

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members and Friends,

Since our last Newsletter there has been a great deal of activity in regard to our parks and open spaces.

Our Parks and Open Space Symposium took place on November 14, 1996. It was a very well attended and interesting event and has received strong positive reviews. If you missed it, you can read about it in an inside article.

We have been very active with the Board of Aldermen, particularly the Finance and the Zoning & Planning Committees. We are discussing with the Mayor matters concerning the improvement of the management and maintenance of all of Newton's open spaces. We had success in our requests regarding avoiding a communications tower in West Newton Square, and studies are under way to establish codes for future tower applications. We have been told there will have a favorable vote on funds to replace the rotting foot bridge in the Kennard Conservation Area, although this item has been tabled by the Finance Committee several times for unknown reasons. Call your alderman on this one, please.

A major success was encouraging the Board of Aldermen to approve the purchase of the Wabasso St. Property adjacent to the Flowed Meadow area and the City dump. That is a key to improving the entire area and giving access to citizens in the north part of town to what will be a wonderful open space complex. We are working with various departments on the long range overall planning for a major combined combination of park land, conservation land and MDC open space which will run from Commonwealth Avenue to Waltham and from Lexington St. to the Charles River. This will include the Rumford Street dump that is due to be capped this year. The Mayor and the Board of Alderman will be able to leave a marvelous legacy to future Newton generations.

We made grants in December to two schools, and will continue to provide scholarships to the Conservation Summer Environmental Science Program.

Articles on some of the above activities and others are included in this issue so you can follow the activities in detail.

I would like to suggest one very important thing to our members. We know that the City Commissions and Departments and the Board of Aldermen are very sensitive to the desires of the citizens, and they definitely do respond to the voice of constituencies when the voices are loud enough and clear enough. All of us, who love our open spaces and what they give to the quality of life in our city, whether NC member or not, represent a constituency for the parks and open spaces. When you become aware of an issue which you feel is important, by either reading it in the Tab or the Graphic or in our Newsletter or learning about it in any other way, your telephone call or letter to your Alderman or Alderwoman to express your feelings can actually help a lot. Do the same to the Department heads, or to the Mayor. Your calls and letters give support and reinforcement to what we say and try to do. There is no doubt about it: "the squeaky wheel gets the oil". We must be a "squeaky wheel" to help our parks and open spaces and conservation areas get the attention they need.

We can never forget that it is your support which makes our activities possible. Our membership renewal drive for 1997 is doing well. The response shows you approve of what we have been doing. You may be assured we will continue. (If you haven't had an opportunity to renew your membership for 1997, we hope you will soon.)

Sincerely,

Burton Elliott, President

THE 30TH YOUTH ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE SUMMER PROGRAM SET FOR JULY

Since 1967 the Conservation Commission has run a summer program that provides summer outdoor experiences to girls and boys entering the 7th to the 10th grade. Each year the Newton Conservators gives a grant to finance partial tuitions based on need.

To quote their brochure, "ESP is a unique summer experience that couples excitement and adventure with developing an awareness of environmental issues and basic ecology". The program runs from July 1-31, 1997. Following are excerpts from their brochure and information sheet. If you have children of that age, you may want to look into this very interesting program which is both fun and educational. Contact Student Director Jenny Casavant at 969-2618 or Staff Advisor Lea Thomases at 527 2763.

Also, Ms. Thomases is looking for a new advisor to replace her when she leaves the program in two years. If you are interested or know anyone who might be, contact Ms. Thomases at 527-2763.

(Put in here the paragraphs marked on their brochures, 1st A, then B)

ANNUAL MEETING AND DINNER THURSDAY, MAY 29, 1997: SAVE THE DATE

Our annual meeting, dinner and conferring of the "Environmentalist of the Year Award will take place on the evening of Thursday, May 29, 1997.

Both the keynote speaker and the honoree for the Environmentalist of the Year Award have been chosen and will be announced shortly. They are both truly outstanding persons. We also plan and to give recognition to our past Presidents others for their past service to our organization. We believe our program will be a very interesting one.

Details will be provided in our next Newsletter, and special invitations will be sent. We hope you will put the date on your calendar and join us on May 29..

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS FOR BOARD MEMBERS

An important aspect of our Annual Meeting is the election of the members of our Board of Directors and officers. Our officers are chosen from the Board, and we seek new members each year who can bring new energy and new ideas to our efforts and programs. Although many Board members continue to serve for many years (thankfully there is always some attrition for time conflicts or other reasons.. If you know of persons whom you think might be qualified and interested (that might very well include yourself!), please send us a note with the name, address and telephone number as well as your own. It would be helpful if you briefly tell us a little about the person.

Send your nominee information to Nominating Committee, Newton Conservators, Inc., PO Box 11, Newton Centre, MA 02159

FALL WALKS PROGRAM UPDATE

Our 1996 fall walks program consisted of seven walks on seven Sundays from September through November. From the reports from the leaders and feedback from participants it was a very successful season. During each walk, participants have an opportunity to see one of our open spaces or conservation areas in the company of someone who is fully conversant with the area. That way one learns the background and natural attributes of the space in greater depth than if one went alone. The history, flora, fauna and geologic attributes are all discussed, and as many times as ones has visited the area in the past one always has a new understanding of the area after a visit with a leader.

John Bliss, a former NC President, lead the October walk in Edmands Park, also known as Cabot Woods. It is one of Newton's lovely natural spaces, and it has many trails, , different elevations, wetlands, a brook, and an open space. Here are excerpts from John's report.

"The walkers and I set of a few minutes after 2:00 PM, returning about an hour and ten minutes later. People were quite interested in the history of the park and in its current condition. Gene Cronin, a member of the group and a long time member of the NC, provided some historical perspective of the area gathered from his lifetime of living in Newton (~80 years). People were interested in more details of the history of the park, and I referred them to the Newton Library volumes on the park at index numbers 711.558 which are located in the Newton Room of the main library."

The Spring Walk schedule will be published in the next Newsletter. We hope you will be able to take advantage of one or more of them. There is no charge for attending.

KENNARD CONSERVATION AREA

by Joseph P. Richardson

(Put his attached article here, and print the map as well if it is possible)

(follow it with the attached "Kennard Conservation Area Fact Sheet")

(Follow that with the following)

Editor's Note. The 32A Kennard Conservation Area in south Newton is one of our finest open natural spaces. It abuts Brookline's Lost Pond Reservation which is about the same size. It has a foot bridge (a.k.a. the bog bridge) that is a key element of the loop trail around the area.. The bridge has deteriorated to a dangerous point and has been on the verge of being closed for safety reasons. It is beyond repair and must be replaced. The new bridge is in the new Capital Improvement Plan, but was originally turned down by the Finance Committee. We have been working closely with the Committee to encourage them to pass this expenditure, and have recently been told that the bridge replacement will be brought up for a vote again and that the Committee is expected to vote favorably on it. However, for several meetings the Committee tabled it or did not put it on the agenda. Please call your Alderman and encourage favorable and speedy action on this item, because the best time to do the work is before the ground thaws.)

MEMBERSHIP FORM

(In the lower half of the last inside page, please put the membership form- be sure to use the new schedule of membership rates.)

(For the blank half of the outside page, please print the following)

Annual Dinner Meeting Thursday, May 29, 1997

Save the Date

Inside:

Report of our November Symposium,

Report on Hammond and Kennard Parks

Summer Youth Program and More.

GRANT RECEIVED TO STUDY HAMMOND POND POLLUTION

In January, 1997, the Newton Conservation Commission, cosponsored by the Friends of Hammond Pond and the Newton Conservators, Inc., has applied for a grant from the Massachusetts Dept. of Environmental Management for a study of Hammond Pond as an endangered wetland. The pond appears to have a serious pollution problem which is slowly but steadily causing a choking of the water surface.

The project will have incorporate five tasks leading to recommendations for alleviating the problems.

1. Define the surface watershed and storm drainage network.
2. Conduct June to September water quality sampling.
3. Determine trophic state through analysis of data.
4. Assess feasibility of solutions and corrective action.
5. Produce an educational brochure and develop a catchbasin marking program.

The following are the project selection criteria.

(add sheet "A" here)

We commend the Friends of Hammond Park for taking the lead in this grant application. For further information, or to participate or assist, write to Stephanie Bacon, 541 Hammond St., Chestnut Hill, MA 02167.

REVIEW OF THE NOVEMBER 14, 1996 PARKS AND OPEN SPACE SYMPOSIUM

The Drucker Auditorium of the Main Library was filled to overflowing with citizens who wanted to engage the six panelists on issues about our parks and open spaces. We estimate that approximately 175 people attended.

The panelists (alphabetically) were: Douglas Dickson, Chair of the Newton Landscape Task Force; Dan Driscoll, MDC Manager of the Upper Charles River Greenway Project; Susan Glazer, Acting Director of the Newton Planning Dept.; James Mahoney, Chair of the Newton Parks and Recreation Commission; Richard Staley, Chair of the Newton Conservation Commission; and Brian Yates, Chair of the Zoning & Planning Committee of the Newton Aldermen.

During the first hour, each panelist explained the activities for which they were responsible and briefly discussed future projects. During the second hour, questions were raised from the attendees and responses were given by the panelists. Dozens and Dozens of questions were asked and issues raised, and dozens more were submitted in writing to the moderator. Time ran out before many could be addresses.

The following are just a few examples of the questions and suggestions.

Is Newton spending as much on open space as neighboring towns? A study showed that we are not.

It was recommended that a network be established to reach all the city organizations on outstanding issues of open spaces.

What are the restrictions on use of recreation lands? Why do playgrounds and playing fields get much more attention than passive use parks?

Will the city have ordinances concerning restriction on telecommunication towers?

A definition was requested for playgrounds, playing fields, public open spaces, and parks, and the use and limitations on use of each.

Can efficiency and elimination of overlaps be arranged by better coordination of all the departments responsible for public open spaces?

Many questions were asked about the Rumford Street dump and the incinerator..

Details were asked for about the Greenway Project and answers were given. How will it be maintained when finished?

Are there plans to acquire more open spaces?

A vision needs to be developed for the future of all open spaces.

Can long range planning be subcontracted to a professional consultant?

Why are our historic cemeteries rarely maintained?

Will the Commissioners be willing to have public neighborhood meetings when major projects are proposed? Why hasn't the public been more involved?

The Wabasso St. property was mentioned several times.

What is the purpose of the Open Space Plan, and what is the timetable for action if any?

Listing all the questions and answers would more than fill up an entire Newsletter.

There was a general pattern to many of the questions, and it involved inclusion of the public in decision making for neighborhoods, improved maintenance of our parks and open spaces, coordination among departments, and especially a request for long range planning..

The Conservators will address as many of the unanswered questions as possible, and we will continue to work very closely with the city departments on as many issues as possible.. The Symposium brought the concerns of the public very directly and clearly to the Commissioners and Department Heads, and has helped to set our own agenda well into the future. We hope you will see the results in the months and years to come.

The following is a condensation of a letter to Mayor Concannon expresses to him three of the many major issues which will have a very beneficial effect on the future of Newton for all it's citizens if adopted. These suggestions came about as a result of the Symposium.

January 14, 1997

Dear Mayor Concannon:

Over the past several months we have discussed various matters concerning open space and parks. This letter is to define three of them and suggest action to be taken.

The first is the matter of the lands involved in the Wabasso St. property purchase Now that the purchase is complete, We propose that combined, long term planning should be done for the 25 acres known as "Flowed Meadows" which the Department of Public Works intends to release, for the rest of the dump sight, for all adjacent public lands and for the eventual purchase of the other two properties on Wabasso St.

This is a unique opportunity for Newton to create an extensive, comprehensive and marvelous combination of parks, playgrounds, passive recreation areas and natural open space in the northern part of the City. We know that various groups are offering suggestions as to the future of the lands, and public input is good. However, in order to have an appropriate, and controlled evaluation of the entire City-owned properties running from Commonwealth Avenue to Rumford St. and Waltham (including the dump site and possibly the incinerator site), and from Lexington Street to the Charles River, we recommend that an official task force or ad hoc committee reporting to you be established to evaluate the properties and recommend short and long term plans for the entire area. All involved City Departments would, of course, be represented on such a Committee, but private citizens should be included by having individuals and representatives of appropriate organizations included. This is an opportunity for the creation of a superb open space complex as a legacy to future generations of Newton residents.

The second matter concerns an issue raised at our Symposium in November. Many questions were asked about coordinated planning, maintenance and use of the properties supervised by the Parks and Recreation Department, the Conservation Commission, the Planning Department and the Department of Public Works.

A clear consensus evolved that certain matters and planning of all the open space City property would be better served by being under one coordinating individual or group. This could improve efficiency of maintenance, allow for coordinated planning and provide for properly balancing the use of Newton's open spaces between sports, playgrounds, passive recreation and programs. It could eliminate counterproductive, overlapping or competing situations. Once again we recommend an ad hoc committee to evaluate the possibility and recommend changes if found advantageous.

Currently, this matter is being considered by the Landscape Task Force and the Parks and Recreation Department. If their recommendations cover the above matters fully and appropriately and include input and agreement from all departments and citizens as well, we would endorse it without the need for a further committee.

The third issue, and one we believe is essential, is to make the position of Environmental Planner in the Planning and Department of Land use position. In present, the position is for twenty hours (the person is responsible for conservation lands. However, because of time restrictions, only statutory issues are dealt with, and matters of full time planning, inspection, improvement and maintenance (except for minimal) are neglected. Previously, the now neglected work was done by a full time volunteer. While this matter does not call for a committee to resolve it, it does require a small increase in the operating budget. We hope you will investigate this matter: we are sure you will understand the need.

Editor's Note about "Wabasso St.":

We have been encouraging the City for many months to acquire the property adjacent to the Rumford St. dump. We are delighted to report that the purchase has been made and the building was demolished on January 31, 1997

Why is this property important? Alone, it is not. However, it is the key to the much larger project mentioned in the above letter to the Mayor. The City (through its various departments) and the MDC own a major collection of lands in that area. The Wabasso St. purchase now gives the people in the northern part of the city access to this entire property from Rumford St. It's roadway is also a key to access to the river and to two more properties west and south of it when they become available. When the whole property is consolidated and the dump capped, this property can become one of Newton's most beautiful and exciting areas, with parks, wetlands, walking trails, passive recreation, and whatever the imagination can allow. We are working closely with the City to help this come about.