

Newton Conservators

NEWSLETTER

Spring Issue April 1997

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members and Friends:

Environmental issues are once again reaching higher levels on government agendas. After so many years of frustration during which our issues arise only to be debated or buried, there seems to be a new responsive-ness in legislatures and executive branches to the public's concern about the condition of our environment and the disappointment of our open spaces and water. Unrestricted development at any cost is no longer as acceptable as it has been.

The U. S. House of Representatives, having heard the public outcry against attempts to dismantle our clean air, clean water, forest management and other similar laws, is finally appearing to be less responsive to requests of oil, ranching, mining and industrial lobbies and its stepping back or moving cautiously.

After many years, our state government has passed a Rivers Act, ostensibly to protect a zone within 200 feet of perennial waterways from pollution-causing development. However, it appears already that the Department of Environmental Protection may be watering the act down by its guidance document which may reduce the protected zone to 100 feet. A homeowners' lobby has filed bills to weaken the act further. Clearly, even laws themselves, which are intended to provide safeguards to our environment, need vigilant and ongoing protection.

Another worthwhile state proposal is an "enabling" bill which would allow municipal or county governments to impose a tax of up to 2% on real estate transactions (after the first \$100,000). These funds would go into a local "land bank" where the money would be earmarked for acquisition of lands to be used for open, undeveloped space. Newton and other communities would be able to increase their open space and park lands without the drain on capital budgets and without the combative process currently involved. This would be a truly wonderful thing.

Our own Senator Lois Pines continues to be a stalwart protector of our environment as the chair of the Committee on Natural Resources and Agriculture. She has sponsored bills providing for safeguards from toxic pesticide use and expansion of the bottle bill.

Abandoned industrial sites have been a source of troubling concern. The sites are now dubbed "brownfields." They can be valuable lands available for redevelopment, but cleanup costs and liabilities have stifled their use. Industry groups have tried to limit liability and cleanup costs for the original polluters, so new developers are reluctant to take on unknown liabilities. Economic development of these sites in a responsible and appropriate manner is desirable. A new bill has been introduced in the state legislature to protect new investment in economically distressed areas while holding prior polluters responsible for cleanup costs. This is a complicated issue, but the outcome could have many benefits.

Newton itself is undergoing self-evaluation in terms of its own lands and open spaces. The capping of the Rumford Avenue dump, the removal of the obsolete incinerator, the purchase of private property to add to our park lands—with more to come—all bode well for our city. Further, we expect that the position of environmental planner for the City which is now part-time will be made full time, allowing for long-needed supervision of our open spaces. The city is involved with private groups in a program to reduce toxic pesticide use in our public places. (See the article about IPM on page 4.) A process is in place to find a new Director of Planning for the city, and our hope and expectation is that the new director will be a person of vision who will put as much emphasis on the planning part of the job as on the development part. The Board of Aldermen and its committees as well as the Mayor's Office are showing a new responsiveness to our environmental and open space issues.

There are changes in the wind, but what has not changed is the never ending conflict between the commercial and industrial interests for unrestricted development and the environmentalists desire to keep all space natural and untouched. While neither position is tenable in this day and age, we can hope for a reasonable balance between responsible development and land protection in its natural state for passive recreation.

While hoping for that may feel good, what is required is the work to make it happen. The Newton Conservators, the Green Decade Coalition, the League of Women Voters and many neighborhood associations and garden clubs have been working hard towards that end. Each in our own way advocate for protected open space, toxic waste reduction, water resource cleanup, acquisition of new land and all the things which keep Newton healthful and beautiful.

Our successes occur when our decision makers know that we have a vocal, voting constituency backing up our words. It is imperative that our members show interest and support by attending Aldermanic committee meetings and writing or calling their aldermen and the Mayor on critical issues. Our officials are elected to be responsive to the needs and desires of the citizens, but they must know what our desires are. Voices from commercial interests are loud and well paid. We must balance that with our numbers. Be active, be involved and we will be heard!

Sincerely,

Burton Elliott

President

(Editor's Note: A list of the members of the Board of Aldermen is on page 6.)

The Newton Conservators Newsletter appears occasionally. President: Burton Elliott. Production: Bonnie Carter, 969-0686 and Colleen Minaker. We wish to thank the contributors to this edition of the **Newsletter**: CRWA, Paula Chasan, Judy Hepburn, Peter Kastner, Beth McDermott, Doug Dickson, Burton Elliott, Janet MacLeod. We also wish to thank Newton Communications Access Center, Inc., NewTV, for the use of its word-processing equipment.

Interested in Identifying Problems and Developing Solutions Along the Charles? Join a Stream Team.

By the Charles River Watershed Association

Stream Teams conduct Shoreline Surveys, or visual surveys, to identify problems such as non-point source pollution, erosion, and sedimentation, and to identify assets such as important habitat, historical sites, possible trails and canoe access sites, and undeveloped land that should be protected. After the survey, team members meet and identify priorities along the river and develop an Action Plan. Stream Teams then work with municipal officials, regulatory agencies and environmental groups to implement the Action Plans.

Team members receive training from the Massachusetts Riverways Program and include a variety of volunteers—landowners, business, municipal officials, civic organizations, schools and people who use the river (canoists, anglers, hikers, naturalists). As a group of potential voters and taxpayers, Stream Teams can be quite successful in implementing their Action Plans.

CRWA and the Massachusetts Riverways Program are currently organizing Stream Teams in the Needham-Newton-Wellesley and the Watertown-Boston-Cambridge stretches of the river. Save the following dates and contact Peggy Savage of CRWA at (617) 965-5975 to sign up and receive more details about the training sessions. For the Nahanton to Norumbega section, training will be held on Wednesday, May 28 at Wellesley Town Hall at 7:00 pm and the survey will be done on Saturday, May 31, starting at 9:00 am. For the Watertown to Boston section, training will be held on Thursday, June 5 at 7:00 pm at the Cambridge Boat Club and the survey will be done on Saturday, June 7. The Norumbega to Watertown section will be done in the fall.

The Newton Conservators, Inc.

Cordially Invites You to its Thirty -Sixth

Annual Meeting & Dinner

Thursday, May 29, 1997

Noyes Hall, Andover Newton Theological School

210 Herrick Rd., Newton, MA 02159

(Parking in Quadrangle in front and behind Noyes Hall)

6:30 PM Social Gathering

7:00 PM Dinner-To make a reservation, see the next page.

8:00 PM Meeting

PROGRAM

1. Business Meeting:

Annual Report of the Treasurer

Report of the Audit Committee

Report of the President

Report of the Nominating Committee

Election of Officers and Directors

Other Business

2. Recognition of Past Presidents

3. Presentation of the Environmentalist of the Year Award to Dianne Dumanoski

4. Speaker:

Jennifer M. Huntington: "Volunteerism, Advocacy and How Things Happen"

Questions and Answers

5. Adjourn

The following slate of officers and directors has been presented by the nominating committee.

Officers: President: Michael Clarke Secretary: Sally Flynn

Vice President: Douglas Dickson Past President: Burton Elliott

Treasurer: Nicholas Yamoni

Directors: Margaret Albright Roger Feinstein Colleen Minaker

Stephanie Bacon William Hagar Norman Richardson

James Broderick Bart Hagare Martin Sander

Bonnie Carter Judith Hepburn Vaunita Schnell

Michael Colloera Frank Howard

Carol Lee Corbett Peter Kastner

Advisors: (Elected by the Board)

AnnaMaria Abernathy Deborah Howard Richard Primack

Lisle Baker Jean Husher Frances Seasholes

John Bliss William Jones William Stevenson

Thelma Fleishman Lawrence Kaplan William Shaevel

Helen Heyn William Leitch Virginia Taplin

Fiora Houghteling George Mansfield Vance

Integrated Pest Management Policy To Be Adopted By City

By Doug Dickson

Through the open door of room 222 at City Hall, you might have overheard, had you been nearby on many of the Friday mornings this year, a small but vocal group haggling through the details of Newton's new IPM policy. This policy, nearing its final stage of development, will soon be announced as the first and most comprehensive of its kind in the Commonwealth.

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) is a problem-solving approach to landscape and building management designed to prevent and control undesirable weeds, insects, fungi and rodents. IPM relies on information about environmental conditions, the dynamics of human behavior, and pest biology to prevent, resist and control pests that interfere with the purpose and use of a specific site. When a particular pest exceeds a particular threshold at a particular site, a full range of pest control strategies is employed, with an emphasis on modifying the habitat, modifying maintenance practices, and modifying user behavior. If all else fails, pesticides may be used, but only as a last resort, and only within specific guidelines for selection and use of least-toxic chemicals.

IPM has been around for years, but it is coming into greater acceptance as an alternative to widespread use of chemicals to control pests, both in the landscape and in buildings. Concern about the impact of pesticides on health-directly through breathing, drinking, ingesting or skin absorption of toxic products or through delayed exposures from contaminated soil, food, air, water, utensils and toys-is driving much of the renewed interest in IPM.

The most obvious goal of IPM is to reduce the use of pesticides to as low a level as is possible and practical. But there are other, equally compelling reasons to employ this common-sense approach. The benefits of prevention are, forever scrubbed in the adage that begins, "an ounce of . . ." Prevention is a central theme of IPM, reducing or eliminating the factors that attract pests. In the landscape, the same practices that prevent pests also yield stronger, more sustainable plants, trees, shrubs and turf. They also allow and rely upon beneficial plants and insects to work their magic: Stronger plants live longer and require less maintenance, reducing both maintenance and replacement costs.

By adopting an IPM policy, the City of Newton acknowledges its obligation to model environmentally responsible practices and to accure the financial benefits of planning and prevention in maintaining high-quality parks, playgrounds and open spaces. The city also recognizes its responsibility to prevent the contamination of soil, air and water, and to protect its citizens from exposure to hazardous chemicals.

The IPM policy workgroup is a collaborative effort of the departments of Health and Parks and Recreation, GreenCAP, Youth Soccer, Newton Commonwealth Golf Course and the Phil Mastroianni Corporation, working with leadership and registration from the Landscape Maintenance Task Force. Other city departments and community groups will be included as the policy is finalized over the next several weeks.

More information about IPM is available in the library or can be obtained from GreenCAP (call Ellie Goldberg at 965-9637).

A workshop on IPM, called "Don't Spray 'Em-Outsmart 'Em," will be held at the Parish of St. Paul in Newton Highlands on Tuesday, May 13 from 7:30-9:00 PM. Call the Green Decade Coalition at 965-1995 for information and registration. This workshop is part of a community education program sponsored by Green Decade and supported by the Newton Conservators, along with the Conservation Commission, the Newton Board of Health and the Parks and Recreation Department.

----- Please tear off here and send in reservation form below. -----

Yes, I/we will attend the Newton Conservators Annual Dinner Meeting

Please reserve _____ places at \$20.00 each. Enclosed is my check for \$_____.

Name: _____ Telephone _____

Address: _____

I prefer _____ (number) vegetarian dinners.

I/we cannot attend but wish to contribute \$_____ towards NC programs.

Please reply by May 27, 1997 to:

Sally Flynn, 33 Whitney Road, Newton, MA 02160 or telephone 965-6297

Make checks payable to Newton Conservators, Inc.

Nahanton Park Meadow Project Begins Spring Effort

by Judy Hepburn

Ground-breaking has been delayed by the "April Fool's blizzard," but the hillside meadow at Nahanton Park, between the upper and lower community gardens, will soon sprout two or more experimental horticultural plots. The intent is to beautify the park through the introduction of a wider variety of meadow wildflowers. Permeable horticultural fabric will be used as an ecologically-friendly approach that provides a good measure of weed suppression while allowing wildflower plugs to become established.

In 1992, when the Nahanton Meadow Project first began, frequent summer mowing of this area was abandoned in favor of a once-a-year, late fall mowing. However, poor soil conditions have supported the rampant growth of an alien species in the *Azorella* family that has proven very difficult to eradicate and competes aggressively against other species. As a result, past efforts to introduce native wildflower plugs have met with only limited success. By nurturing plants along in smaller, well-defined plots under weed-blocking fabric, we may begin to reclaim this land for our more colorful, native varieties.

The Friends of Nahanton Park invites the community to help in this multiyear effort. If you can offer suggestions, provide seedlings or other contributions, help with planting and watering, or have any interests in meadow establishment please write to: Friends of Nahanton Park, 70 Crescent Street, Auburndale, MA 02166 or call Judy Hepburn (964-1137), Paula Chasan (965-2752) or Frank Howard (244-7269).

Nahanton Park Misused for City's Dumping

by Paula Chasan and Judy Hepburn

Since soon as the snow melted after the April 1 blizzard, Newton's Dept. of Public Works trucks began hauling the south side's paved tree limbs and brush to Nahanton Park and gave permission to private landscapers/contractors to take the same. Since creating this huge debris mound, the DPW has continued to use the park for a noisy on-site chipping operation, filling the park with piles of wood chips. All of this is happening in the middle of a unique and beautiful park that is critical to wildlife in our city.

The Friends of Nahanton Park understand that the City was facing an unusual and difficult problem. However, the City had made a commitment to the Friends after the winter of 1994 when, in a more pressing snow emergency, the DPW had used the park as a dumping grounds for giant mounds of snow mixed with asphalt and road debris. Verbal assurance had been given that Nahanton Park would never again be used to solve the City's public works problems. As the Friends pointed out in 1994, the DPW's Eliot Street facility had ample space for temporary storm-related storage and there had never been a valid reason to misuse Nahanton Park in the first place.

The April Fool's Day blizzard was clearly not a crisis equal in magnitude to the snow removal problem of 1994. The City's decision to dump at Nahanton was made more deliberately, after the immediate crisis was over and the snow melted. Once again the logical alternative, using the Eliot Street site, was not taken.

The precedent that the City's behavior sets to landscapers, who are eager to find free dump sites, is the most disturbing feature of the solution it chose. It was this very problem, dumping at the park by landscapers and others who defaced the beauty of the park through the introduction of the dirt roads. This proposal, successfully voted on by the Board of Aldermen in March, is designed to prevent the very behavior that, sadly, the City now appears to be endorsing and encouraging.

The impact of the City's dumping on the park's wildlife is not yet known. The huge brush pile was a magnet for sparrows, attracting one uncommon migrant: a Vesper Sparrow. However, transient birds cannot make up for potential harm to the park's breeders at a critical time in the spring. The site of the DPW's dumping-and-chipping operation is an open meadow used by male American Woodcocks for their evening courtship flights, and Nahanton is the only place within city limits where woodcock breed. Perhaps more significantly, just a week or two before the blizzard an anonymous donor generously constructed and installed a "bluebird trail" for the park. Almost as soon as the boxes were up, a pair of Eastern Bluebirds arrived to investigate. If they are not driven out by the noise and disruption of the DPW operations, which are only a few feet away from one of the boxes, Nahanton may become the second nesting site for bluebirds within the Route 128 beltway.

Newton Board of Aldermen

1996-1997

ALDERMEN AT LARGE WARD 1 WARD ALDERMEN

Robert E. Gerst Carleton P. Merrill Theresa M. O'Halloran

51 Claremont Street 15 Newtonville Avenue 8 Jackson Terrace

Newton, MA 02158 Newton 02158 Newton 02158

Home: 965-0658 Home: 244-2421 Home: 527-0516

WARD 2

Allan L. Ciccone Dennis V. Maguire Robert K. Antonellis

105 Fair Oaks Avenue 38 Grove Hill Avenue 15 Lothrop Street

Newtonville 02160 Newtonville 02160 Newton 02158

Home: 332-5466 Home: 527-5805 332-1094

Office: 527-2345

WARD 3

Richard J. Bullwinkel Leonard J. Gentile Anthony J. Salvucci

15 Lindbergh Avenue 214 Adams Avenue 23 Eddy Street

West Newton 02165 Newton 02165 Newton 02165

Home: 527-7067 Home: 527-5446 Home: 244-2509

Office: 964-9953

WARD 4

Richard J. McGrath Frederick MacLeish, Jr. D. Pauline Bryon

1617 Washington Street 18 Myrtle Avenue 11 Acorn Drive

West Newton 02165 Auburndale 02166 Auburndale 02166

Office: 332-3339 Home: 332-6528 Home: 244-0932

WARD 5

Paul E. Coletti Brian E. Yates Christine Samuelson

34 Columbia Avenue 1094 Chestnut Street 185 Winslow Road

Newton UF 02164 Newton UF 02164 Waban 02168

Home: 965-3654 Home: 244-2601 Home: 244-8789

WARD 6

Susan M. Basham Kenneth R. L. Parker George E. Mansfield

67 Fisher Avenue 69A Norwood Avenue 312 Lake Avenue

Newton Highlands 02161 Newton Centre 02159 Newton Highlands 02161

Home: 965-5139 Home: 965-3723 Home: 969-1479

WARD 7

Brooke K. Lipsitt Sydra Schnipper R. Lisle Baker

36 Billings Park 273 Ward Street 137 Suffolk Road

Newton 02158 Newton Centre 02159 Chestnut Hill 02167

Home: 965-0107 Home: 965-2331 Home: 566-3848

WARD 8

Vacant due to the death Richard A. Lipof Fay G. Cohen

of Wendell R. Bauckman; 35 Hartman Road 15 Cottonwood Road

Special election to be held Newton Centre 02159 Newton Centre 02159

on **June 3, 1997**. Home: 332-8729 Home: 527-6219

Office: 332-8909 Office: 722-1639

FREE TREE PLANTING FOR NEWTON HOMES

The Parks and Recreation Commissioner, Russell J. Halloran, and the Urban Tree Task Force of the City of Newton, would like to invite you to participate in a program of off-berry tree planting.

Nearby communities have for years provided trees to residential property owners, but the Newton has always planted its shade trees in the street berm (the space between the sidewalk and the street). The Parks and Recreation Department plants about 200 trees each year. A number of these street trees are lost mainly due to the Newton soil area and restricted area for the tree's root system to achieve its full growth capacity in narrow street berms.

We are continuing the off-berry street tree planting program to insure healthier and longer-lived trees. Homeowners may select one or two trees from a list of handsome and hardy tree species. The tree and tree planting will be done at no cost to the homeowner.

If you choose to take part in this program, you will have a chance to consult with Richard Metro, the City's Superintendent of Urban Forestry, and James Broderick, Chairman of the Urban Tree Committee, about your selection of a tree and the location that you would like the tree planted in your front yard, generally within 10 feet of the City's sidewalk area. At no cost to you, an approved landscape contractor will be responsible for the proper installation of your selected balled and burlapped tree, which will be 1 1/2 to 2 inches in caliper and some 12 to 14 feet high depending on tree species. Thereafter, you will be responsible for its care.

Since there is a very high acquiring in this program of free trees, participation is on a first-come, first-served basis. The actual planting will begin in October, depending on the availability and delivery of the trees.

If you are interested in acquiring a free tree in this program, please contact the Newton Parks and Recreation Department, 70 Crescent Street, Newton, MA 02166 by mail or by telephone 552-7120.

Newton Conservators Spring Walks

Saturday, April 26, 10:00 to 3:00 PM

Orchard Park Clean up

This neighborhood park at the corner of Grant and Everett Street belongs to the Newton Conservators, and was the gift of Miss Priscilla Orday. Help be responsible to clean up Winter's toil and litter. Bring gloves and small tools and see the daffodils plant and fall. Call Peter Kastner (332-4015) Conservators board member.

Sunday, May 11, 8:00 AM

Mather's Dove Bird Walk--Nahanton Park

Woodlands, wetlands and meadows take this a wonderful place for spring birding. Meet at the Park's Nature Center, enter the park at the Nahanton St. entrance nearest the river. Parking in the park. Call Paula Chasan (965-2752), Friends of Nahanton Park.

Sunday, May 18, 2:00 PM

Newton Cemetery Walk

Enjoy the wonderful landscaping and specimen trees at Newton's example of 19th century cemetery landscaping. Meet at the administrative building just inside the main entrance on Walnut Street. Call Peter Kastner (244-6094), board member.

Sunday, May 25, 2:00 PM

Bicycle Trip Downstream along the Charles River Pathway

A low energy *tour de force* will head downstream toward the Museum of Science along the Charles River Pathway. Bring snacks for the rest at the Hatch Shell. Helmets are required. Meet at the MDC ice rink on Charlesbank and Nonantum Roads. Adequate parking is available. Call Peter Kastner (244-6094), board member.

Sunday, June 1, 2:00 PM

Edmunds Park

Edmunds park is one of Newton's first parks. Given to the city by the Edmunds family in 1913, this 33-acre park (also know as Cabot Woods) has a wonderful trail system and provides an opportunity for walks, bird watching and nature study. Call Zig Plater (964-4329), past board member.

Sunday, June 8, 2:00 PM

Canoeing On the Charles Above the Falls

Canoe on the Charles River above the Upper Falls damns into an area unknown by most residents within the metropolitan area. Meet at the canoe launch at the end of drive into Nahanton Park off Nahanton Street. Parking near the launch. Call William Hagar (964-2644), board member.

Sunday, June 15, 2:00 PM

Webster Conservation Area