

**Brody**

**From:** DolanPond@aol.com  
**Sent:** Sunday, March 16, 2008 3:04 PM  
**To:** undisclosed-recipients:  
**Subject:** Newton Conservators e-Bulletin - Crystal Lake Vote on Monday

## Newton Conservators e-Bulletin

Saturday, March 15, 2008

### Crystal Lake Vote is on Monday!

This is a special Newton Conservators e-Bulletin to alert you that the aldermanic vote on the CPA acquisition of **230 Lake Ave**, a keystone piece for a unified south Crystal Lake Park, is scheduled for **Monday evening, March 17**. The vote is expected to be very close and, due to it being a real estate transaction, must receive a two-thirds majority of all the alderman to pass (16 votes out of 24 possible). We urge you to inform yourself on the benefits of this project – we have provided lots of background information below – and to let the members of the board of aldermen know your opinion on the matter before the vote. Please scroll down to contact information later in this email. Thanks for reading!

## Crystal Lake Reimagined!



*“Just beyond, where Lake Avenue bears away to the right, is the dainty little natural park reserved by the city. In this classic retreat, communion with Nature in all her various moods is the order of the day, and the sibilant whispering of languishing couples enjoying the solitude of their own uninterrupted society, the order of the night. Here are trees of the ancient forest, rocks of the paleozoic age, the soft turf of the natural grove, the rustic seat of modern civilization, and the ripple of tiny waves on a pebbly beach. Further along, where the grove meets the railway, is the bath-house, and there at almost any hour in summertime young Neptune may be seen disporting himself in the cool water with loud splashings and still louder yells of delight..”*

The almost poetic words above, describing the southern park section of Crystal Lake come not from recent scribings related to the 230 Lake Ave CPA proposal, but rather from a wonderful little book published some 97 years ago by the **Newton Centre Improvement Association** (1911). The book (courtesy of Carol Stapleton, Parks and Recreation manager at Crystal Lake) is entitled **“A Comprehensive Historical Sketch of Crystal Lake – in Newton Centre, Massachusetts with Incidental References to Interesting Events in the History of Newton”**, and gives a rather complete history of Crystal Lake to that time with recommendations for the future. You can find the complete text of the book on the website of the Newton Conservators at <http://www.newtonconservators.org/images/crystallakebook1911.pdf>.

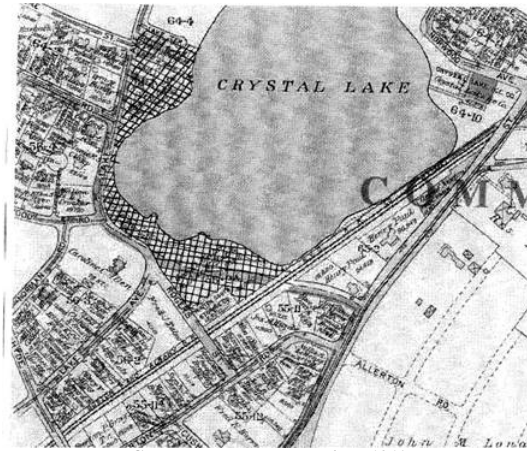
You might be surprised to learn that Crystal Lake was known as Wiswall’s Pond, Baptist Pond, and even Silver Lake over its history. From the book, we learn that *“Crystal Lake covers 31 acres and contains, estimated by liquid measure, 142,600,000 gallons, or, estimated by solid measure, 1,190,000,000 pounds. Its shore circumference is about one mile. The greatest length, from north to south, is 1,200 feet; the greatest width, from east to west, 1,000 feet; and the greatest depth, 31 feet.”*

To this reader, the organization who published this small tome sounds in many ways similar to the Newton Conservators (founded in 1961). According to the book, the **Newton Centre Improvement Society** was organized sometime around the 1860’s *“by a company of gentlemen interested in the planting and care of trees: Many of the trees which now shade and beautify the highways and byways of Newton Centre were set out under the direction of this tree club. As other public needs arose it widened its sphere of usefulness and became an improvement association. It then turned its attention to the Lake, and the first result of its influence was the construction by the city of the Lake Avenue embankment The work was completed in 1883, at a cost of \$500: It reserved to the public a very accessible and attractive part of the shore ...”*.

*“Private enterprise is of course responsible for the many attractive homes which now adorn the shore and the adjacent streets. But whatever of public spirit has been shown in using Crystal Lake to the best possible advantage owes its inspiration to the work of the Improvement Association. The building of a sea-wall and embankment, the reservation of a bathing beach with the adjoining grove.... were promoted and helped along to ultimate completion by the Improvement Association.”*

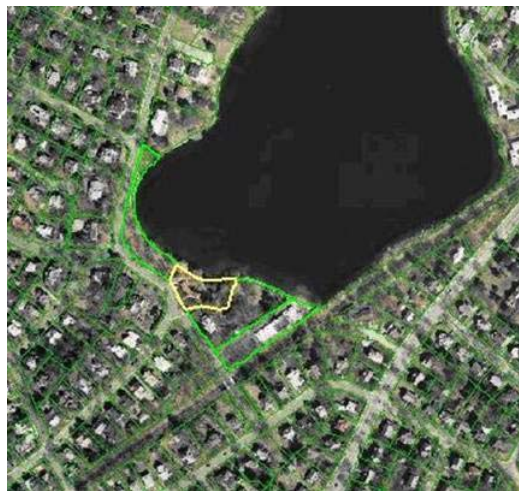
The book contains a very telling illustration from 1910 of the open space area on the southern shore of Crystal Lake (see below). The hatched area indicates undeveloped land (privately held Open Space) that was in existence until that time. The railroad ran where the Green Line is today. Lake Avenue and Rogers Street were in existence. The hatched area includes the current Levingston Cove and Rogers street bathhouse.

The proposal to unify these areas with the acquisition of 230 Lake Avenue is not without precedent – we had continuous open space there in the early part of the last century! Compare the 1910 map with the current view derived from the city’s GIS mapping showing 230 Lake Ave (outlined in yellow) and the city’s Levingston Cove, 20 Rogers Street, and the Bathhouse area (outlined in green). It is clear how key the 230 Lake Avenue property is.



**Crystal Lake area map circa 1910**

The hatched area indicates undeveloped land (privately held Open Space) that was in existence until that time.



**Crystal Lake area map circa 2008**

The yellow area represents 230 Lake Ave; Highlighted light green areas indicate current city holdings.

*Chapter VII, entitled **A Vision for the Future**, of the Crystal Lake book advises: "Far greater is the need to develop more fully its wonderful natural attractions. The Lake is the most appropriate place for a good beginning. ....Crystal Lake would become one of the show-places of Metropolitan Boston, to say nothing of the added attraction to the natural beauty of Newton Centre, the additional use of the Lake itself by residents of Newton, and the consequent gain to the city as such through a wider acquaintance with its residential advantages on the part of the general public .... ..bring to the community a new value that cannot be estimated in dollars and cents. May the day not be far distant when not only Crystal Lake, but all the lakes, and the streams too, of the Garden City, shall receive the attention they richly deserve, and become a harmonious part of the general progress already so conspicuous in the homes and private estates of this goodly heritage."*

*"To make the most of a beautiful body of water in the very midst of a community of beautiful homes is not a dream to the thoughtful observer."*

This dream is within reach today ...

... if there are enough who dare to dream.



A view on Crystal Lake from the Levingston Cove to the bathhouse; 230 Lake Avenue is the house on the right.

The illustration below shows what a keystone 230 Lake Avenue really is. The 20 Rogers Street acquisition was really fortunate and, with the house taken down, the possibilities are much more visible. However, please note the irregular shape of the 230 Lake Ave lot which has a large incursion into what most might assume is part of 20 Rogers. Under the current proposal, that portion is acquired by the city and there is an easement connecting 20 Rogers to Levingston Cove, creating a fully functional park.



Aerial View of the South Crystal Lake Area.

Official information on 230 Lake Ave from the city website can be found at:

<http://www.ci.newton.ma.us/Assessors2003/InteractiveMap.asp?id=62001+0002&mid=62001+0002&cid=&cx=736634.522395603&cy=2943793.66811635&level=7&th=p&pd=x&dist=&lu=101&nb=2C&cm=sel&dd=a&x=267&y=223>



Aerial View of the South Crystal Lake Area.

## Where do the Aldermen Stand on 230 Lake Avenue?

The vote on acquiring 230 Lake Avenue will take place at the Board of Aldermen meeting on Monday evening, March 17, 2008 in the aldermanic chamber on the second floor of City Hall. The proceedings are also televised live on cable by NewTV so you can watch from the comfort of home. While the BOA meeting starts around 7:30 pm, the first portion is devoted to items that are pretty much pro forma – “first call”. There is a break and then so called “second call” items from various committees and merit discussion are taken up. One such item is an important override proposal (an amalgam of various aldermanic override ideas) – see last week’s Tab for details. This may be taken up first and discussion could last awhile. However the order of discussion could always be changed. It seems likely that discussion on this may not be taken up until 9 pm at the very earliest (if you have cable you could monitor).

While any attendees at the BOA are not permitted to speak (and clapping or booing is considered extremely impolite behavior), the presence of advocates is a powerful visual message to aldermen. There may be “Lake” stickers available to even better indicate where you stand on the issue. It’s a very valuable experience witnessing the debate and discussion and will give you a much better perspective on the individual aldermen. Please attend in person if you are able. There were always a good contingent of supporters for the Angino Farm project who were present (actually on several nights as it was postponed a number of times).

Now as to where aldermen stand on 230 Lake Avenue - the Newton Tab last week provided some info on how various aldermen voted in the Community Preservation Committee and the Finance Committee. There have been a number of aldermen who have already given some indication as to their vote on this issue to various of the 230 Lake Avenue advocates. An important caveat - as always, aldermen are certainly independent folks and do not always appreciate being categorized – they always maintain that they could end up voting in any manner. With that in mind, we provide the following information.

The following “Aldermen of Vision” have indicated that they are in support of the 230 Lake Avenue acquisition and will likely vote YES: Carleton Merrill, Susan Albright, Ted Hess-Mahan, William Brandel, George Mansfield, Victoria Danberg, Ken Parker, Lisle Baker, Mitch Fischman.. John Freedman, although he has indicated he will vote for the project has some issues with some aspects.

The following aldermen had indicated that they do not support the item and will likely vote NO: Allan Ciccone, Jr., Anthony Salvucci, Jay Harney, and Leonard Gentile.

Verne Vance will be out of town for the meeting and effectively an absence has the same effect as a NO vote. It is noteworthy that Harney and Gentile's Ward 4 has the third highest percent (11.4%) of Crystal Lake season passes in the city.

To the best of our knowledge the following aldermen are at various stages from leaning YES to leaning NO (in ward order!): Scott Lennon, Stephen Linsky, Marcia Johnson, Greer Tan Swiston, Amy Mah Sangiolo, Paul Coletti, Brian Yates, and Sydra Schnipper.

Steve Linsky would really like a buyer identified ahead of time. Aldermen Marcia Johnson and Amy Sangiolo have been very much in favor of retaining the house and were looking for a guarantee of such. Paul Coletti affirmed at Finance Committee (as quoted in the Tab) that "Everything else looked good until I read that particular paragraph (referring to the possibility of the house being torn down). Our understanding is that additional language could be added by the aldermen to do that or to bond the purchase differently or make other provisions. Such modification do not seem to be an obstacle to the various advocates for the project.

Your contact could be the critical factor that could persuade aldermen who are undecided!

## Action – How to Contact Your Aldermen

If you have some opinions on 230 Lake Ave or other issues before Board of Aldermen, why not use the democratic process and let your elected officials know of your concerns? Contact information for the Board of Aldermen can be found on the city website at <http://www.ci.newton.ma.us/Aldermen/index.asp>. Check it out and get to know your aldermen! Below is some information derived from there organized by Ward. If you are not sure which Ward you live in the city website provides a convenient map at <http://www.ci.newton.ma.us/MIS/GIS/Maps/SmWardMap.pdf>. Ward Aldermen are only elected by voters within their ward. Aldermen At Large are on the ballot in all of Newton.

At this late stage, it's okay if your message is brief such as "My name is X and I live in Ward X and support the CPA acquisition of 230 Lake Avenue." On the phone, you may not reach a busy aldermen but its fine to just leave a message. You can very easily just send a short email with the highlight of your message in the subject line as well making it easier for them to measure the trends. Certainly, if you personally know some aldermen, it's great to discuss or engage in email or phone discussions. You could contact all aldermen or those who you might most wish to let know of your feelings on the issue.

Many people wonder about contacting their representatives. While more geared to contacting state legislators, Mass Audubon has an interesting document with answers to your frequently asked questions on the process of contacting elected officials - <http://www.massaudubon.org/PDF/advocacy/QA.pdf>.

Aldermen receive a thick packet on the Friday before a meeting with all the information and they try to digest it over the weekend. There is a lot of work that our aldermen do outside of all the actual board and committee meetings they attend. So please be respectful of their time and the fact that they may disagree with you. Some aldermen are also away for the weekend so a brief email or phone message may be the only way to get the information to them.

Scott Lennon,	1 Ward	617-584-5723,	<a href="mailto:sflennon@comcast.net">sflennon@comcast.net</a>
Carleton Merrill,	1 At Large	617-244-2421,	(no email)
Allan Ciccone, Jr.,	1 At Large	617-965-2690,	<a href="mailto:allancicconejr@comcast.net">allancicconejr@comcast.net</a>
Stephen Linsky,	2 Ward,	617-796-1701,	<a href="mailto:slinsky@newtonma.gov">slinsky@newtonma.gov</a>
Marcia Johnson,	2 At Large	617-965-4920,	<a href="mailto:marcia@marciajohnson.org">marcia@marciajohnson.org</a>
Susan Albright,	2 At Large	617-527-7108,	<a href="mailto:salbright@newtonma.gov">salbright@newtonma.gov</a>
Anthony Salvucci,	3 Ward,	617-244-2509,	<a href="mailto:asalvucci@newtonma.gov">asalvucci@newtonma.gov</a>
Ted Hess-Mahan,	3 At Large	617-795-7220,	<a href="mailto:thessmahan@newtonma.gov">thessmahan@newtonma.gov</a>
Greer Tan Swiston,	3 At Large	617-308-7906,	<a href="mailto:aldermanswiston@gmail.com">aldermanswiston@gmail.com</a>
Jay Harney,	4 Ward,	617-332-4283,	<a href="mailto:jayharney@rcn.com">jayharney@rcn.com</a>
Leonard Gentile,	4 At Large	617-527-5446,	<a href="mailto:lennypmgi@aol.com">lennypmgi@aol.com</a>
Amy Mah Sangiolo,	4 At Large	617-969-0677,	<a href="mailto:sangiolo@rcn.com">sangiolo@rcn.com</a>
William Brandel,	5 Ward,	617-332-0719,	<a href="mailto:bill@billbrandel.org">bill@billbrandel.org</a>
Paul Coletti,	5 At Large	617-965-3654,	<a href="mailto:Nesi49@aol.com">Nesi49@aol.com</a>
Brian Yates,	5 At Large	617-244-2601,	<a href="mailto:byates@newtonma.gov">byates@newtonma.gov</a>
George Mansfield,	6 Ward,	617-969-1479,	<a href="mailto:gmansfield@newtonma.gov">gmansfield@newtonma.gov</a>
Victoria Danberg,	6 At Large	617-969-1756,	<a href="mailto:vdanberg@aol.com">vdanberg@aol.com</a>
Kenneth Parker,	6 At Large	617-965-3723,	<a href="mailto:ken@kenparker.org">ken@kenparker.org</a>
Lisle Baker,	7 Ward,	617-566-3848,	<a href="mailto:AldermanBaker@comcast.net">AldermanBaker@comcast.net</a>
Sydra Schnipper,	7 At Large	617-965-2331,	<a href="mailto:Sydra_Schnipper@verizon.net">Sydra_Schnipper@verizon.net</a>
Verne Vance,	7 At Large	617-232-5494,	<a href="mailto:vvance@rcn.com">vvance@rcn.com</a>
Cheryl Lappin,	8 Ward,	617-796-1723,	<a href="mailto:Clappin@newtonma.gov">Clappin@newtonma.gov</a>
Mitch Fischman,	8 At Large	617-964-2848,	<a href="mailto:mfischman@daylor.com">mfischman@daylor.com</a>
John Freedman,	8 At Large	617-243-9509,	<a href="mailto:johnfreedman@comcast.net">johnfreedman@comcast.net</a>

The following is the email string for the Board of Alderman members (except for Alderman Merrill who does not list an email) plus the City Clerk. This is also derived from the contact information on the city website at <http://www.ci.newton.ma.us/Aldermen/index.asp>

[AldermanBaker@comcast.net](mailto:AldermanBaker@comcast.net), [aldermanswiston@gmail.com](mailto:aldermanswiston@gmail.com), [allancicconejr@comcast.net](mailto:allancicconejr@comcast.net), [asalvucci@newtonma.gov](mailto:asalvucci@newtonma.gov), [bill@billbrandel.org](mailto:bill@billbrandel.org), [byates@newtonma.gov](mailto:byates@newtonma.gov), [Clappin@newtonma.gov](mailto:Clappin@newtonma.gov), [gmansfield@newtonma.gov](mailto:gmansfield@newtonma.gov), [jayharney@rcn.com](mailto:jayharney@rcn.com), [johnfreedman@comcast.net](mailto:johnfreedman@comcast.net), [ken@kenparker.org](mailto:ken@kenparker.org), [lennypmgi@aol.com](mailto:lennypmgi@aol.com), [marcia@marciajohnson.org](mailto:marcia@marciajohnson.org), [mfischman@daylor.com](mailto:mfischman@daylor.com), [Nesi49@aol.com](mailto:Nesi49@aol.com), [sangiolo@rcn.com](mailto:sangiolo@rcn.com), [salbright@newtonma.gov](mailto:salbright@newtonma.gov), [sflennon@comcast.net](mailto:sflennon@comcast.net), [slinsky@newtonma.gov](mailto:slinsky@newtonma.gov), [Sydra\\_Schnipper@verizon.net](mailto:Sydra_Schnipper@verizon.net), [tedhess-mahan@rcn.com](mailto:tedhess-mahan@rcn.com), [Vdanberg@aol.com](mailto:Vdanberg@aol.com), [vvance@rcn.com](mailto:vvance@rcn.com), [dolson@newtonma.gov](mailto:dolson@newtonma.gov)

## Let Us Know How You Are Feeling

On the question of the 230 Lake Avenue acquisition, please let us know of your feelings on the subject (or forward to us copies of emails you send). If you are in favor, you can also just let us know in a short note replying to this email which we can compile into a larger email and put in the hands of the aldermen. Send an email to [dolanpond@aol.com](mailto:dolanpond@aol.com)

## Original CPA Proposal for 230 Lake Avenue

The official original proposal for 230 Lake Avenue can be found at <http://www.ci.newton.ma.us/Planning/CPAC/09182007%20230%20Lake%20Ave%20proposal.pdf>. The recommendations of the CPC regarding this proposal are at [http://www.ci.newton.ma.us/Planning/CPAC/fy08%20updates/11142007\\_lake\\_ave.pdf](http://www.ci.newton.ma.us/Planning/CPAC/fy08%20updates/11142007_lake_ave.pdf)

The original proposal called for \$1.4M to come from the CPA fund with \$550K from the city to be bonded. This proposal made it to the Board of Aldermen but was not

voted upon. There appeared to be a lot of objection to the use of city funds in these tight financial times. In addition, there was an effort to address other concerns of the aldermen.

Some excerpts from the proposal are below:

*Since the Commonwealth of Massachusetts granted the City authority over Crystal Lake as a great pond in 1924, the lake has been a summer tradition. Many thousands of Newton residents – of all ages, interests, and ethnic backgrounds – meet, congregate, and enjoy passive and active recreation by the lake in a relaxed atmosphere. Summer swimming at Crystal Lake is affordable to every resident.*

*The recent use of community preservation funds to purchase the property at 20 Rogers Street has done much to resolve previous public safety issues and overcrowding at the City's Crystal Lake swimming beach. In the summer of 2007, 26,201 beachgoers – nearly 59% more than the previous summer – resoundingly endorsed this addition to the City's swimming area.*

*Building on that success, integrating the land at 230 Lake Avenue into the chain of public spaces at Crystal Lake, will further enhance public access to the lakeshore, and increase the flexibility needed to plan and manage public use. An expanded, integrated Crystal Lake Park will protect what is universally recognized as one of Newton's "special places." More than perhaps any other City park, Crystal Lake has been a unifying centerpiece in Newton, drawing people together from across the City's distinctive villages. From the late 19th century to the present, it has been the site of many civic celebrations – from ice skating festivals to fireworks to community fundraising events (which in the 1930s included diving demonstrations and enactments of scenes from operas). Yet even as it hosted these very public events, Crystal Lake continued to provide a uniquely desirable location for both private residences and quiet nature walks.*

*By completing the chain of public spaces along the lakeshore, the purchase of 230 Lake Avenue will protect Crystal Lake's unique mixture of passive and active recreation, of public and private enjoyment, and of contemplation and community, for centuries to come.*

It was found that:

*230 Lake Avenue fits the Act's*

- ♦ *definition of land for recreational use, which includes, but is not limited to, use for "community gardens, trails, noncommercial youth and adult sports, and parks"*
  - ♦ *definition of open space, which includes, but is not limited to, "watershed land, lake and pond frontage, beaches, lands to protect scenic vistas, and land for recreational use"*
- and its use for public recreation and open space fits the*
- ♦ *allowable uses of Community Preservation funds for both recreation land and open space – to acquire, create, preserve, and restore or rehabilitate for the purpose of making [resources] functional for their intended use*

*Crystal Lake as one of Newton's "character-defining features": Crystal Lake is valuable not only as recreation land and open space, but as a visible symbol of Newton's sense of community. Although the Committee is not recommending this project under the CPA category of "historic resources," Crystal Lake is clearly recognized by Newton residents as what historic preservationists call a "character-defining feature" of the City. Recent walking tours of the lake area, sponsored by the Newton History Museum and the Newton Conservators, have attracted participants from across the City and even from neighboring communities. Lakeside residents have welcomed these walkers, on occasion even inviting them into their backyards to share their private views and exchange stories about how Crystal Lake and its neighborhood have changed through the years.*

## Revised CPA Proposal

A revised proposal was submitted in February, 2008. Under this revision, the property would be acquired for \$1.9M, all of which would come from the CPA fund. Key provisions are that it would be a friendly taking (for the sake of expediency and some additional flexibility it allows), a 15000 sq ft lot would be retained and a restriction put on the façade to maintain the look, an 8000 sq ft lot next to 20 Rogers, an easement to connect existing city parcels, and the house would be sold. There was some question as to how much the reduced parcel would sell for. CPC member, Charles McMillan, who had objected to the original proposal but supported the new proposal, felt that a \$1M price was certainly a reasonable expectation. Money from the sale would be returned to the CPA fund.

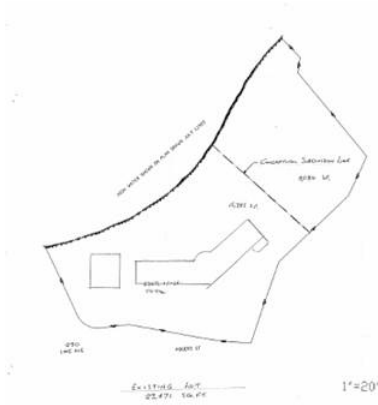
The letter of submission (2/12/08) for the newer revised proposal is given below.

*I am pleased to submit this revised proposal for the acquisition of the property located at 230 Lake Avenue. This proposal would use Community Preservation Act funds to acquire the parcel at its appraised value of \$1.9 million in the following way:*

*The City would use CPA funds to acquire the property from Mrs. Sciegienny by means of a friendly taking. The City would subdivide the property into a 15,000 square foot lot containing the house which would then be resold, with the proceeds of the sale returning to the CPA fund. The City would retain an approximately 8,000 square foot lot adjacent to 20 Rogers Street, and an easement along the rear of the house lot along the lakefront as a connection between the City's land at Levingston Cove and the 20 Rogers Street property.*

*Acquisition in this manner does not require placement of restrictions at the time of closing; however, as a condition to any resale, the front façade of the house and its setting would be protected by a historic preservation restriction, as well as a conservation easement along the lakefront. Although I expect the City will be successful in marketing the property, in the event that the City is unable to find a buyer for the house lot after a reasonable time, then and only then would the City consider demolishing the house and placing a conservation restriction over the entire house lot. This approach has the benefit of an accelerated timeline because restrictions would not need to be approved by the appropriate state agencies prior to closing, and it also allows for more flexibility if the City is later unable to sell the house lot.*

*Acquisition of 230 Lake Avenue gives us the opportunity to connect City properties along Crystal Lake and create a recreation resource for future generations; accordingly, I request your consideration and support of this revised proposal.*



A rough indication of how the lot might be divided (provided at CPC meeting)

## A Master Plan for Crystal Lake

Recently the BOA also considered the funding of a needed Master Plan for Crystal Lake. The original proposal was for an amount of \$50,000. The Newton Conservators stepped forward with an offer of \$15,000 in funding for the master plan, reducing the city allocation to only \$35,000. This was voted upon earlier this month and passed the full board with a vote of 16 Yes, 7 No, and 1 absent. You can read more about the Conservators funding later in this email.

Such a master plan will allow a fresh look at what all of Crystal Lake could be, not just the bathhouse area. Since passing, it appears that the city building department (under Nick Parnell) is poised to engage consultants who have worked with the city on the process in the very near future.

A new Crystal Lake Park is more than just about swimming – an activity that occurs actively for only about two months of the year. It is envisioned to be used for both active and passive recreation. Levingston Cove was made into a wonderful resource a number of years ago with handicapped accessible pathways, new benches, etc. – a mostly passive use (e.g. fishing). The Roger Street Bathhouse area is primarily devoted to summer swimming activity. Boating activity (canoeing/kayaking) is allowed with put-in restricted to Cronin's cove and boat dropoff at a very tight turn on Lake Avenue. A new master planning process will take a fresh look at all lake activities and see how all uses may be accommodated.



### A note on Boating at Crystal Lake:

In 1911, they were talking about boating on Crystal Lake: *"If a pier at the public embankment were included in the general scheme of improvement, with one or more boats in readiness for a trip around the Lake, after the manner of the Public Garden in Boston, it would certainly find favor with the children, and possibly with the older folks too. In that case there should be a superintendent to run the boats, keep the shore in good condition, and have charge of things in general. Under such conditions a drive through the Newtons would always include the Lake, and sometimes the boat ride around it. Thus raised to a high plane of development, Crystal Lake would become one of the show-places of Metropolitan Boston, to say nothing of the added attraction to the natural beauty of Newton Centre, the additional use of the Lake itself by residents of Newton, and the consequent gain to the city as such through a wider acquaintance with its residential advantages on the part of the general public."*

## Crystal Lake Conservancy

The Crystal Lake Conservancy (CLC) was established last year to ensure the long term health of Crystal Lake in addition to fundraising resources to support the long term improvement and maintenance of the expanded lake side park.

The Crystal Lake Conservancy partly came out of the following CPC recommendation: *"By 26 November 2007, the Mayor will submit to the CPC and Board of Aldermen*

*a plan for creating an organization to raise private funds to support further improvements, maintenance, and programming at Crystal Lake. The Committee expects that community groups will play an integral role in both creating and carrying out this plan. The Committee further expects that any future requests for public funding of capital improvements at this site will not rely on the Community Preservation Fund, but will identify a combination of community contributions and/or a dedicated municipal funding stream adequate to cover the maintenance of such improvements.”*

The Solomon Fund recently announced their support with a financial commitment of \$10,000 towards the legal establishment of the Crystal Lake Conservancy and its Community Participation and Fundraising Plan for Crystal Lake. The Newton Conservators are also supporters of the Conservancy. Organizing the Conservancy as a non-profit entity will provide further benefit to organizations and individuals, as they continue support for the development and maintenance of this precious open space.

The Crystal Lake Conservancy is looking to model itself after other successful conservancy organizations. The much larger Central Park Conservancy in NYC and the Charles River Conservancy locally come to mind. There are many others both in Massachusetts ([www.conservationcommon.org](http://www.conservationcommon.org)) and elsewhere across the country. Such organization have similar goals of environmental advocacy, developing a sense of community among users, and fundraising for additional improvements.

Donations may be currently directed to the Newton Conservators, who have agreed to act as the interim agent while the Crystal Lake Conservancy finalizes its non-profit status. Contributions may be sent to The Newton Conservators, PO Box 590011, Newton MA 02459 with “Crystal Lake Conservancy” noted on the check.

The Crystal Lake Conservancy Community Participation and Fundraising plan is posted online at [http://betterlake.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/02/Conservancy\\_plan.pdf](http://betterlake.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/02/Conservancy_plan.pdf). Information about the efforts of the Crystal Lake Conservancy toward improving Crystal Lake can be found at [www.betterlake.com](http://www.betterlake.com).

For inquiries regarding the Crystal Lake Conservancy please contact Barbara Wales, [BarbaraWales@realtor.com](mailto:BarbaraWales@realtor.com).

## A Vision for Crystal Lake

The Crystal Lake Conservancy is pleased to present an artist’s conceptual illustration of a potential design for Crystal Lake (Please see illustration below). The purpose of the conceptual plan is to encourage the community to “imagine the possibilities” of this once in a lifetime opportunity to improve Crystal Lake.

The image spans a view from the location of the existing bathhouse, clockwise along the shore of Crystal Lake, to the northwest tip of Levingston Cove. The eventual final design, landscaping, and engineering of this space will simultaneously preserve wildlife habitat while enhancing the beach and park facilities at Crystal Lake. In 2007, the Newton Parks and Recreation Department sold 2516 season passes to Newton residents for swimming at the Lake and recorded an amazing 26,000 visits from all the different villages of Newton. The final design will be handled via the Master Plan process recently approved by the Newton Board of Aldermen (3/3/08). It is anticipated that implementation of any such plan would take place in a number of phases.

The Crystal Lake Conservancy believes that the opportunity to acquire the 230 Lake Ave property with CPA funding greatly enhances the preservation of open space and enhancement of both active and passive recreation.



Full Resolution: <http://betterlake.com/gallery/concept/concept-sm.jpg>

General information regarding this Conceptual Sketch :

1. The parking area and related paving shown is 25 to 30% LESS than present parking lot paving, and will NOT drain into the lake.
2. The parking area is BELOW the street level and screened by landscaping to allow for unobstructed views to be maintained- BOTH into and out of the Park.
3. The structures shown are quite small (more of residential scale) and include open pavilions for shade and cover from rain. In TOTAL they represent 20% LESS area than the present bathhouse.
4. ALL new green space is maintained as such; and it’s anticipated that the area around the ‘buildings’ would be naturally permeable materials to join more naturally with new open space and control run-off.

## Crystal Lake Task Force

The Crystal Lake Task Force is city appointed group of individuals who meet regularly to discuss the future of Crystal Lake. It is chaired by Janice Bourke ([JBourke@comerica.com](mailto:JBourke@comerica.com)), and can make recommendations to the city.

## Newton Conservators Support

The Newton Conservators officially supported this acquisition and recently have agreed to a mechanism of holding funds for a Crystal Lake friends group. Here is the text of recent Newton Conservators support for the project which was published as a letter in the Newton Tab.

January 10, 2008

*Subject: Purchase of property at 230 Lake Street by the City*

*We support the purchase by the City of Newton of the house at 230 Lake Avenue in Newton Centre with funding support by the Community Preservation Committee. Acquiring this property would set aside a contiguous section of City owned property from the swimming area to Levingston Cove. This is a wonderful opportunity to provide for future open space improvements in terms of future activities. We applaud the efforts of Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council and the Mayor for making an application under the Community Preservation Act to obtain this essential piece of property in the restructuring of Crystal Lake.*

*The Community Preservation Committee members have judiciously selected numerous properties that provide open space and recreational areas for Newton residents. Addition of this property would set the stage for an eventual belt of lakefront land that could be used for open space viewing along with increased access for lake-based activities. It is these types of decisions that maintain Newton's commitment to open spaces in all parts of the City.*

*This land purchase will serve the Newton community for years to come with a general Crystal Lake open space park for all to enjoy.*

*Sincerely yours,*

*William Hagar  
President, Newton Conservators*

The Newton Conservators actually approved putting some significant funding into the direct acquisition for 230 Lake Avenue and this was conveyed to Alderman Baker on Feb 21, 2008. President Bill Hagar's letter in this past week's Tab explains the position.

### **Conservators walk the walk for Crystal Lake**

<http://www.wickedlocal.com/newton/news/opinions/letters/x1438205086>.

We support the effort to provide additional open space at Crystal Lake for the Newton Community. In last week's TAB (March 5, 2008), it was reported that Newton Aldermen approved \$35,000 in funding for a Crystal Lake plan, and listed an additional \$15,000 from fundraising efforts to complete the required cost for the plan. The \$15,000 contribution for the plan came from the Newton Conservators! The Newton Conservators' Board of Directors, on Feb. 20, approved the contribution of \$15,000 for funding the current planning efforts as follows:

"Newton Conservators will contribute \$15,000 for the planning of the use of the property at 230 Lake Avenue and contiguous properties."

This contribution is for the planning of the use of the property at 230 Lake Ave. and contiguous properties, but is not directly linked to the acquisition of the property. The Conservators would be pleased if our efforts and contribution eventually lead to the purchase of the property by the city using Community Preservation Funds, but it is not a requirement. The Conservators believe ardently that this is a wonderful opportunity to bring together lands that the city owns on either side to form a contiguous pathway. We realize that the city is facing major financial problems; nevertheless, this opportunity only comes once in a lifetime and is worth our contributed support to plan for the use and possible purchase of the property at 230 Lake Ave.

Mary Carpenter's letter in last week's TAB referenced historical settings in Newton and the early use of Crystal Lake. In her letter, she recapitulated the modern history of Crystal Lake and the lake-based activities that provided enjoyment for numerous residents for years and years. We cannot flash forward into the future, but it is nice to contemplate what Newton would be like if the open space around Crystal Lake were preserved for the enjoyment of current and future generations.

*William G. Hagar  
President, Newton Conservators*

### **Press, Opinion and Letters Coverage**

The Newton Tab, in a story by writer Neal Simpson, has extensive coverage of the Crystal Lake situation in its March 12 issue <http://www.wickedlocal.com/newton/homepage/x1438205363>. This is recommended reading.

In addition, there was a lot of other opinion and letter content generated. The following column by Schuyler Larrabee is very enlightening – he does planning and evaluation of state property.

#### **Larrabee: Why and how Newton should buy 230 Lake Ave.**

<http://www.wickedlocal.com/newton/news/lifestyle/columnists/x1870702917>

#### **Guest Column By Schuyler Larrabee**

NEWTON - Many people in the city, when talking about this potential acquisition, express concern about the loss of an important part of Newton's residential landscape. 230 Lake Ave. is a distinctive home, and appeals to many of us.

Some of those same people seem to think that if the land and house are sold to a private individual, then "obviously" the house will be protected. Actually, that is quite unlikely as the design of the house doesn't really respond to the way people live today. It also needs substantial repairs. A very likely course of action for anyone who buys that land and house is to demolish the existing house and build new. They might have to wait a year, because the Historic Commission could, and likely would, implement a demolition delay restriction, the most they can do. But that time would just allow the new owner to properly plan their new home. That new house could be substantially larger, by right, than the existing, and no one can predict what sort of design it might have.

If the city acquires the house, under the current plan two things would be done: A subdivision of the land would take a 20- or 25-foot-wide strip from the water's edge and make it public property, providing a pedestrian connection between the newly expanded Crystal Lake Bath House area and the Levingston Cove Park. Subsequent to that subdivision, the remaining land and the house would be put on the market, with an historic restriction precluding modification of the street side of the house. This will preserve the aspect of the house most people find attractive. When the property is sold privately, a new owner would be free to renovate and/or expand on the Lake side of the house.

The city's purchase will permit this subdivision along the Lake for public use. The entire city of Newton, and all its residents, gain additional flexibility in using its open space, linking an active recreational area to one more passive in nature. This is a highly desirable result.



A notion that the city has somehow impeded the owner's sale of her property has gained some currency. But in fact, Mrs Sciegienney, the long-time owner of 230 Lake Ave., has expressed her desire to sell this property to the city so that future generations can enjoy expanded access to Crystal Lake.

There is one more thing to consider: people's attitudes about change. No one is ever anxious to embrace change. But the fact is that change can be for the better. It is possible to improve upon what exists today. We can do better, we can improve, and with careful, considered planning, we can accomplish what some have titled "a better lake." We have before us, and the aldermen have before them, an opportunity to do this right.

We will always have to deal with multiple city issues but we will never have another opportunity as lies before us regarding Crystal Lake.

*Schuyler Larrabee, a Newton Centre resident, is a member of the Crystal Lake Task Force*

### Bring together Crystal Lake

<http://www.wickedlocal.com/newton/news/opinions/letters/x1379331091>

A little book entitled "A Comprehensive Historical Sketch of Crystal Lake" (1911) begins by describing Native Americans' delight in what they called "Nonantum," or what is now Newton. Nonantum means "rejoicing," and the sketch writer imagines how "Waban and his kinsmen" must have skimmed the surface of Crystal Lake with their light canoes and fished in "its limpid pools."

Later, in "the Modern Era," the Newton Centre Improvement Association built a seawall and embankment along part of the lakeshore, and reserved a bathing beach. Under the "simple manners" then considered good form, bathers undressed behind a tree and then, "attired solely in nature's garb," dashed to the water, where they "disported themselves to their hearts' delight." But when residents increased in number, these "primitive habits" had to be given up. Hence, a bathhouse was built, rules were written, and Crystal Lake raised to "the fashionable atmosphere of well-regulated watering-places."

By 1911, the writer noted that "the American public is beginning to appreciate its opportunities and feel somewhat ashamed of its past neglect of them. To make the most of a beautiful body of water in the very midst of a community of beautiful homes is not a dream to the thoughtful observer." Comparing Crystal Lake to the pond in the Public Garden, the writer urged that something be done to preserve its natural beauty for generations to come.

Nearly a century later, we have that opportunity. By purchasing 230 Lake Ave with CPC funds, we can bring together other lands already owned by the city at the westerly end of the lake, and restore that end of the lake to something of its original beauty. I urge our aldermen not to miss this historic opportunity to make an old dream come true.

**Mary Wilson Carpenter**  
Stafford Road

### Dear TAB: Please reconsider 230 Lake Ave. position

<http://www.wickedlocal.com/newton/news/opinions/letters/x1438205086>.

I would like to ask the TAB to reconsider its previously expressed editorial stance on the 230 Lake Ave. acquisition — given that the revised and approved CPC application has a number of provisions that resolve most of your issues. This plan was crafted with input from Crystal Lake activists, neighbors, aldermen, and the mayor's office to address various concerns raised by citizens, and aldermen by:

- Funding the entire purchase with CPA funding at a cost not greater than appraised value (*Please remember that half of the cost is paid by the Commonwealth CPA match.*)
- Creating a permanent waterfront easement to connect all public parcels
- Subdivision of the property to allocate more public open space and allow for the house to be leased or sold to an appropriate user
- with proceeds to return to CPC for other projects.
- Establishing conservation and historic restrictions on the property and home in order to protect it from wholesale modifications or destruction.
- Providing a resident caretaker to occupy and maintain the house during the transition.

Though this may not fulfill the 'vision' of a completely restored open space at the South cove, this is a much better deal for the city that respects current fiscal concerns, while providing more valuable open space and an additional 300 feet of public waterfront connecting Levingston Cove to the new open space and swim facility. Moreover, it represents a rare compromise leading to a sensible solution for all.

**Robert Fizek**  
Citizens for a Better Lake  
[www.betterlake.com](http://www.betterlake.com)

### Crystal Lake purchase is a fair way to use CPA funds

<http://www.wickedlocal.com/newton/news/opinions/letters/x1438205086>.

The Board of Aldermen should support the proposal to use \$1.9 million of CPA funds to purchase the property at 230 Lake Ave. and expand Crystal Lake Park. It is a fair way to use this money for acquiring more open space which is centrally located in Newton. Other recent uses of CPA funds, such as the purchase of lands at Kessler Woods (\$5 million), Angino Farm (\$2.4 million), and the Durant-Kenrick house (\$1.4 million) also met the goals of expanding open space or historic preservation that the CPA requires. However, there is no better use of CPA funds than expanding the new Crystal Lake Park. Over 26,000 visits to the park took place during last summer, and the park is easily accessible by walking and by public transportation.

Using CPA funds to enhance Crystal Lake Park is a wise move indeed, and one that is entirely consistent with the intent of the Community Preservation Act.

**Srdjan S. Nedeljkovic**  
Newton Highlands

### Conservators have committed to Crystal Lake master plan

<http://www.wickedlocal.com/newton/news/opinions/letters/x1438205086>.

The article, "Aldermen approve \$35,000 for master plan for Crystal Lake," (3/5/08), states that "The remaining \$15,000 needed for the plan would come from fundraising efforts." In fact, prior to Monday's meeting of the Finance Committee and the Board of Aldermen approving the funds, the Newton Conservators had already committed to contributing \$15,000 for the planning of the use of the property at 230 Lake Ave. and contiguous properties. By this direct 30 percent grant toward a needed master plan for

Crystal Lake, they wished to encourage the board in the CPA funded acquisition of 230 Lake Ave. which would unify this critical open space area utilized by citizens from all of Newton. The Newton Conservators were founded 47 years ago and promote the protection and preservation of Newton's open spaces for the benefit of the community; they also help educate the public about our open spaces via walks, lectures, newsletters, and other educational programs.

The current proposal for 230 Lake Ave. allows for the purchase totally with CPA funds (eliminating the \$500,000 city fund request while getting state matching funds), seeks a private buyer for the house with proceeds going back to CPA, maintains the Italianate facade of the home while allowing functional upgrading, and most importantly provides an open space connection between Livingston Cove and the recently acquired Rogers Street property and swimming area. Our Ward 3 family, like so many others across Newton, loves the Crystal Lake experience (swimming, walking, kayaking, windsurfing, birding, relaxing and even running our son's RC model boat) even though we are much closer to other city facilities on the north side of the city such as Gath Pool. I was surprised to learn recently that over 11% of Crystal Lake season passes went to residents of Auburndale, a non-abutting village to Crystal Lake!

**Ted Kuklinski**  
West Newton  
Board member, Newton Conservators

## Some Additional Considerations

### *Are the CPA Funds related to Newton North and the Override?*

Funding the acquisition of the property at 230 Lake Avenue will greatly expand access to a new and improved Crystal Lake Park. Many people in Newton are concerned that the City does not have enough funds to pay for schools, teachers, police and fire protection. However, the current proposal for purchasing 230 Lake Avenue uses only funds collected by the Community Preservation Act. It does not utilize any money from the general budget. Using CPA funds to purchase 230 Lake Avenue will help this and future generations of Newton enjoy a wonderful park at Crystal Lake.

### *Will the Purchase of 230 Lake Avenue will greatly improve Crystal Lake Park?*

The Board of Aldermen has a historic opportunity to forever enhance and preserve open space in the City of Newton by voting to purchase the property at 230 Lake Avenue. Along with the recently acquired land at 20 Rogers Street, this new purchase will allow the public access along the entire beachfront of Crystal Lake, from Livingston Cove to the Gil Bathhouse. What a wonderful chance we will all have to enjoy strolling, resting, and taking our friends to this new and wonderful park!

### *Does the new Crystal Lake plan includes preservation of house at 230 Lake Avenue?*

The new CPA plan submitted includes preservation of the house at 230 Lake Avenue. Even though this house is not yet on the Historic Register in Newton, many who are familiar with this area consider it architecturally interesting and a local landmark. It is anticipated that as the new Crystal Lake Park is designed, the house will be purchased by a private owner. Any renovations that are planned will need to preserve at least the front façade of the house. This will offer the community the best chance to historically preserve this resource while allowing for public use all along the shores of the lake.

### *Will the plans for Crystal Lake allow continued tax revenues for the City?*

The recent proposal for Crystal Lake Park, which includes the purchase of the property at 230 Lake Avenue, will maintain tax income for the City. After the property is purchased by the City, the plans call for a portion of the land to become part of the newly expanded park adjacent to the former 20 Rogers Street parcel. Also, the lakeside portion of the property will include public access so that people will be able to walk between the park and Livingston Cove. However, it is anticipated that the house itself, along with a 15,000 parcel of land immediately around it, will be sold to a private entity. Thereby, the City will benefit by having this property remain on the property tax role, while lovers of the Lake will have a greatly expanded park.

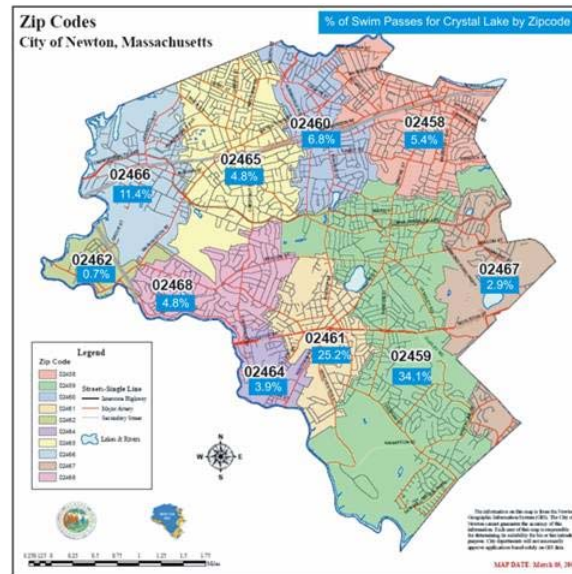
### *Is the Crystal Lake purchase a fair way to use CPA funds?*

People should support the proposal to use CPA funds to purchase the property at 230 Lake Avenue. It is a fair way to use this money for acquiring open space which is centrally located in Newton. Other recent uses of CPA funds, such as the purchase of lands at Kessler Woods, Angino Farm, and the Durant Kendrick house also met the goals of expanding open space or historic preservation that the CPA requires.

However, Crystal Lake has a much higher usage factor than many other city facilities and is centrally located. Over 12,000 visits to the park took place during last summer, and the park is easily accessible by walking and by public transportation. Using CPA funds to enhance Crystal Lake Park is consistent with the intent of this program. With a cost of \$1.9M, and reimbursement from the sale of the house expected to be around \$1M, the net cost may only be \$900K. The 1% CPA surcharge is matched by the state effectively reducing direct taxpayer funding to about half that. The City will have a jewel of a resource in the center of Newton that can be enjoyed by our generation and all future generations in years to come.

### *What is the Geographic Distribution of Crystal Lake Use?*

Crystal Lake is centrally located and users come from all over the city for many types of activities. But we do have some statistics for the swim users. Below is a map by zipcode of swim pass sales at Crystal Lake by percent of total. Surprisingly, 11.4% of Crystal Lake passes are bought by Auburndalians. There are less swim sales in north wards (but still significant) due to being able to buy passes at Gath Pool good for both facilities. Fully 1 out of 10 Highland residents have a seasonal pass to Crystal Lake. These season pass figures do not include all the camp groups, swimming lesson participants, and large number of walk ins, or those that are passive recreation users. Much like the central library, Crystal Lakes draws from all over.



**Why would anyone buy this property with the proposed restrictions and proximity to passive and active recreation uses? And won't value be greatly reduced?**

This is still a prime piece of property and there will be "conservation buyers" who will want to live in this location because of its situation. According to RE agents we've talked to, including two on our committee, the market is strong enough, the price is realistic and there are buyers out there for this kind of property.

**Won't prospective buyers be put off by the potential for a pathway along the lake and noise from the beach?**

The same concern was raised about the Charles River Pathway and abutters now say they love this amenity and don't mind walkers at all. This is also true for anyone living next to a city park of athletic facility—demand for these properties remains high.

**Why did CPC not recommend the project be bonded over 5 or 10 years, as has been true for other large expenditures?**

Rather than tie up future funds and incur added interest costs, the committee felt that, with funds currently available over this and the next fiscal year, it would be prudent to pay off this purchase now. The amount of the state match becomes uncertain after this fiscal year and we want to be prepared for this new environment. The CPC has shown itself to be open to other approaches the BOA might suggest.

**Why not just let the market take care of this property? Why should the city take on a speculative project like this?**

Because the city abuts this property on both sides, we should care about what eventually goes on there. The condition and limitations of the current house and the site itself probably means the house would be replaced with a less modest structure. This could affect the value of our own property for recreation purposes. By taking this step, we retain a level of control over the outcome that would not otherwise be possible.

**Would this building and site be appropriate for a use such as the Newton Cultural Center, which is now looking for a new home?**

The building may not be the right size, have sufficient parking, etc, for this use, but any use that fits zoning (current for revised by the Board for that purpose) would be satisfactory as long as it fits with the surrounding neighborhood and was compatible with recreation uses on either side.

**Isn't the city paying too much for this property, given the falling market?**

There may have been some movement in the market since the house came under agreement last fall, but Newton prices never fell to the extent they did elsewhere, this is a special location that may insulate it somewhat from broader trends, and there are signs of Newton market resurgence this spring that could render this question moot. The city has taken a lot of time to reach a conclusion regarding this acquisition and the owner has been patient and cooperative. There is never an absolute known value in real estate and. The city tries to be fair with the owners of the properties they buy.

## Some Final Thoughts

(Ted Kuklinski – Editor Newton Conservators e-Bulletin)

When I first moved to Newton, I was struck by the fact that there was a real lake right here in Newton. How lucky those folks who live on the lake are! Living lakeside in Newton never be an option for my family. But having public access via a newly feasible contiguous park at Crystal Lake is a possibility - if the board of aldermen see the value in it in their upcoming vote.

The public support for Crystal Lake from all over was exemplified at a public session at the Newton Library when the acquisition of the Hannon property was first being discussed. The library auditorium was filled with folks from all over Newton who got up and elaborated on many creative ideas for Crystal Lake. Newton has since been lucky to be able to acquire that property and now has been offered the opportunity of acquiring the property next door at 230 Lake Avenue. This would enable a continuous stretch of public space from the existing bathhouse area all the way to Levingston Cove. What a slate of possibilities this presents!

Crystal Lake is truly one of the best natural features in Newton, centrally located, and is beautiful in all seasons. There are times that I will take a detour just to go by it and take in its tranquility. Crystal Lake is used and valued by citizens from all over Newton, not necessarily by just those who live nearby. Our family prefers swimming at Crystal Lake to the Gath Pool although that is much closer.

The times I have visited Minneapolis, the locals always have wanted to take me out to see their lakes (some comparable in size to Crystal Lake) and have a picnic there. They truly are some of the hallmarks of the city and well used for all sorts of activities. In contrast, on my first visit to Florida, I remember taking an evening drive out to the coast north of Clearwater to check out the beaches. How disappointing it was to drive so close to the ocean and not be able to see it with the view blocked almost totally by large buildings. The only respite to the concrete were a very few public parks along the way. I view Crystal Lake as a microcosm of that situation, but one where we

can open up more of the precious lake shore to all the citizens of Newton.

I know that times are tight here in Newton with the Newton North situation, school budget, firehouse conditions, etc.. There are always going to be needs in the city that will require more funds than it seems we have. This is especially true with all the new cost estimates for NNHS this week and I can understand how the aldermen are treading a bit lightly when it comes to spending city money.

This is why CPA was such a good thing for Newton. Open space, community housing, historic preservation, and recreation projects were finally able to be funded - in the old days they were always at the bottom of the budget pile and would be lucky to receive funding or get pushed off for years and years. Our family was very happy to see the passage of the Community Preservation Act some years ago and happy with all the projects that have been accomplished.

CPA was meant for acquisitions such as 230 Lake Avenue that became available on short notice. A lot of the big ticket items in the open space category have already be acquired/ Basically we have the money for this acquisition and Doug Dickson of the CPC stated at the Finance Committee that there were no big projects in the CPA pipeline that would preclude the city from moving on this. This is a very reasonable expenditure for additional open space in a critical area adjacent to other open space!

We seem to have a cooperative seller in Mrs. Sciagienny (someone who appears to be civic minded in offering the property to the city first) who has luckily exhibited some patience with the process and I would hate to see a repeat of the situation that happened over the years with the 20 Rogers Street property. I would ask the aldermen to look with a future vision on this property to create a magnificent Crystal Lake Park.

Would that many years from now, Newtonians will look back and say "they did the right thing!"

*Working to preserve open space in Newton  
for 47 years!*



[www.newtonconservators.org](http://www.newtonconservators.org)

---

It's Tax Time! [Get tips, forms and advice on AOL Money & Finance.](#)