



Working for 43 years to preserve open space in Newton!

the Newton Conservators

NEWSLETTER

Winter Issue

www.newtonconservators.org

February / March 2004

Conservators Seek to Acquire Angino Farm

When it rains, it pours—and fortunately, the availability of Community Preservation funds makes the Newton Conservators, working in close coordination with city government, a credible buyer of conservation property coming on line in Newton. Angino Farm is the latest in a string of properties that have long been on the Open Space Plan priority list to hit the market in the last year.

This new opportunity follows recent acquisitions of the Wilmerding and Forte properties (adjacent to Webster and Dolan Pond conservation areas, respectively) and the anticipated acquisition of Kessler Woods in the Spring (see update on page 4). Discussions regarding two other properties are also underway.

It's frightening to think about where we'd be without the successful passage of the Community Preservation Act more than two years ago. A look at the transformation taking place on the south side of Andover Newton Hill provides a clue—devastation of the natural landscape for construction of mega-homes and townhouses. Fortunately, the timing of recent opportunities has fallen into line with the availability of CPA funds, making the city a contender. The Conservators can take credit for its leadership in the passage of CPA, along with developing the expertise over recent years to act as agent in the acquisition of these properties as they come onto the market.

Angino Farm is a 2.5 acre property at the corner of Winchester and Nahanton Streets. It is Newton's last farm, operated until his death three years ago by Jerry Angino, who served as the truant officer for



View of Angino Farm from the corner of Nahanton and Winchester Streets, looking north. The JCC is across Winchester Street to the left of this photo.

Newton Public Schools for many years. This much-loved Newton figure grew flowers and vegetables on this open parcel and his family farmed it before him. The property includes a Colonial-style home originally built in 1700, a barn and a shed. The Newton Historic Commission considers the house, barn and scenic vista to be historically significant.

Following his death, Jerry Angino's sister, Rose Mitchell, lived in the house. After she died last year, the family decided to sell the property. The asking price is \$3.5 million and the family has already turned down at least one offer. They and their broker are amenable to selling the property to the

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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Angino Farm, continued from page 1

city by way of the Newton Conservators and a tentative offer has been accepted. As of this writing, the terms of a Purchase and Sale Agreement are being negotiated and will include two contingencies: that an independent appraisal be conducted to determine value of the property and that funding be arranged by June 1, 2004.

The Conservators are funding an appraisal, with the expectation that we will be reimbursed through the Community Preservation Fund. Results are due by mid-March. Meanwhile, planning is underway to determine how the property would be used if purchased by the city. Possibilities on the table at this point include converting the house and/or the barn to two or more units of affordable housing, with the possibility of additional units if they are needed to make the project work. The 2344 square-foot, two-story house consists of nine rooms, with six bedrooms and two baths. It is in average condition and would need some work to make it useful as one or two units of housing. The barn is 900 square feet and it's not clear yet whether it can be affordably converted for housing.



Angino Farm house, originally built in 1700.

The parcel is zoned for single family housing (SR1, requiring 25,000 square feet per lot), and with 350 feet of frontage, the property could hypothetically be subdivided to accommodate three new houses in addition to the existing one by right. A significant constraint is that a culverted stream apparently runs under the property. This means that a substantial portion of the land may be protected under both city ordinance and state wetlands law, which could reduce the buildable area. In addition, considerable grade changes could be required, since most of the land sits well below the adjacent Nahanton and Winchester Streets. Grade changes of more than three feet require a special permit.

Newton Pride is interested in the property for a greenhouse to aid their work in beautifying city gardens and grounds. Other suggestions for the site include a community garden or farm and various educational programs. Additional ideas are welcome, but must get into the script immediately so that planning can hold to an extremely tight schedule.

That schedule calls for an application to be filed with the Community Preservation Committee by March 3. The CPC would then hold a public hearing on the proposal on March 31.

Action by CPC and the Board of Aldermen must be completed by June 1.

(Continued on page 3)



Aerial view of Angino Farm, showing house (center right) and barn behind it close to the property line at the right. Solid dark area in the center of the photo is an open field, farmed in the past by Jerry Angino. Photo taken from Newton Web site.

A small group representing the various interests in the project has been assembled under the leadership of the Newton Conservators. Interested groups include Newton Housing Authority (with whom we worked on the Forte acquisition), CAN-DO (a local affordable housing developer), Newton Historic Commission, Newton Pride and the Conservation Commission. If you have ideas or wish to help with this effort, contact Duane Hillis, chair of the Newton Conservators Land Acquisition Committee (dhillis@rcn.com).

Doug Dickson, with input from Duane Hillis
Photos by Doug Dickson

MISSION Newton Conservators, Inc.
<p>The Newton Conservators promotes the protection and preservation of natural areas, including parks, playgrounds, forests and streams, which are open or may be converted to open space for the enjoyment and benefit of the people of Newton. It further aims to disseminate information about these and other environmental matters.</p> <p>A primary goal is to foster the acquisition of land, buildings and other facilities to be used for the encouragement of scientific, educational, recreational, literary and other public pursuits that will promote good citizenship and the general welfare of the people of our community.</p>
<i>The Newton Conservators was formed as a not-for-profit organization nearly 43 years ago in June 1961.</i>

The Newton Conservators Newsletter© is published five times each year by the Newton Conservators, Inc. Issues usually appear in February, April, June, September and November. Deadlines for these issues are the fifth of each month in which an issue is scheduled to be published.

We welcome material related to our mission from any source. Send proposed articles by email in MS Word or rich text format to dg dickson@rcn.com. Digitized photographs, maps and diagrams are also welcome.

Editor: Doug Dickson 617-969-8661
Production: Bonnie Carter 617-969-0686

Thanks to the following contributors to this edition of the Newsletter: Margaret Albright, Jim Broderick, Doug Dickson, Duane Hillis, Martha Aberin Horn and Eric Reenstierna. Thanks to Douglas Leith for his excellent proofreading.

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Teamwork Makes Us Successful

The team concept has never been on people’s minds as much as it has lately. The Patriots refuse to be introduced as individuals but instead are introduced as a team. They go on to win the Super Bowl—twice. Now, every organization, from the Red Sox to traditional, management-driven corporations, attempts to instill the team concept.

But all along, the Conservators have played as a team.

Every member of the Conservators’ Board of Directors serves an important function. In one aspect or another, every director takes the lead. One person (and, often, more than one) handles finance, another Ordway Park, another publicity, another oversight of our conservation restrictions, another educational grants.

Some senior directors serve to provide “institutional memory.” Others start new efforts, as in our new work in land management. Some of us help by contributing to this newsletter or sharing with the community their special knowledge of plants and wildlife.

In land acquisition, where we may target three or four parcels for protection, it seems that for each one, a different individual steps forward to be the “point person,” contacting the property owner, calling meetings, arranging a purchase agreement and shepherding the property through the process.

Some of us serve on other “teams” and are part of the larger effort to help the city not only preserve open space but to work in a combined effort in historic preservation, recreation, and affordable housing. Some of our best work is done by advisors and affiliates who come on board to work with us on a particular project where they have special expertise. We always welcome them.

No one calls all the shots. We make all our decisions as a group. Every couple of years, someone else from the team takes the wheel.

And it works. The proof is in our string of accomplishments.

Because we share a mission. And because, like the Patriots, we play as a team.

Eric Reenstierna

KESSELER WOODS UPDATE

The purchase of Kessler Woods by the city and its development partner, Cornerstone Corporation, from NStar in January was postponed because of a new requirement imposed by the state Department of Telecommunications and Energy. DTE halted the transaction until it can hold a hearing to review NStar's plans for distributing the proceeds of the sale to its customers. This hearing is currently scheduled to be held in March. If all goes well, the closing is expected to occur in early April.

Meanwhile, the Conservators, under the leadership of Cris Criscitiello, Jon Regosin and Eric Reenstierna, have been working with Cornerstone to map out a proposed trail through the area that will not be built on by the developer. As currently conceived, the trail would cross Vine Street from the southern parcel and proceed in the direction of South Branch, an annual stream that enters the property from LaGrange Street. This waterway separates the portion of the northern parcel that the city will own (the portion south of this stream) from the part that Cornerstone will own. Since the area from South Brook north to a rocky ledge that roughly demarcates the buildable upland portion of the property along LaGrange Street is not conducive to construction (it is either protected wetland or too steep for building), the trail is proposed to cross South Branch and continue to and along the base of the rocky outcropping of Roxbury puddingstone.



View across a portion of the Roxbury puddingstone ledge containing locally rare plant communities at Kessler Woods.

Atop this ledge is a community of plants that Jon Regosin, a biologist and Conservators director, say is rare in Newton. It contains a variety of mosses and

lichens, as well as a wonderful view Saw Mill Brook below and a large portion of the protected wetland that will be donated to the city by Cornerstone through a conservation restriction. Ideally, the edge of this ledge would be preserved to allow a branch of the trail to reach the top of the outcropping and for walkers to enjoy the view as well as the special character of the plant life.



Boulders at the base of the puddingstone ledge off LaGrange Street, just north of South Branch stream at Kessler Woods.

From the ledge, the trail would wind westward toward Saw Mill Brook, with which South Branch connects. It would follow Saw Mill Brook, a perennial stream, toward the Brookline town line. There is an opportunity for a bridge across Saw Mill Brook to enable walkers to connect to Harwich Road, which connects to Brookline Street on the opposite side of the property.

Cornerstone has committed \$90,000 for the construction of trails and other amenities. Their representative has been receptive to suggestions by the Conservators about the location of trails and the nature of amenities. Those conversations are expected to continue in conjunction with city officials.

*Doug Dickson, with input from Cris Criscitiello
Photos by Doug Dickson*

GREEN DECADE COALITION/NEWTON LECTURE SERIES

Sustainable Building Design

Using Newton North High School as a Model

Monday, February 23, 2004 7:00 PM

Druker Auditorium, Newton Free Library

Panel includes Brooke Lipsitt, David DelPorto, Barbara Batshalom

Ordway Park Renewal

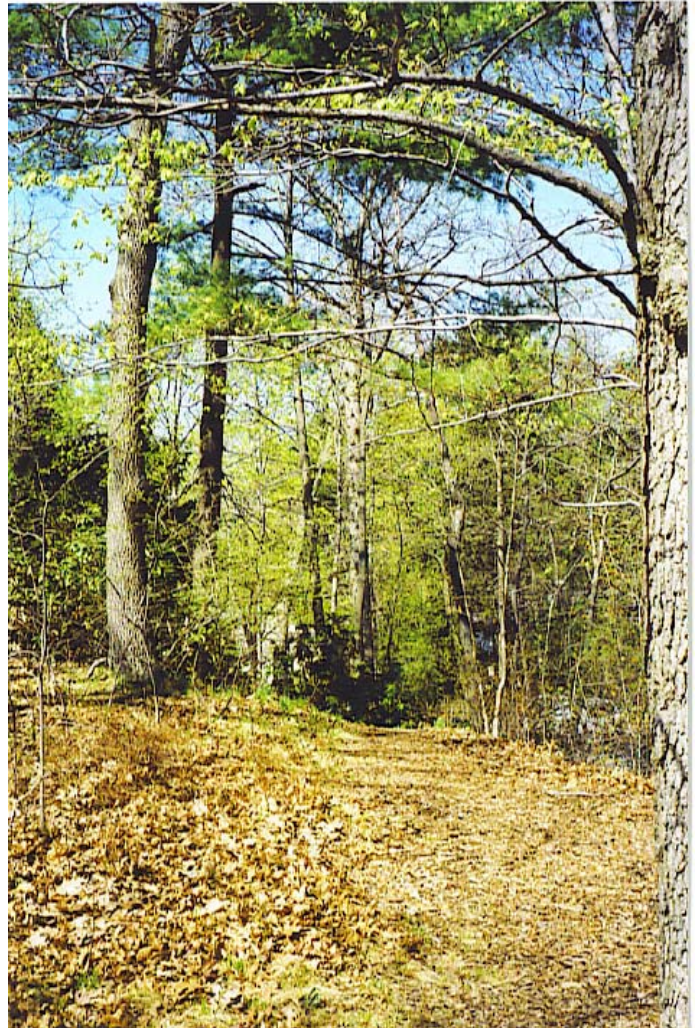
The late December–early January thaw allowed another exercise in cutting back Norway maple saplings that have been crowding the park. Come spring, the flowering of rhododendrons and azaleas should be more clearly visible on the Grant Avenue side. This summer Grant Avenue will be repaved and needed curbing provided, and a request has been made for an estimate from the city of the costs of bringing water service into the park at the time of the repaving.

Beth Schroeder, a landscape designer, and Susan Sangiolo, a landscape architect, have joined Jim Broderick, a registered landscape designer, for several meetings and visits to the park. The trio intend to have a layout plan and a planting plan ready in late May to present to neighbors and Conservators for their comments. The planting plan in particular will provide for installation in stages.

Since the last Newsletter, the contributions to the Ordway Park Fund have been coming in steadily. With a recent generous contribution from the Charles River Neighborhood Foundation, we have raised more than \$5,000 from some 60 contributors, and checks for an additional \$5,000 from the matching fund have been deposited. In addition, the Newton Centre Garden Club has offered to pay for a bench if the final plans for the park provide for one.

In telephone calls and in letters, current and former neighbors of Ordway Park have reminded us of the “little, unremembered” ways an unobtrusive, natural half-acre can have a role in individual lives. One donor now in California asked that her contribution be accepted in honor of her mother, an Ordway neighbor, who remembers the watercolor classes Priscilla Ordway held in her woodland garden, and still keeps near her phone a portrait of her son by Miss Ordway. A letter from Vermont said in part, “Pls. accept what must be only a token donation to Ordway... But—I did want to be part of the effort. I grew up a child at 35 Grey Cliff Rd.” The writer goes on to recall the paving of Grant Avenue, talks about trees in the park, and then adds, “Forgive my ramblings! Ordway was in the orbit of my childhood ramblings—which led eventually to a life-long career in forestry and land conservation.”

Jim Broderick



*View up the path and through the trees at Ordway Park.
(Photo by Jim Broderick)*

DON'T POSTPONE!

Because of a neighbor's generous matching grant of \$10,000 to an endowment fund for the maintenance and renewal of Ordway Park, your donation to the Ordway Park Fund will be doubled. This is a once in a generation opportunity to build the Newton Conservators' resources.

If every member makes a gift, we will reach our goal of \$50,000. (Institutions that have been approached are very interested in the percentage of membership already contributing.) So please join the 60 other Conservators and neighbors who have already contributed and make out your check to:

Newton Conservators Ordway Park Fund
PO Box 590011
Newton Centre, MA 02459

“Friends of Albemarle” Group Is Formed

The city's proposal to site a football stadium at Albemarle Park spurred a group of Newtonville neighbors to take a more active role in preservation and management of the neighborhood open spaces. The Friends of Albemarle was created to "support and improve Albemarle Park, Cheesecake Brook, and other open spaces in north Newtonville, for the enjoyment of everyone in the community." The long-term goal of the group is to work with Parks & Recreation, other city departments, the Charles River Pathway project and other groups on developing a master plan and cohesive strategy for Albemarle Park, Avery Wood, Cheesecake Brook and the Charles River Pathway.

This spring, the Friends have several events and projects in the works:

- On April 25, the Friends of Albemarle will be working with NewtonServes teams on a **Spring cleanup** of Cheesecake Brook and Avery Wood, and maintenance of the wooden playground equipment at the Park. Contact Beverly Droz at 617-796-1290 or email bdroz@ci.newton.ma.us to volunteer for one of the Albemarle clean-up teams.
- An outdoor discussion of **potential improvements**, a step toward development of a master plan for the area, will be held in mid-May at the Park. Contact the Friends of Albemarle for more information: info@FriendsofAlbemarle.org.
- **A walk through the park**, including Avery Wood and along the Cheesecake Brook corridor to the newest part of the Charles River Pathway, is tentatively planned for June. Contact info@FriendsofAlbemarle.org for date and meeting location.

For more information on activities or to join the group, contact Curtis Betts at 617-965-1799 or Margaret Albright 617-969-0497, or email info@FriendsofAlbemarle.org.

Margaret Albright



Commonwealth Avenue entrance to Marty Sender Riverwalk, dedicated last October. (photo by Doug Dickson)

SENDER RIVERWALK DEDICATED

On a rainy day last October, a group gathered to honor Marty Sender with a ribbon-cutting and the official opening of a portion of the Charles River pathway named in Marty's memory. Among those present for the dedication were Mayor David Cohen, Representative Kay Kahn, DCR Senior Planner Dan Driscoll, Marty's wife Jane Sender, and a group of neighbors and friends.

The Marty Sender Riverwalk begins at the corner of Commonwealth Avenue and Islington Road, runs along Lyons Field, continues through Auburndale Playground along the cove, and ends at the entrance to Forest Grove Park in Waltham.

Marty was a long-time director of the Newton Conservators and we contributed to construction of the Riverwalk in honor of his substantial contribution to our organization and causes we support.

Doug Dickson

FOUR CONSERVATION RESTRICTIONS IN THE PIPELINE

The Conservation Commission has been working busily on four Conservation Restrictions. Two CRs, protecting portions of the Jick and Field properties abutting Hammond Pond, will conserve the wooded swamp and floodplain around the pond as envisioned in the Open Space Plan. Property by property we are slowly reaching that goal. The Field property also has a beautiful stand of trout lilies in a portion of its CR area. This will not be a public access CR, providing only conservation benefits.

The Jick CR has gone to Joel Lerner of the state Department of Conservation and Recreation for comment. The Field CR is in final form and ready for final Law Department review and Conservation Commission approval at the February meeting.

The Bradford development (The Residences on Boylston Street, opposite the intersection of Langley Road and Route 9) has a small wetland in the back, which we wanted to remain wild as it abuts woods in the rear yards of some of the Dudley Road houses. The wooded area has the usual small mammals, but there are also deer. Jon Regosin noted salamander eggs in the wetland area where there's a vernal pool. This is prime habitat for them—wooded areas plus a pool—so this one is for open space without any public access to conserve its habitat values.

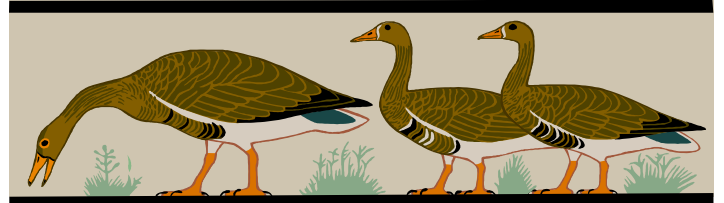
The Bradford CR is in final form, approved by the Conservation Commission and by the Law Department. It will be going to Joel Lerner for final state approval soon.

Negotiation of the Wilmerding CR is now final and final language capturing the agreement is being drafted by the Law Department. It is expected to be approved by the Conservation Commission at its February meeting. This CR will be held by the Newton Conservators in accordance with state law, because this property was purchased with CPA funds. This is the first of several CRs that will be held by the Conservators.

Larry Burdick, Anne Pearson (for the Conservators) and Martha Horn (for the City) have agreed on the substance of a database, abstract and procedures for our ongoing project to monitor all of the city's conservation restrictions. The workspace

for Larry and Anne and access to the city's computer system are now in place. All that's left is a minor scheduling matter and the system that has been designed will be ready to go. The Conservators' help has been extremely valuable as this project is time consuming and would not be possible without their efforts.

Martha Aherin Horn



HAMMOND POND UPDATE

The Hammond Pond kick-off meeting was well attended and the design plans are in process. Stephanie Bacon is working on the QAPP portion—the quality assurance piece of this big puzzle. She is writing the protocol and will be arranging training for volunteers to take water samples before, during and after the project to measure the effectiveness of the bio-retention areas (aka 'rain gardens') and other storm-water management facilities to be installed.

Martha Aherin Horn

FLOWED MEADOW UPDATE

The Flowed Meadow Improvement Project is well underway. Landscape Designer Carol Schein has a preliminary plan that carries out the decisions of the Flowed Meadow Planning Group as to pathway improvements, benches, signage, etc.

Thanks to Matt Gray, whose Eagle Scout project gave us two fine bridges, beautiful signage and bird boxes. The Island Neighborhood Association has signed up for a workday in the Spring to clear pathways through the swamp. Another Boy Scout has expressed interest in doing additional work in the Spring, so it appears that by this time next year all of the short-term goals of the Planning Group will have been met.

The bulk of this project is being funded through the Community Preservation Fund, as approved by the CPC and Board of Aldermen in 2003.

Martha Aherin Horn

FORTE PROPERTY UPDATE

Since the last newsletter, the sale of this property adjacent to Dolan Pond has closed. The Conservators briefly took ownership of the acre-plus parcel before conveying it to the City of Newton for \$1. This action facilitated the purchase of this land with Community Preservation funds for conservation as well as affordable housing. The Newton Housing Authority will rehabilitate the Forte house for rental to a qualifying family and Habitat for Humanity will construct two connecting units for sale to families meeting the income restrictions.

Since closing on the parcel, the parties have been negotiating the line that will divide the conservation property from the housing property. About 70% of the land will be protected as an extension to Dolan Pond Conservation Area. The Newton Conservators signed off on this placement of this line at its January meeting. The Conservation Commission is expected to do the same at their meeting in February.

This will clear the way for negotiation and filing of a conservation restriction that will be held by the Conservators on the protected portion of the parcel. It will also allow for a special permit application that will be needed for the two additional units of Habitat housing.

Doug Dickson



Education Grants Open

Newton school teachers and community groups who seek funding for educational programs may apply for grants up to \$1000 from the Newton Conservators. This program has been in place for several years, and the Conservators have funded community classrooms, nature study programs and environmental initiatives in public schools as well as in the community. To learn more, visit our Web site at www.newtonconservators.org, or contact Bill Hagar, Grants Committee chair, at 617-964-2644 or william.hagar@umb.edu.

Call for Amateur Scriptwriters, Producers and Directors

The Newton Conservators is considering joining with the Green Decade Coalition to create a series of programs to be run on Newton's cable TV channels. These would involve presentation of information about Newton's conservation areas, efforts to improve management of our parks and other topics of interest to Newton residents.

If you have experience writing, directing or producing for cable TV, or would like to learn by doing, please contact Eric Reenstierna (ericreen@tiac.net) or Doug Dickson (dgdickson@rcn.com). Our ability to join in this effort depends on the volunteer services of a few interested members.

This initiative would be a logical extension of other programs we run, including our Spring and Fall walks, our "Walking Guide to Newton's Parks and Conservation Areas," our lecture series and our educational grants program.

Green Decade Lecture Series

The Green Decade Coalition/Newton and the Newton League of Women Voters are cosponsoring a program on Sustainable Building Design on **Monday, February 23**, 2004 at 7:00 PM in the Druker Auditorium of the Newton Free Library.

Program speakers are Brooke Lipsitt, former president of the Newton Board of Aldermen; David Del Porto, Ecological Engineering; and Barbara Batshalom, The Green Roundtable. Nick Parnell, Newton Public Buildings Commissioner, will give an overview of the Newton North project.

Using the Newton North High School construction project as a model, the program will examine how green building practices and technologies can be applied to municipal buildings to achieve resource and energy sustainability.

On **Monday, March 22**, the series will turn to pest management in the landscape. David Mellor, Fenway Park Master Groundskeeper and author of "The Lawn Bible: How to Keep It Green and Growing Every Season of the Year," will speak on The Secrets of Great Lawns.

HAVE YOU CHECKED OUT OUR NEW WEB SITE?

The Conservators have a new Web site, thanks to Web manager Dan Brody. Dan recently joined the board of the Newton Conservators and has logged countless hours in a total rehab of our Web presence.

On the site, you can find information on all of the parks and conservation areas in the city—just click on the map. Or you can check out the latest events and issues related to our work. You can locate archived copies of the newsletter or get information on grants, lectures and other programs. If it's a book or Walking Guide you're after, you can purchase them through our site. You can also obtain membership information and check links to other organizations who share our mission.

See for yourself what a terrific job Dan Brody has done in recreating our Web site. Bookmark www.newtonconservators.org as one of your favorite sites and visit us often. There's always something new to read or download. Make us one of your Internet habits!

Calendar of Events

We encourage you to attend meetings of the Conservators board and city boards that conduct business related to our mission. Regular meeting times are listed below:

Newton Conservators Board meets the fourth Wednesday of every month at 7:30 PM, usually in a City Hall meeting room or the City Hall cafeteria.

Conservation Commission meets the fourth Thursday at 7:30 PM in City Hall Room 209.

Parks and Recreation Commission meets the third Monday at 7:30 PM in City Hall Room 209.

Community Preservation Committee meets the last Wednesday at 7:30 PM in City Hall Room 209.

Aldermanic Committee on Community Preservation meets the last Tuesday at 7:45 PM in City Hall Room 222.

**If you haven't paid your membership dues for 2004, now is the time. Please renew today!
And consider an additional tax-deductible gift to support our work!**



*Celebrating 43 years
of open space advocacy
in Newton*

Newton Conservators Membership Form

PO Box 590011, Newton Centre, MA 02459 • 617-969-8661 • www.newtonconservators.org

- YES, I'd like to start/renew my one-year membership with the Newton Conservators to help preserve open space in Newton. I'll receive informative newsletters and emails and be invited to participate in guided tours of local conservation areas, lectures, and other programs and activities.
- I'd like to make an additional tax-deductible contribution to support the work of the Newton Conservators: \$_____

MEMBERSHIP OPTIONS

- Individual member \$25
- Family member \$35
- Sustaining member \$50
- Donor \$75
- Patron \$100

All amounts are tax deductible

NAME _____

STREET _____ VILLAGE _____ ZIP _____

EMAIL ADDRESS _____ Make checks payable to **Newton Conservators, Inc.**

February/March 2004 Newsletter





the Newton Conservators **NEWSLETTER**

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Check out our new Web site at www.newtonconservators.org



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