



Working to preserve open space in Newton for 45 years!

the Newton Conservators

NEWSLETTER

Summer Issue

www.newtonconservators.org

June/July/August 2006

SMITH, WOLFF TELL CONSERVATORS: GREENWAY HEALING CITY

Twenty five years is a long time to pursue a vision. The vision for the Rose Kennedy Greenway has always been to replace the hard steel and asphalt of the Central Artery with open space. The vision is nearly achieved. Architect Peter Smith of Newton, Principal of Global Urban Solutions, and Lynn Wolff, President of Copley Wolff Design Group, both provided design services for the Greenway. They spoke at the Newton Conservators' annual dinner on May 31. They guided the audience on a computer-animated tour of the new park. Within a year, the speakers told the Conservators, what are still hard surfaces will become a sculptured urban landscape. The new park will knit Boston's downtown and its waterfront together again.

The park that we have today that best resembles the new space at the Greenway, said Ms. Wolff, is at Copley Square. There, an urban open space is bordered by surface streets. The park at Copley Square required re-design when an earlier version failed to attract users. The new parks at the Kennedy Greenway will share the surface with roads and walkways. These will connect downtown with the South Boston Seaport district at Congress and Summer Streets and with the North End at Hanover and Causeway Streets.

The new parks are designed with fountains, lawns, seating, and locations for push cart vendors. The



landscape architects have done their part to make this a lively urban environment, said Ms. Wolff. The hope is that it will work as designed.

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Greenway Healing City (continued from page1)

Computer animation gave a striking vision of the Greenway:

- a linear park built in sections, to address the needs of different communities
- definition of each neighborhood section with a different species of tree
- a promenade along the edge of the North End, where buildings that once turned their backs to the Central Artery are undergoing redesign to face the park
- a large, outdoor urban “room” for civic gatherings near downtown
- a museum built as a ship’s hull with its ribs exposed, by architect Moshe Safdie
- indigenous plantings
- plenty of gardens, fountains, and seating
- winter lighting, to make the park more user-friendly in the dark months
- use of evergreens, trees with berries, and trees with interesting bark
- a new Massachusetts Horticultural Society museum, with a display garden
- strong Chinese design influences in the area near Chinatown
- reestablishment of the grid pattern of streets at the Bulfinch Triangle near North Station
- connection to existing parks at the Christopher Columbus Park on the North End waterfront and the new esplanades on either side of the Charles River

The Central Artery served its function for fifty years, but at a cost. The cost was that it severed the North End from Boston and Boston from its waterfront. Massachusetts invested heavily – in money, in time, and in the disruption of construction – to take it down. Finally, we got it done. The payoff is the Rose Kennedy Greenway.

If the reality is anything like the computer animation, we will be glad we did.

- *Eric Reenstierna*

PRESIDENT’S REPORT

(Text of Address by William Hagar, President, at Annual Meeting)

Welcome to the forty-fifth annual meeting of the Newton Conservators! I want to thank all of you members and friends who are attending tonight’s dinner. Special thanks to Aldermen Vern Vance, Alderman Marci Johnson, Alderman Brian Yates, and Mayor David Cohen. We welcome you to our program, and thank you for your assistance with various open space projects in the past and the future. We also welcome individuals from other environmental and historical groups that are attending and have cooperated and collaborated with us in the past to keep open space and conservation on the agenda in Newton.

One collaborative group just received NewTV’s “Red Carpet Award” for field production and community input. This group, which includes Patty Goldman, Duane Hillis, Frank Howard, Ted Kuklinski and Cris Criscitiello, put together a number of “made for TV” shows including the award winners: “Flora and Fauna of the Charles River”, and “Appreciation of the Charles”. Carole Smith Berney helped with the presentations, and she & Patsy Murray have just published a document, “Wildflowers near the Charles River”, which Carole was signing this evening for members. Autographed copies are always important, and I have one of them. Dan Driscoll (DCR) assisted with the printing of “Wildflowers”, and has given us many copies for distribution at tonight’s meeting. We also want to thank Carol Corbett, Anne Pearson and Duane Hillis for their help in setting up the meals, mailing list, centerpieces and projection equipment for this forty-fifth annual dinner.

Dottie and I have lived in Newton for over thirty years so the 45th annual meeting is rather impressive in numbers. Some of you out there were members from the beginning and have provided support for all
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President's Message (continued from page 2)

of those years. Your initial efforts have been rewarded many times over with conservation oversight and improvements making this a better place for all. The Conservators started when open spaces in Newton were being consumed at an incredible rate. I was told that in the 1950's the Wells Avenue Charles River area had the most pristine flora and fauna found in the State. It was lost as a large parcel of open space, but remaining edges of it may be seen whilst canoeing along the Charles from Nahanton Park to Millennium Park. This is a great city to be part of, and the demand for buildable space is a constant threat. Trying to balance the dynamics of an active city can be very difficult; nevertheless, it is most important to retain viable open space for the health of the community.

Rachel Carson, the author of *Silent Spring*, knew the importance of preserving the environment. Her science and commitment alerted us to environmental protection. Several quotes from her come to mind:

“Only within the moment of time represented by the present century has one species-man-acquired significant power to alter the nature of his world.”

“Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts.”

Roger Feinstein, a past president of the Conservators, who passed away last year, told me that a meeting of the Conservators was like a Quaker Meeting: when the appropriate topic pops up someone will add their expertise and energy to complete the task. No tasks are assigned or expected. Roger was a wonderful writer and a ferocious recycler who will be missed.

As I reviewed the past year, I am in wonder about all the things that our members have accomplished. One example is our Grants program to provide financial input to the school system to help educate students in environmental topics. Funding from our program helps the teachers with their interesting environmentally-based education projects. Tonight we have teachers from two school systems: Sharon



Foster & Beth Ann Nohmy from Franklin Elementary School and Ms. Jones & Missy Costello from Bigelow School, whose students have benefited from our outreach environmental education programs. Their presentations were well received by all of you at tonight's dinner. The Conservators also are very supportive of Newton's very successful Environmental Science Program, directed by David Backer, that takes the next age level of students from Newton and helps make them much more aware of their environment. We now have an active community farm that serves as visual open space for passers-by, as a food cooperative for local citizen farmers, and as a teaching platform for numerous students and members of the Newton Community. Gregory Maslowe will be the farmer working this piece of fertile earth.

I am continually impressed with the activity and ability of Board Members. Our meetings cover material on a myriad of topics: Treasurer's reports and notes, meeting notes, land acquisition information, insurance policies, land management, legal advice, publicity, maintaining Web site, guided walks, and lectures. Our involvement with the recent spring presentation on activities supported by the Community Preservation Act (CPA), which was coordinated by Ted Kuklinski and Doug Dickson,

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President's Message (continued from page 3)

educated Newton citizens on what has been accomplished over the past five years due to this program.

The current agreement of having the CPA in place in Newton has wide support among the Conservators. CPA has been a remarkable program throughout the state and in Newton. Over five years ago, required signatures were obtained and the motion was placed on the ballot. Citizens of Newton approved the plan, and the Community Preservation Act program, subsequently, has thrived in Newton. Members of the Newton Conservators were essential members of the team that coordinated efforts to have this monetary addition from the state support their efforts. The last two major land additions were Kessler Woods and the Angino Farm. Without CPA funds these land acquisitions would not have been possible.

New ideas on the horizon are continued preservation of land in Newton and an interest in having full access to the walking paths on top of the aqueducts. Most of the aqueduct paths, which crisscross Newton, are open for travel, but some sections are blocked by owners. Opening of the aqueduct pathway is one goal for us to do for the next year.

SPEAKERS



Lynn Wolff and Peter Smith

AWARDS



ENVIRONMENTALIST OF THE YEAR

Jon Regosin (left), Eric Reenstierna, and Duane Hillis for their roles in the acquisition of Angino Farm



CHARLES MAYNARD AWARD

Frank Howard, for his work to save the American Chestnut



DIRECTORS' AWARD

Jim Broderick, for his work to establish the Ordway Park Endowment Fund

AMERICAN CHESTNUT RESTORATION - THE END OF THE BEGINNING

Charles Johnson Maynard (1845-1929) experienced more than 60 years of the American chestnut (*Castanea dentata*) as the dominant hardwood in the Appalachian forests. It is likely that he knew it was the most reliable producer of mast for wildlife, because the trees bloom in July, far past the frosts that may adversely affect other nut trees such as the oak. As a knowledgeable naturalist, he understood the ecological disaster in 1908 when the chestnut blight (*Cryphonectria parasitica*) began girdling and killing each of the 4 billion trees in Newton and the eastern forests.

Meadowview, Virginia is home to the research farms of The American Chestnut Foundation (TACF) with almost 20,000 trees planted on over 130 acres. Thirteen state Chapters of TACF, with their own breeding programs crossing blight-resistant pollen from Meadowview with their own native trees, are focused on developing the fullest American chestnut characteristics as well as local adaptability. The MA chapter now has 5,000 trees planted in its research orchards (www.masschestnut.org).

After twenty-three years of incorporating genes for blight resistance from the highly blight resistant Chinese chestnut (*Castanea mollissima*), by crossing and selection of blight resistant trees and also back crossing with American chestnuts, TACF's Staff Pathologist Fred Hebard, Ph.D., has just announced the first harvest of 118 nuts which are 15/16 American and 1/16 Chinese and which are blight resistant. With his team of geneticists, plant breeders, foresters, science advisors, administrative staff, and benefactors, he plans to proceed further to explore chestnut blight virulence (www.acf.org). In addition, reforestation trials are underway.

The TACF goal of restoring a blight resistant American-Chinese hybrid tree to the eastern forests would probably have Maynard's enthusiastic approval.

- Frank Howard

TREASURER'S REPORT FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2005

The Conservators began 2005 with \$130 thousand of unrestricted net assets, and ended it almost \$16 thousand higher, with an increase in unrestricted net assets of \$15,757.

Net income from operations before special projects was \$4,923, very close to the prior year. There was \$17 thousand of member dues and gifts and almost \$1,500 of map guide sales, both close to the previous two years. Expenses totaled almost \$14 thousand, also close to previous years. Grants were made to Newton's Environmental Science Program (\$2,000) and the Franklin Elementary School (\$480). Other expenses include newsletter production costs, Ordway Park maintenance, and insurance, all at normal levels.

Special projects showed a reversal from the previous year. Whereas in 2004 we incurred almost \$12,000 in Angino Farm related costs, in 2005 those costs were reimbursed by CPA funds, and that reimbursement was treated as a revenue item in 2005. Offsetting this was the \$7,500 pledge the Conservators made towards the Farm. The net effect was that special projects increased net assets by \$4,663.

Investment income, including the gain in value of our index fund investment, was \$6,171. In total the sum of operating income, special projects, and investment income was \$15,757.

In addition to the unrestricted funds, Newton Conservators holds donor-restricted funds, which grew by \$61 thousand to almost \$90 thousand at year end. Of that \$61 thousand increase, \$43 thousand was for Angino Farm, including contributions and a pledge from the Ledgebrook residences next door. Other increases were from contributions to the Ordway Endowment Fund and the Ordway Improvement Fund (which used the improvement funds to do a major landscaping improvements at Ordway), and from a maintenance fund given as part

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Treasurer's Report (continued from page 5)

of a gift by the Awtreys of a parcel of land on Sargent Street.

The Conservators' balance sheet now shows property of Ordway Park, 60 Prospect St. (which was a gift in 2004), and the new property on Sargent St. We also continue to have on our books the Forte property at 76 Webster Park, recorded at \$1.1 million, with an offsetting \$1.1 million mortgage to the City. When this property is transferred to the Newton Housing Authority and Habitat for Humanity, the mortgage note will be cancelled; until then the property is technically on the books of Newton Conservators.

In total, unrestricted and restricted net assets ended the year at \$235,074, a \$77 thousand increase in 2005.

- Katherine Howard

THANKS

Thanks to Newtonville Camera and NewTV for their help with equipment at our Annual Dinner. Thanks also to Andrew Reenstierna for technical assistance.

ELECTION

The Newton Conservators elected the following officers for 2006-2007:

- President William Hagar
- Vice President Beth Schroeder
- Treasurer Katherine Howard
- Secretary AnnaMaria Abernathy
- Past President Eric Reenstierna

COMINGS AND GOINGS

The Newton Conservators welcome two new Directors to the Board of Directors for 2006-2007:

- Florie Funk
- Carole Herman

The Conservators want to thank five Directors who are moving from the Board of Directors to our Board of Advisors. All of these Members have contributed greatly to the work of the Newton Conservators. We look forward to working with them in their new role.

- James Broderick
- Lucy Caldwell-Stair
- Michael Clarke
- Douglas Dickson
- Jon Regosin

AQUEDUCTS ON NEWTV

The June episode of The Environmental Show on NewTV takes viewers on a tour of Newton's Aqueduct pathways. The show is produced by the Newton Conservators. The NewTV production team included video and photos by Duane Hillis, Frank Howard and Dan Brody, and Editor Patricia Goldman

Beautiful footage shows where the paths begin along the Charles River and run through Waban and Newton Highlands to the Newton Center Playground. Host Cris Criscitiello points out the wildflowers, trees and birds. Engineer Frank Steiger explains how the huge aqueduct pipes originally brought water into the city, dropping six inches a mile because they used only gravity, no pumps. Doug Dickson explains efforts to maintain and preserve these pathways. Henry Finch explains ins and outs along the way.

Be sure to catch this episode, running repeatedly through the month of June on Saturdays (10 a.m.), Mondays (3 p.m.), Tuesdays (1:30 p.m. and 11:30 p.m.), Wednesdays (11:30 a.m.) and Thursdays (noon, 4 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.).

MISSION
Newton Conservators, Inc.

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.

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.

The Newton Conservators was formed as a not-for-profit organization 45 years ago in June 1961.

ECHO BRIDGE UPDATE

The Friends of Hemlock Gorge (Web site at www.hemlockgorge.org) are working closely with area legislators to obtain the funding for repair and replacement of the railings at the top of Echo Bridge so that the view from the top of the bridge will remain open to all lovers of natural beauty and that commuters and park lovers alike can continue to walk across the bridge from one section of Hemlock Gorge to the other.

Representatives Ruth Balsler, Lida Harkins and Alice Peish from the three towns that include Hemlock Gorge obtained \$250,000 for the railings in the 2007 State Budget. Senators Cynthia Creem and Scott Brown are currently working for the money in the Senate. They are expected to be successful since the 2004 Transportation Bond Bill contained such a provision. The principal obstacle may be the Governor.

Conservators should start contacting the Governor and the Lieutenant Governor's offices to urge them to support the money for the railings that will keep this magnificent structure open to the people.

After the money is obtained, the Friends will work closely with the MWRA to design and install the necessary replacements for missing parts of the railings and to repair others to make them less vulnerable to future damage. We have obtained names of persons with the needed expertise from the Mass. Historic Commission, Mass Highway Department, and others. The actual amount of work needed is much less than was stated in the papers. About twenty of the decorative balls at the top of the stanchions need to be replaced. Four or five of the lower railings on each side need to be replaced. (These are the only real hazards.) Although three or four of the stanchions on each side are in varying states of disrepair, even the weakest looking are still firmly attached to the bridge. We need a designer to do detailed specifications that the MWRA could then put out to bid with the money we hope to get from the General Court.

For ongoing information, visit my web site www.brianyates.org or the Friends of Hemlock Gorge web site www.hemlockgorge.org.

- Alderman Brian Yates

The Newton Conservators Newsletter© is published five times each year by the Newton Conservators, Inc. Issues usually appear in mid-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 ericreen@tiac.net. Digitized photographs, maps and diagrams are also welcome.

Editor: Eric Reenstierna 617-969-5820
Production: Bonnie Carter 617-969-0686

This issue marks the retirement of Doug Dickson from his position as editor of this newsletter. The Conservators are indebted to Doug for his years of service to this organization and, especially, for his leadership. As Editor, Doug helped to broadcast the mission of the Conservators across Newton. We have been fortunate to have him as editor.

Thanks to the following contributors to this edition of the Newsletter: Bill Hagar, Frank Howard, Katherine Howard, Brian Yates, Doug Dickson, and Margaret Albright. Thanks also to Douglas Leith for his excellent proofreading.

CHEESECAKE BROOK WALK



On Sunday, June 25 at 2:00 PM, join the Friends of Albemarle, the Conservators, and the Newton History Museum as we explore Cheesecake Brook.

Cheesecake Brook is a small stream that runs through Newton, flowing underground from its headwaters near Brae Burn Country Club and daylighting in West Newton near Washington Street, where it continues through backyards until it reaches Eddy Street. From Eddy Street onward, this culverted brook runs down the center of the boulevard, Albemarle Road. In the past century much of the land along this boulevard has become one of Newton's most important open spaces – Albemarle Park.

In his 1893 Boston Metropolitan Park Report, Charles Eliot writes, “{At} Cheesecake Brook,... the City of Newton is practically illustrating the treatment, which....should be applied to all the larger waterways of the district.... Instead of covering the stream with backyards or a street the watercourse is placed in an open strip of grassy or bushy ground upon each side of which is constructed a roadway affording access to houses facing the stream.”

Come learn about the history of this Olmsted-inspired waterway and how plans are now underway to return to that vision from 1893 and create a linear passive recreation space from Watertown Street to the River. We will walk the brook from Eddy Street to the Charles River and explore little known open spaces in the neighborhood including an old oak forest known as Avery Wood. The walk, in conjunction with the Newton History Museum, will be led by Curtis Betts from Friends of Albemarle. Meet at the Gazebo in Albemarle Park at 2:00 PM. Parking along the road is ample.

- Margaret Albright

LETTERS

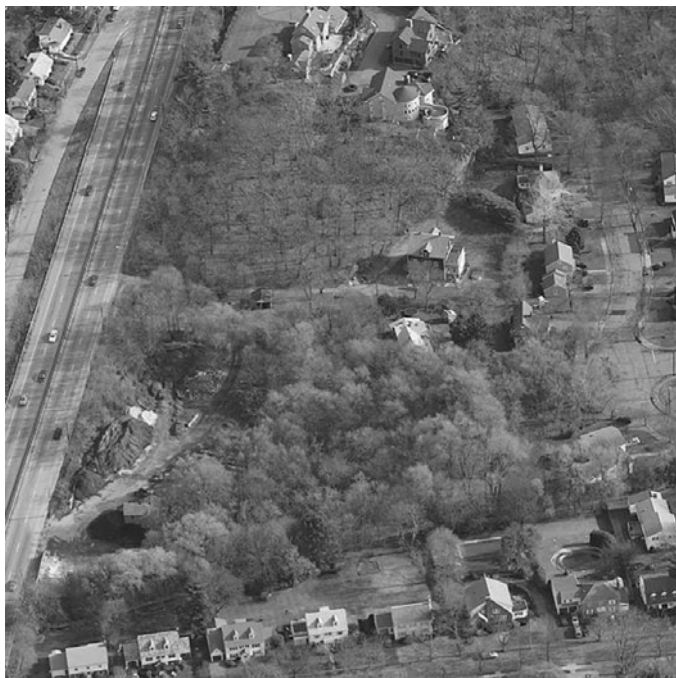
(Note: The letter that follows is in response to the reported development plans for two large sites off Route 9.)

To the Editor:

In the last 25 years, Newton has lost 25% of its forest land, leaving roughly 20% of its land relatively in an open state. Approximately half of this remaining open space is made up of golf courses. Open Space in the Garden City is rapidly declining.

Acceleration of this decline is due in part to the large scale commercial development of housing under the state's 40B regulation, allowing increased density for developments that meet the 40B criteria. In order to control some of this rapid development, the City of Newton must adopt a certified comprehensive plan to reach affordable housing levels of 10%. Without this plan, much of the remaining open space is in jeopardy.

Two specific privately owned vacant inventories require conservation action. Sam White & Sons and Horst Woods are both Specific Vacant Open Space Lands containing Boston Basin Topography
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exhibiting Unique Geologic Treasures providing scenic vistas of aesthetic and educational value. The distinctive bedrock or "Brighton Volcanic Outcrop" is in the form of three steep cliffs. One cliff is located along Rt. 9, and two cliffs are between Dudley and Brandeis Road abutting Newton South High School.

Also in this area is a Flood Plain along Paul Brook. This is one of the remaining open brooks and the only outlet for the rain fed "Great Pond" Crystal Lake. Isolated wetlands have been identified.

Developing outside the 200 ft. wetlands boundary on the Paul Brook site, coupled with the impossibility of containing the 5 feet of floodwaters expected in the 100 years storm, it would appear both land owner and public interests may be served best through a land acquisition for conservation.

Sincerely,
Kevin Kernan
Newton South Homeowners Association

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

Angino Farm Commission meets the first Thursday of every month at 7:00 pm in City Hall Room 209.

Community Preservation Committee meets the last Wednesday of every month at 7:00 pm in City Hall Room 209.

Conservation Commission meets the fourth Thursday of every month at 7:30 pm in City Hall Room 209.

Parks and Recreation Commission meets the third Monday of every month at 7:30 pm in City Hall Room 209.

Urban Tree Commission meets the third Friday of every month at 7:45 am in City Hall Room 202.

Aldermanic Committee on Community Preservation meets the last Tuesday of every month at 7:45 pm in City Hall Room 222.

**If you haven't paid your membership dues for 2006, now is the time. Please renew today!
And consider a tax-deductible gift to support our work!**



*Celebrating 45 years
of open space advocacy
in Newton*

Newton Conservators Membership Form
PO Box 590011, Newton Centre, MA 02459 • 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: \$_____
- Please do not share my name and address with other groups.

| MEMBERSHIP OPTIONS | |
|--|-------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual member | \$25 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family member | \$35 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining member | \$50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Donor | \$75 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Patron | \$100 |
| <i>All amounts are tax deductible</i> | |

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



the Newton Conservators **NEWSLETTER**

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