

## Greenway board seeks Armenian park delay

By Thomas C. Palmer Jr., Globe Staff

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Members of the Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway Conservancy board don't have the authority to reject a proposal to build a memorial park along the Greenway, but its chairman said yesterday it would exert influence to delay or relocate the park.

"We have talked, on the conservancy board, about not having any memorials or statues on the Greenway for at least five years," said Peter Meade, chairman of the conservancy's 10-member board, which includes Edwin Schlossberg, the husband of Caroline Kennedy Schlossberg, granddaughter of Greenway namesake Rose Kennedy.

Yesterday the board was briefed for the first time on a proposal to build a park that would memorialize the Armenian genocide along the Greenway, a series of parks being created along the corridor of the old Central Artery. A state law, passed in 2000, directed the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority to study building an Armenian memorial.

The conservancy, which was set up to endow, maintain, and organize events for the Greenway, has no direct authority over what is built there; the turnpike authority controls that. But, asked whether the board has a say in the matter, Meade said, "I think we do."

Fred Yalouris, director of architecture for the Big Dig, said what goes on that location is "not part of the conservancy's area of purview." But he added, "Obviously, we will talk with them."

Yalouris said the Armenian proposal "fit perfectly" on the space available, next to a planned history museum. Asked whether it was of concern to him that the proposal memorializes

Armenians in particular more than other immigrant groups, Yalouris said, "Yes it is, but it's what they proposed."

"This is like a public park at no expense to the taxpayer," he said.

The proposed Armenian park would be the sole memorial along the Greenway. There is not even a plan for a bust or statue of Rose Kennedy. Throughout Boston, there are numerous memorials to ethnic groups and causes, such as the New England Holocaust Memorial, erected near Faneuil Hall in 1995. But many people involved in Greenway design during the last decade -- from neighbors to members of the Mayor's Central Artery Completion Task Force -- have said they wanted to steer clear of statues or monuments to causes.

The memorial park's supporters emphasize that it is intended as a tribute to all immigrant groups, not just Armenians.

When Erkut Gomulu, president of the Turkish American Cultural Society of New England, objected to the placement of an Armenian memorial on the Greenway at yesterday's board meeting, Meade said: "This is exactly what we're trying to avoid on the Greenway. There will be a number of groups coming to say, 'What about me?' 'What about us?'"

The memorial has also drawn critics because the Armenian Heritage Tribute and Genocide Memorial Foundation, which proposed the park to the Greenway board yesterday, has not gone through a public process, as advocates of other projects have.

Instead, the Armenian group got its chance because of a 33-word section of law passed in 2000 directing the turnpike authority to study building "a monument to the Armenian Genocide 1915-1922."

State Representative Peter J. Koutoujian, a Waltham Democrat who is Armenian-American, supported the law, and has been involved in planning for the memorial. "We had some legislation passed directing the turnpike to look into the feasibility of siting a park," Koutoujian said.

The legislation did not specify a location, but the turnpike is formally proposing the design on a Greenway parcel of a little under a half acre between Cross Street and Surface Road near Faneuil Hall. Neighborhood groups have reacted favorably to the design itself, which would feature an elaborately designed sculpture, fountain and reflecting pool, and a labyrinth of pavement and grass.

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Turkish groups have long disagreed with Armenians over whether what happened starting in 1915 constituted a genocide of 1.5 million Armenians. Gomulu, the president of the Turkish American Cultural Society of New England, unsuccessfully opposed the legislation that paved the way for the current proposal.

"This amendment represents an intolerable degree of ethnically oriented propaganda infiltrated to public spaces," wrote Gomulu to one state official when the 2000 law was being proposed.

James M. Kalustian, president of the board of directors of the Armenian heritage foundation, said his group met privately with many public officials, including Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino, to inform them about the proposal.

"The mayor was supportive in the meeting," Kalustian said. "I don't know what his official stance is."

Menino declined to comment yesterday.

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