

*Town of Weymouth
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Press Release

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Weymouth awarded \$400K grant for park improvements at Emery Estate

The grant will support \$1.7 million in improvements to the grounds of the property for passive recreation and outdoor events.

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Weymouth, MA – Mayor Robert Hedlund announced today that Weymouth has received \$400,000 in grant funding for park improvements to the Emery Estate through the Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) program. Mayor Hedlund joined Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Matthew Beaton for the award announcement in Taunton. The grant will support a \$1.7 million investment in the grounds of the estate to support passive recreation and programmed outdoor events.

“The Emery Estate is a unique public resource with outstanding potential to provide new opportunities for passive recreation, public enjoyment, and Town programming,” **said Mayor Robert Hedlund**. “The PARC grant is a first step towards unlocking that potential and creating something distinct and valuable for Weymouth.”

The Emery Estate is a 24-acre property located on King Oak Hill in East Weymouth. The property was owned by the Emery family and operated as a single-family home (and at times, a working farm) for nearly 100 years. The Town acquired the property for open space in 2011 with \$1.9 million in Community Preservation funds. Absent acquisition, the property could have been subdivided and developed for new housing in an already dense neighborhood.

The PARC program was identified as a potential funding source for improving the estate by Mayor Hedlund's planning staff and Emery Estate Advisory Committee. A conceptual design and cost estimate to improve the grounds were developed by the Town's Engineering Division and presented to the public in June. Proposed park improvements include parking to accommodate public use, safe vehicle access from Emery Lane, new pedestrian entrances at Commercial and North Streets, a comfort building and pavilion structure to support programmed events, and a new circuit of paths and walking trails to take advantage of the property's hilltop views and isolation.

"If the estate is going to be a true public space, it needs to be usable, it needs to be accessible, and it needs to be welcoming," **said Administrative Services Coordinator Nicholas Bulens**. "With these park improvements, we'll develop a new, functional outdoor space that people can use for their own passive enjoyment and that the Town can use for programming a variety of events."

On December 5th, Weymouth's Town Council voted unanimously to accept a PARC grant and approved \$1.7 million in borrowing for the total project cost. The PARC program will reimburse the Town for \$400,000 in work completed.

"It's great that Weymouth will receive funding from the PARC program for the park upgrades. This project will allow for more accessibility to the estate," **said Senator Patrick O'Connor**. "The views of Boston from King Oak Hill are amazing, and it's a beautiful location for residents to enjoy."

"Weymouth has a long history of preserving our open space," **stated Representative James Murphy**. "The PARC grant will ensure that we can uphold this tradition. Creating walkable trails with views of Boston that are easy to navigate will make the Emery Estate the shining star of passive recreation in Weymouth. I am pleased and would like to thank Secretary Beaton for his continued dedication to our town."

Improvements under the PARC grant will be limited to the grounds of the estate. No funding will be spent to repair or maintain the property's buildings, which include a three-story colonial home modeled after George Washington's Mount Vernon Estate. Mayor Hedlund has appointed a new Advisory Committee charged with determining whether the house can be preserved with a sustainable public or private use. The committee will have four months to make its determination while plans for the grounds move forward.

The Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs' (EEA) PARC Program (formerly the Urban Self-Help Program) was established in 1977 to assist cities and towns in acquiring and developing land for park and outdoor recreation purposes. The program is administered by the EEA's Division of Conservation Services. Any community with an up-to-date Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) is eligible to apply for the PARC program as well as other funding programs administered by the Division of Conservation Services.

Weymouth's OSRP was approved in 2013. Since then, the Town has received \$150,000 in federal Land and Water Conservation Funds and now \$400,000 in PARC grant funding for park and recreation improvements. The federal Land and Water Conservation Funds,

awarded in 2015, will support the development of a new Back River trail and overlook on the site of the capped municipal landfill in East Weymouth. This project is scheduled to begin in the spring and will be completed by June of 2017.

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