

The Newton Conservators, Inc.
PO Box 590011
Newton Centre, MA 02459

April 26, 2004

Re: Land Gift

Dear Members of the Board,

I am writing this letter to clarify my intentions in offering of a 1/4 acre gift of land to the Newton Conservators. While Board deliberations encompass a range of organizational and programmatic issues, I hope that knowing the impetus for my gift and learning about the land will inform your decision-making process.

For nine years I have lived in the presence of a preserved and unusual natural landscape in my suburban backyard. So too have neighbors below us on Dexter Road enjoyed proximity to this open space with its refreshing presence of green herbs, shrubs and trees that are also home to birds, mammals, insects and a host of non-human urban dwellers whose lives are part of the living mosaic of suburban green spaces.

In reflecting on this natural landscape one recognizes the presence of time in the form of a tiny parce of land left undisturbed by human progress. This unassuming island of undeveloped land, whose edges are defined by surrounding building lots and streets, is a reminder of what was once a natural and vibrant landscape. Looking at the land one recognizes that its formidable and rocky slope, its most compelling and attractive feature, has also been its saving grace. Notable specimen trees are rooted in the firmament of this stony face and, now grown to maturity, their thick overarching branches form a firm lattice work of branches with their seasonal burgeoning of green life giving leaves.

But the present forces of change, in the form of market economics and social transformation, and the irrepressible dynamics of human progress exert great pressure on any available remaining land. This eastern facing bedrock outcrop that has met the morning sun's rays before the time Europeans first graced American shores, now is no longer a formidable obstacle to development. Former natural barriers to human presumptions and development succumb to new technologies, and a rare surviving dramatic rocky promontory, with shallow soils and wooded lower slopes might easily become just another engineered house lot.

Over the years we have lived on Prospect Park we have watched, across the street, next door, and now around the corner the remaining open and natural spaces of Prospect Hill being carved into another and yet another new residential

Carolyn Fine-Friedman 60 Prospect Park Newton, MA 02460

lot. And what of these changes? Drainage impacts create havoc on downslope properties; more cars come and go on old cart paths; designed landscapes fill with exotic plants altering the local biota; families live in showcase homes with innovative technologies that enhance the controlled environments we have come to expect for ourselves; lives are lived in urgent preoccupations with the artifices of 21st century lifestyles.

When I began to think about my family's move in 2003, I recognized that the surplus land of the property at 60 Prospect Park provided an unusual opportunity. I could have taken a conventional approach and subdivided my land to create a second buildable lot. But I was able to choose to honor the inherent natural values that lie within and upon the land instead.

I know there is a certain blind optimism, and some might say naiveté in choosing to permanently protect a natural oasis in a neighborhood of large suburban homes. You may at this point be asking yourself the question 'why is this person so intent upon saving this very small piece of land in an otherwise urban landscape?' The answer is that I have a very strong desire to see nature survive the war that we humans continue to wage upon it. A vital way for nature to have a fighting chance in this campaign is for us humans to set aside large tracts of land that protect whole ecosystems and allow nature to determine its own course, to evolve and adapt without human manipulation. I actively pursue these goals in my work with a number of wilderness organizations in New England including the Northeast Wilderness Trust and the Wildlands Project. And, despite the fact that I live in an urban setting I cannot turn off the desire to steer the wheels of "progress" around some pieces of land and to allow nature to continue to BE, even here on Prospect Park. In this sense, my gift is symbolic. We must do all we can, wherever we can, to change the tide of humanity's impacts and preserve nature's life giving balances. My vision is to see this land permanently protected, not just for its dramatic rocky face and its community of living and natural things, but because saving it is a symbol of optimism for the preservation of all of nature both in Newton and beyond.

However uneventful such a modest gesture may seem in some respects, it is my fervent hope that the Conservators would accept this gift and would protect a small piece of land to preserve a legacy for the future of both the natural and the human communities.

Sincerely,



Carolyn Fine Friedman
60 Prospect Park
Newtonville, MA 02460