



## Charles River Watershed Association

April 6, 2007

(By Fax and Mail)

Ben Lynch, Program Chief  
Waterways Program  
Department of Environmental Protection  
One Winter Street, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Boston, MA 02108

***Re: Chapter 91 application, Community Rowing, Inc., Brighton, MA***

Dear Mr. Lynch:

Charles River Watershed Association (CRWA), an environmental organization with over 5,000 members dedicated to protecting the health, beauty and accessibility of the Charles River has reviewed Community Rowing, Inc.'s (CRI) Chapter 91 license application and submits the following comments.

Over the years, CRWA has developed a strong working relationship with CRI. We are familiar with its programs and efforts to involve the public, particularly children, in rowing on the Charles. We have also followed and supported CRI's efforts to find a permanent home on the banks of the river after making do for many years with sharing the Daly Rink and then losing even that option.

We support CRI's new boathouse. However, because this is such a large project, which will effectively occupy an acre of water sheet when the area in front of the docks used for launching and landing is factored in (39,260 sf of Commonwealth tidelands) and which will also occupy filled tidelands, the public benefits offered by the project should be significant and made part of the Chapter 91 license. While we are confident that CRI's current director and board will follow through on public commitments made, only enforceable license conditions will ensure that years from now those commitments and benefits are fully provided.

The public riverwalk between the building and the river can be a wonderful amenity, if the public knows it is open to it rather than a part of CRI's operations and space. While there will be no physical barriers, the overhanging balconies on the main boathouse, the path's linkage with the sidewalk, and the activity of carrying sculls to the docks across the riverwalk may all signal to the public that the space is in fact private. We know CRI is committed to maintaining this as public space and willing to post signs at the ends of the riverwalk informing the public

that it is a public walkway. We agree that as a safety matter bicycles should be walked rather than ridden on the walk when CRI is open.

CRI is proposing to make the western most (upstream) dock (dock #1) available for hand-carried boat launching, fishing and enjoyment by the public. This will not be a dedicated public dock, but rather, provided in conjunction with CRI's use of this dock for its boats. While access to the three other docks will not (and should not) be physically restricted, CRI does not envision public use of these docks because there will be equipment on them. We think the public should be allowed access to these docks and particularly dock #4 with downstream views, at times that do not conflict with CRI's use, and that conveying their accessibility to the public is important. Designating a certain area for storage or security of launches would be one way to accommodate both CRI's concerns and public access.

Signage for both the riverwalk and docks will have to be worked out with the Department of Conservation and Recreation, but CRI should also in its publicity and brochures be required to inform the public of the walk, docks and the public's ability to put in or out at dock #1. This publicity would seem to be a good fit with its promotion as a public rowing facility. CRI will also provide public meeting space in the main boathouse for a nominal cost covering its actual expenses only that it should publicize. Public restrooms in the main boathouse will also be available when the building is open (5:30 am to 8:30 pm) with signage near the front door informing the public of this.

CRI provides over a 100 programs in which the public can participate each year. Continuation of its free programs -- G-ROW BOSTON for girls in the Boston public schools, its adaptive programs for physically and intellectually challenged youth and adults and summer programs for emotionally-challenged and low income youth should be incorporated into its license and these free programs will hopefully expand as CRI grows into its new space. Rather than specify particular programs, the license should require that a percentage of its programming be dedicated to free or subsidized programs targeted for challenged and underserved groups. CRI also provides scholarships for both adults and youths unable to pay full fee.

CRI programs are a great addition to the river enhancing its use and CRWA looks forward in the coming years and decades to working with CRI to enhance the river's accessibility to and enjoyment by the public.

Sincerely,

Robert L. Zimmerman, Jr.  
Executive Director

cc: Alyson Magian  
Julia O'Brien