



the Newton Conservators

NEWSLETTER

December Issue

<http://chemserv.bc.edu/conservators>

December 1999

Message from the President

BUILDING COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND SUPPORT

By Doug Dickson

What makes a community-based advocacy organization like the Newton Conservators successful? I think it boils down to three essential ingredients:

1. There must be a clear vision shared by an active group of dedicated citizens who set the tone and provide leadership for the work of the organization.
2. The group must be known for the credibility and constructive nature of its ideas and judgments.
3. There must be a general understanding that the group speaks for a substantial subset of opinion within the community--that it represents a broadly-shared point-of-view.

How do we stack up? My analysis is that we do very well on the first two points. We have a rich history of accomplishment, tremendous respect within the halls of government, a solid core of activists willing to take on leadership responsibility. But on the third count, I believe we have lost ground. An influx of new residents in recent years and the general absence of high-profile issues, like open space acquisition, have contributed to a decline in awareness of the organization and its mission.

A couple of recent experiences have brought home to me the realization that we are not as well known in the community as one might expect. In working with groups opposed to construction of a varsity soccer field on the Newton Campus of Boston College, for example, I had to repeatedly explain who the Conservators were and why we

were interested in Cabot Woods. Similarly, on a recent walk sponsored by the Conservators, few people knew of the organization and no effort was made to educate or enroll them.

If we permit this situation to continue over the long term, our effectiveness will begin to erode. We sacrifice authority and credibility when we speak for the opinionated few instead of a broad-based segment of the community. So what steps can we take to change this trend?

The Board has already begun to move in several directions. A membership campaign was initiated last year that produced a 25% gain in dues-paying households. We have revived a publicity initiative aimed at getting greater public notice for our activities, including our grants program, our spring and fall walks, and our advocacy of issues. Peter Kastner has agreed to take on this role. And we are planning to co-sponsor programs with other community groups that will associate our name more prominently with a range of issues closely associated with our mission. Undoubtedly, there will be other good ideas we can act on—we'd be happy to hear any that you'd like to propose.

But there is an additional area of opportunity we cannot afford to overlook. Each of you as members and supporters can actively promote the organization to your own friends and neighbors. If each of us recruited just one other member, our base would double overnight. And selling the virtues of open space and responsible land use in a community like Newton should be so easy that a quota of one

new member each seems, in fact, a puny goal to shoot for.

In a very real sense, each of us holds the future of the Newton Conservators in our hands. Our individual actions will determine whether we continue to speak with a voice and vision that reflects widely-shared community views. When you receive your annual renewal mailing shortly, please take a moment to consider who among your acquaintances would be interested in joining with us to preserve and improve upon the quality of life we value in Newton. Either refer a membership form to those individuals or spring for the \$10 introductory membership as a gift. Its affordable, its worthwhile, and it will contribute to the future success and stability of our community.

Tree Ordinance Passes

by Doug Dickson

Following an hour and a half of vigorous debate, the Newton Board of Aldermen passed a landmark Tree Preservation Ordinance by a vote of 14 to 9. At the last minute, Alderman Alan Ciccone changed his vote from NO to AYE, setting the stage for a motion to reconsider, which has already been filed. Reconsideration of the vote will be taken up at the next meeting of the Board on Monday, December 20th. This is an often-used parliamentary procedure intended to permit lobbying or other actions to take place that would result in changed votes. It also keeps the matter alive for other possible parliamentary maneuvers aimed at delaying enactment or killing the ordinance altogether.

If you favor this legislation, your help is again needed to write or call the aldermen asking that they vote NO on the motion to reconsider. Thirteen or more votes against the motion to reconsider preserves passage of the ordinance. Attendance at the December 20 meeting is also needed to show community support for this important measure.

As enacted, the Tree Preservation Ordinance would protect trees 8 inches or larger on all private property except for occupied dwellings consisting of four or fewer units. The private homeowner exemption written into the original bill was expanded by amendment on the floor of the Board to include rental properties and to clarify a technical misunderstanding about the inclusion of dwellings used for purposes such as home offices.



Dogwood Trees on the Bike Tour de Newton

The ordinance requires that trees removed for construction be replaced according to a formula requiring that the combined diameters of replacement trees equal the diameter of removed trees. For example, a tree with a diameter of 8 inches might be replaced with four trees, each with a diameter of two inches. If replacement trees cannot be located on the property under construction, they may be planted elsewhere in the city with guidance from the tree warden if they are planted on public property. Alternatively, an equivalent sum of money may be contributed to a Tree Replacement Fund, which would be available for planting and care of public trees.

This is the first ordinance of its kind in New England. Other communities in the south, mid-west and far west have enacted far-reaching ordinances protecting trees on private property, but with the exception of a very limited measure protecting “significant” trees in Springfield, MA, no other municipality in the region has a comprehensive tree preservation ordinance on its books. Cambridge and several other communities are actively working on similar bills or considering such an initiative.

The Tree Preservation Ordinance establishes trees as a valued resource that is declining from development activity. It recognizes that continued, uncontrolled loss of trees has broad public health, economic, environmental and quality of life implications for the entire city. In addition, it sets community-based procedures and incentives for retaining and protecting trees during development, whenever reasonably possible. Finally, the ordinance creates a model for other communities that are also seeking to proactively balance tree preservation and development.

Thanks to all who have supported and actively lobbied for passage of this ordinance. Your continued active participation will be needed to hold the line while the political process runs its course. Please express your support for the ordinance and ask the aldermen to vote NO on the motion to reconsider.

Bicycle Master Plan

by Michael J. Clarke



Newton's Bicycle and Pedestrian Task Force is reviewing a Bicycle Accommodation Master Plan for the City. The purpose of the plan is to assess basic conditions for bicycling, analyze local needs and provide a framework for the establishment

of a city-wide bicycle network along public ways. The consultant, Greenman-Pedersen, Inc has investigated the feasibility of bicycle lanes on selected roadways throughout the city. The plan identifies "attractors" as probable origin and destination points for bicyclists and then maps priority routes to link these. State and national standards were applied to evaluate how these routes might be best upgraded to better accommodate bicycles. These include defined bicycle lanes or adding appropriate signage to indicate that motorists should "Share the Road" on designated bicycle routes or simply to remind them that bicycles are legal vehicles too.

Partly at the suggestion of the Newton Conservators, the Cochituate and Sudbury Aqueducts are now mentioned in the plan and indicated on the map of possible bicycle routes. Should the aqueduct routes prove to be viable, the Master Plan would likely be amended to provide bicycle connections to the roadway system. Including the aqueducts in an off-road transportation system could link Upper Falls, Newton Highlands and Newton Centre into a circuit with the Charles River Pathway. Wellesley is also working to use their segments of these two aqueducts as pathways, so a link along the

aqueducts between Newton and Wellesley might provide safe routes for bicycles and pedestrians over an extended east-west distance.

The plan also suggests that adequate bicycle parking be provided at attractors such as village centers and T stations. Presently, Boston College is the only major attractor that provides significant bicycle parking. An example of an excellent bicycle parking accommodation (from Notre Dame rather than BC) is shown at the beginning of the article. The inverted U's shown support the bicycle and provide a solid anchor for a lock. The Notre Dame version has a maintenance-free plastic coating, which cannot mar the finish on bicycles.

Conservators Walk Charles River Path

Bridge Street to Cheesecake Brook

October 16, 1999

by Ted Kuklinski

We gathered early the morning of Saturday, October 16 at the historic Bemis Dam and Mill along the Charles River Path to slip back in time. From our vantage point over the river at Bridge Street, our group of about fifteen checked out the classic view of the historic dam and mill. We noted the opening in the building where a pulley cable crossed the river to allow the mill on either side to supply power to the other. The mill usage of the site dates from 1700's; it is now used for offices in its incarnation as the Meredith Building. The dam was once the site of an unusual "rolling stone" dam and was mysteriously breached in the 1940's.

Next we walked upstream, entering the existing path from the rear parking lot. The first thing we noticed were the orange surveyor sticks marking the future path of the official Charles River Path. We noted the snapping turtle hangout on the opposite shore. A little further along the silver maple dominated woods path, we explored various small inlets known to be good heron, merganser, and warbler habitat. The future path diverged in some places from the current path, following a path of higher ground to avoid encroaching on wetland areas. Some of the existing footpaths along this section of the Charles are impassable at high water. There is a plan to provide a more inland path connection to the Albemarle Road entrance at Cheesecake Brook.

Our group continued on the existing path out to where the Cheesecake Brook spills into the Charles River. According to the King's Handbook of Newton (Sweetser, 1889), "In the good old days of the Colony it received the name of Cheesecake Brook, because a party of hunters rested at noonday on its sylvan shore, and regaled themselves on cakes and cheese." Our party rested there as well and then returned to Bridge Street, eagerly looking forward to the completion of this next link in the Charles River Pathway. Many thanks to Thelma Fleischman of the Jackson Homestead for providing historical background information.

A public hearing on November 3 at the Charles River Museum of Industry, with presentations by MDC Planner, Dan Driscoll and Carol Johnson Associates, provided more details on the proposed pathway along this section. The new path may be about 8 feet wide consisting of a crushed stone aggregate binder, which will allow water to pass through it. Although more geared to pedestrian use, the surface will be bicycle friendly allowing users who have traveled up from Watertown Square on either side of the Charles to continue their upstream progress on the Newton side. There is the possibility of providing painted heron feet on the sidewalk to visually lead travelers to the entrance to this section of the path. There will be various side paths for such activities as fishing access.

A major interesting feature of this section will be a new wood or steel bridge crossing the Charles before the path reaches Cheesecake Brook (the stakes were in place denoting the location). The planners are still considering which bridge design, arch or truss, might be best for the crossing. It will rise by low boardwalk to an elevation considered safe for a hundred year flood level and will have minimal structure underneath. It was thought that most of the construction staging for the bridge would take place from the opposite shore. On the north shore, the path would continue further upstream through some woods and behind the Super Stop and Shop. There would be a connection to Pleasant Street and, at North Street, one could continue on the currently completed path on the south shore. It was thought that the major parking area for users of this section would be on the Waltham side. Dan Driscoll projects that

construction will begin in the fall of 2000, with the new greenway open in the spring of 2001.

Dolan Pond Knotweed Control

By Ted Kuklinski

At the Dolan Pond Conservation Area there has been an ongoing project attempting to control the invasive Japanese knotweed plant without the use of pesticides. This bamboo-like plant grows very tall and very fast, produces large numbers of flowers and seeds, has deep, difficult-to-remove roots, and tends to spread rapidly.



Environmental Science Students at Dolan Pond

In the summer of 1998, the Newton Environmental Science Camp spent a workday attempting to remove one of the three major patches of knotweed at Dolan Pond. In the area where it was removed, it did unfortunately grow back, but at a somewhat reduced size. This past July 13th, determined to win the battle, approximately 50 Environmental Science campers, staff, and other volunteers, armed with shovels, pitchforks, and rakes, made another attempt at completely uprooting the knotweed in all three of the infested areas. The campers generated a truckload of pulled knotweed. Experimentally, various types of plastic sheets were placed over some of the cleared areas to see if this would inhibit the regrowth. The areas not covered did grow back to a much smaller size and importantly did not significantly flower.

Over the summer and early fall, a group of Newton Conservator volunteers, including Norm Richardson, Linda Simon, Katherine Howard, Jana Tolisano, and Bill Cheney, raked up and evened out the remaining areas and finished laying large plastic sheets over them. Leaving the plastic sheets in

place for at least a season should kill the persistent knotweed roots by depriving them of light and water and preventing them from growing upward.

On Sunday, October 24, approximately 60 volunteers, consisting of students, teachers, and parents of the fifth grades classes at both Burr and Franklin schools, put forth a tremendous effort to spread wood chips over the plastic sheeting and along the paths of the Dolan Pond area. Special thanks to Bob Davis Jr., whose pickup truck proved invaluable in redistributing the huge pile of wood chips to the needed areas. With this small army of volunteers and their shovels, rakes, and wheelbarrows, approximately 3000 square feet of knotweed was covered over. The extra chips were used to refurbish the existing pathways and volunteers stayed later than scheduled until every last wood chip had been used.

The students participating were from the classes of Kalpana Guttman, Lucia Kegan, and Jane Frantz at Burr School, and from the classes of Joan Yospin, Mrs. Adams, and Mrs. Klane at the Franklin School. This was the second year that Burr and Franklin students had volunteered at Dolan Pond and been using the Dolan Pond as their "outdoor classroom." As the Franklin students related in a recent letter to the Tab, "We walk there and observe and sketch our special spots. In spring, we will be testing the pH of the water as part of our science studies. Dolan Pond is an important part of our neighborhood, and we are glad that we could work there on a beautiful Sunday afternoon."

Complete control of this invasive at Dolan Pond will require continued vigilance in pulling any remaining plants when they appear next year. It will also involve eventual planting of suitable substitutes for the knotweed. A recent article, "Outsiders stubbornly root themselves in the region," (Boston Sunday Globe, 11/21/99, West p. 21) quoted Rose Paul of the Nature Conservancy in Vermont with this interesting suggestion: "For this species, there's one more way to discourage it. Make Japanese knotweed pie. It's a delicious substitute for strawberry-rhubarb."

Anyone interested in joining a "Friends of Dolan Pond" organization, please call Ted Kuklinski at 617-969-6222 or send email to DolanPond@aol.com.

Ordway Park

By Jim Broderick

On Sept.25 the Ordway Park Committee planted 400 small spring bulbs (scilla, crocus and chionanthus) to naturalize areas within sight of the paths. This summer's drought has added to the already existing distress of the largest of our American beeches. Its spring leaf-out will give us a clearer indication of its condition.

This year in our fall cleanup, on November 6, we were able, thanks to borrowed leafblowers, a mulching mower, and some ordinary rakes, both to clear the paths and sidewalks of leaves and to spread the leaves as cover under shrubs and trees. In past years, leaves that could have enriched the park's soil have had to be carted away to the city's compost pile.

Many Ordway neighbors have at various times spoken to us about the park and made helpful suggestions. We welcome all comments and want to encourage all who visit the park or live near it to keep in contact with us. Those interested in Ordway Park can call Jim Broderick at 332-3465 or any member of the Newton Conservators Board of Directors.

Andover-Newton (Institution) Hill

by Sarah Barnett

The Newton Conservators has a thirty year history of advocating for the preservation of the wide vista from Andover Newton Hill, which looks south across valleys to the Blue Hills. Newton's Open Space Plan has called for preservation of this vista since 1981. For almost 200 years, since Andover Newton acquired the hill, this view has been enjoyed and appreciated by the public.

Today, Andover Newton Hill (also known as Institution Hill) is our only Newton hilltop that is still accessible to the public, including the infirm who can drive to the top. All of our other major hilltops have private developments. (Waban Hill has a reservoir on top).

Now a developer is proposing to build a large apartment building near the top of the Hill which would permanently destroy the vista.

When the Trustees of Andover Newton Theological School decided to sell the southern slope they chose a developer with an initial plan for 60 townhouse units for those over the age of 55 yrs. The plan has since changed to include a long 4 story

apartment house near the top of the hill. While the number of units remains the same, the total amount of floor area has doubled.

Since the developer is using some government assistance, which requires 15 units to be "affordable" (but not similar to the market rate units), he is applying for a Comprehensive Permit from the City. The Comprehensive Permit is granted by the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA), which consists of 5 members appointed by the Mayor, and does not go through the usual aldermanic permitting process. The developer plans to file for the permit in December, with a public hearing to be held in January.

Meanwhile, partly at the urging of the Conservators, the ZBA has formulated its procedure for granting Comprehensive Permits, which has been circulated for comment. However, it is unlikely that this procedure will be in effect at the time of application.

The Conservators have repeatedly urged Andover Newton and the developer to provide a plan that will retain open areas for: 1) traditional access to the top via walking paths; 2) the magnificent vista from the top of the hill and a building height that will allow it to be seen; 3) a setback from Andover Newton that will allow for a wildlife corridor; and 4) a setback from the roads that will provide a greenbelt commiserate with that provided in the adjacent Hebrew College development plan.. If you would like to help with the effort to save the vista and/or would like more information contact Doug Dickson (969-8611, ddickson@mediaone.net) or Sara Barnett (969-6988, sbarnett99@aol.com).

The Newton: Conservators Newsletter appears three or four times a year. Editor: Michael Clarke. Production: Bonnie Carter, 969-0686. We wish to thank the contributors to this edition of the **Newsletter**: Mike Clarke, Doug Dickson, Jim Broderick, Sarah Barnett and Ted Kuklinski. We also thank Boston College, for the use of its word-processing equipment.

Newton Recycling

by Barbara Herson

Mayor Cohen announced that Newton is launching a campaign to increase paper recycling by opening three new paper recycling sites.

"Newton has a new paper recycling option that will make money for our City," said Mayor Cohen at his weekly press conference. The citizens of Newton have known for years that recycling is the right thing to do to preserve our natural resources for future generations. Everyone in Newton should know that now it is the fiscally responsible thing to do. The Department of Public Works, the Recycling Committee and the Solid Waste Commission have joined forces to educate households, business and non-profits groups on how to easily recycle their mixed paper and bring it to the new conveniently located sites as well as our Recycling Depot at Rumford Avenue.

The new collection sites will increase recycling participation by allowing apartments, condominiums and small businesses an opportunity to join in paper recycling. An incentive for businesses will be a reduction in their disposal costs. Newton has achieved a 46% recycling rate. With this new effort, Newton will move closer to reaching our recycling 50% goal. For every ton of mixed paper collected, the City will earn \$50. Clean white office and computer paper will earn the City \$100 per ton and can be brought to the Elliot Street site and the Rumford Avenue Recycling Depot. Curbside collection of recyclable materials still significantly reduces Newton's waste disposal costs.

The new mixed paper collection sites are:

- 52 Elliot Street (adjacent to the DPW yard in Newton Upper Falls) M-F, 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.
 - Fire Department Headquarters at Willow and Centre Street - 7 days a week.
 - 755 Dedham Street Fire Station - 7 days a week.
 - Recycling Depot at Rumford Avenue - M-F 7:30 a.m. 2:30 p.m. and Saturday, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
- The majority of paper that can be recycled consists of mixed paper, which is any paper product that does not contain food waste.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please renew your membership for 1999.

____ New Member

____ Renewal

Name _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Individual member	\$20
Family membership	\$25
Sustaining member	\$35
Donor	\$50
Patron	\$100
Additional Contribution	\$_____
Total	\$_____

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