dutton Streets entryway. And that it will provide an attractive amenity for developers and prospective businesses of the HCID.

Please let me know if you have any questions or would like additional information regarding this matter.

Cc: Diane N. Tradd, Assistant City Manager/DD Director

