

Newton Conservators Nature Notes
Sunday, November 14, 2004

*** Welcome**

This email newsletter provides information on upcoming nature and environmental related events, exhibits, and information in and around the Newton, Massachusetts area and is sponsored by the Newton Conservators, the local open space organization in Newton. Please visit their website at <http://www.newtonconservators.org>. Welcome to many new readers of this free email newsletter. If you wish to be removed from this email list, simply reply with "remove" in the message or subject.

*** URGENT: Angino Farm Comes to a Vote on Monday**

Angino Farm is the last remaining farm in Newton and the Newton Conservators put forth a proposal before the CPA Committee to save it. The project has been recommended by the CPA Committee and recently passed the aldermanic CPA and Finance Committees. Ultimately it was desired to save the property in its original farm usage.

The full Board of Aldermen will discuss and likely vote on the Angino Farm CPA proposal on Monday evening (November 15, 2004). The item is on second call. It is important to let your aldermen know how you feel on this project – whether for or against it. The Newton Conservators, Newton's open space advocacy group and land trust organization, initiated this project which has been a high priority in the city's open space plan and a project that has always been listed in CPA documents as an example of what could be done with the CPA. The Conservators negotiated with the owners who have already agreed to large price concessions.

As difficult as this may be for some of us to understand, a number of Aldermen are lining up to vote against saving Newton's last farm—Angino Farm. There is still an issue of the price of \$2.5 M being a little more than the value obtained by assessments. There are some aldermen who are not convinced of the viability of the farm operation (under CSA). There are arguments that it's not a good value and CPA monies should be spent elsewhere.

It has been proposed that the money be provided as follows: \$1M upfront from current CPA funds and \$1.5M bonded over 5 years to spread the cost out. There have been a number of large open space related projects in the early years but only because they came to market in that time period. Interestingly, the latest crop of 21 CPA proposals contains only 1 smaller open space project (non-acquisition) for improvements at Flowed Meadow and has a substantial number of housing, historical, and recreation projects.

Here are some reasons why it would be a grave mistake for Newton residents not to seize this opportunity to save the farm:

- The Angino Farm has for years been on the City's *Open Space Plan as a high priority for protection.*
- As the last intact farmstead in Newton—complete with a historic farmhouse and barn, this is the *last chance to save a link to Newton's farming history.*
- A farm group of committed Newton citizens has been formed to organize a community farm at the Angino site. *This group has demonstrated repeatedly that an economically viable and self-sufficient community farm can be operated at the Angino site, despite its small size. Over 75 Newton families have pledged \$500 each to obtain a share of the produce and to support the farm. In addition, we have raised \$95,000 in pledges toward farm start-up costs and building improvements.*

- The community farming operation will *convert an empty field into a vibrant community resource* where Newton residents of all ages will come to enjoy and participate. The farm will run educational programs for Newton school children and a program to help feed people in need.
- *50% of the funding for the purchase of the Angino Farm will be provided by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts*, providing outstanding leverage for Newton Taxpayers.
- *If this purchase is not funded by the Aldermen, the Angino farmhouse and barn will be torn down, and, at minimum, three large single family homes will be spread across this 2.25 acre site* at the high-visibility corner of Winchester and Nahanton Streets.

Over the past few months, hundreds of Newton residents have come forward to express support for saving Angino Farm. Yet despite the tremendous value that this project will provide to Newton residents, there are Newton Aldermen who are not convinced that the benefits that this project will provide are enough to justify the expense and risk. Now is our last chance to urge our elected Aldermen to vote to fund the City purchase of Angino Farm. Please call your Aldermen to urge them to vote in favor of saving Angino farm. The debate and vote will be held at approximately 8:30 PM, tomorrow (Monday) night, and it is important that farm supporters turn out in force to attend the meeting. For more information please contact Newton Conservators board member and farm group coordinator, Jon Regosin, (617) 244-0736, [jon.regosin\(AT\)highstream.net](mailto:jon.regosin(AT)highstream.net).

The vote is likely to be very close and every vote is important. Because the funding is to be bonded under this proposal, 16 votes in favor are required (even if some are absent) unlike the simple majority for most aldermanic votes. If you would like to express your opinion to your aldermen, you can find a list of contact information on the city website at http://www.ci.newton.ma.us/Aldermen/pix/bios_index.htm and click on the link entitled "Contact Information – MS Word" or click on the individual alderman's picture for their particular contact info. It's a good way to get to know the aldermen in your particular ward. You can just leave a message. While this is not a public hearing and no input from the public is solicited, coming to the Aldermanic chambers tomorrow evening for the debate or beforehand to greet your alderman.

You can learn more details about this project at the Conservators website at <http://www.newtonconservators.org/linksfarming.htm> or at the site of the new Farm Group that has formed: <http://www.communityfarm.info/>. Check their website for full information. An excerpt from their website is below: "We are friends and community members who wish to preserve and work on Newton's last standing Farm. The Angino family farm is being offered to a group of concerned citizens who see the value of maintaining and working a community farm located on Nahanton Street. The Angino estate has entered in provisional agreement to work with the City of Newton, the Committee for Community Preservation, and local residents to see that Newton's last farm is preserved as protected productive open space."

Much like the [Stearns Farm](#) in Framingham, MA, they envision a real working farm where community members can work together in [Community Supported Agriculture](#) to grow a self sustaining source of delicious produce in an eco-friendly farm where school groups and the community could participate in educational programs. We have been talking about inviting the community to buy shares where each family could both work on the farm and enjoy its harvest. We like to see a portion of this food going to local shelters and food pantries."

Many other local communities have such local farms many using the so called CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) model of operation where community members buy shares in the farm. One such nearby farm is the Stearns Farm in Framingham at <http://www.stearnsfarmCSA.org>. To learn more about CSA's check out <http://www.stearnsfarmcsa.org/whatiscsa.htm>. The Conservators NewTV series inaugural show concerned itself with the topic of Angino Farm and CSA's. A copy of this show was distributed to all aldermen and several open houses for the aldermen have been held (as recently as earlier this afternoon).

* Some Comments on Angino Farm - Duane Hillis

Duane Hillis, Newton Conservator board member and leader of Friends of Nahanton Park, provided some additional thoughts on the significance of Angino Farm and keeping a farm in Newton.

“Although we currently have only one community housing unit planned at Angino (the proposal had to conform with existing zoning regulations), we sure have everything else! (this farm goes back to the 1600’s with the house quite possibly sitting on the original foundation of Samuel Trusedale’s home (1689). The Historic Commission is looking into dating the foundation (it is much older than the current structure built in the late 1800’s) and the Landmark filing for these buildings is working it’s way through the Massachusetts Historical channels. Angino started as simply an Open Space advocacy, but the Community Farming coalition really made a strong case. They have incredible passion for this concept. It is not only about “farming” i.e. raising crops, flowers, herbs, but it is mostly about the “community”, with a strong desire of parents for their children to have roots in the local soil, to know where their food comes from and what it takes to make it grow, first hand. I We hope to have considerable participation with the many schools in Newton. Solomon Schechter (private), just around the corner on Wells Ave, is one of the first to recognize the advantages to having a hands on “farm” classroom right here in Newton. Many from Newton send their children away in the summer just to participate in farming programs.

Gardening (farming on a personal level) has become increasingly popular: “Increased spending driven by consumers' desire to reconnect with nature: Demographics, an aging population and rising home ownership, is partly behind the increase in garden-related spending, but the real driver for growth is the consumers' passion to reconnect with the natural world. ... As contemporary American culture becomes more "virtual" computerized and electronic, consumers feel a growing need to ground themselves in the real world, a trend which is finding expression in the garden as consumers divide their yards into different "outdoor rooms." They are inviting wildlife, including birds, bats, turtles, frogs and exotic fish, into increasingly elaborate garden getaways where they escape from the modern world and connect with the sounds, smells and sights of nature.” See the full article at http://retailindustry.about.com/library/bl/03q1/bl_um032503.htm. Are people interested in participating in gardening as recreation? “Three down years on Wall Street, a sagging economy and a flimsy job market have Americans running for cover. Many are finding sanctuary in their own backyards.... In 2001, members of 8 in 10 U.S. households (85 million) participated in one or more types of indoor or outdoor lawn and garden activities, the highest level of participation since 1996, according to the National Gardening Association (NGA). This groundswell of interest has also boosted sales in all things green. Between 1996 and 2001, lawn and garden sales were up 68 percent, surging to \$37.7 billion from \$22.5 billion.” - **American Demographics**, March 1, 2003

It is intended that Angino Farm be a very public space with ongoing community support and interaction, as well as a broad range of educational programs for every age and level of interest. As you know we have a large number of people already committed to a share in our CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) and each have pledged \$500 based on *supporting the project* not just on “getting a good deal on some veggies”. Roger Swain said to us at the Cold Spring Farmer’s Market this summer: “everyone should spend \$10 per week at a farmer’s market to support their local agriculture”.

The Community Preservation Act is the best darn bang for a buck anywhere! Not only do the taxpayers have direct participation in the process of how *their* money is spent (they in fact *have* to step up to the plate and make a proposal), and right now the State comes in with another buck! Sweet! Tough to beat that deal and all the money has to be spent on “community” projects ie: open space, community housing, historical preservation and recreation. As the Newton

Taxpayers come to realize the value of this well invested money, I predict that they will not only vote to keep the fund, but increase the %. As Conservators, we are doing our part to try to educate all of Newton to the incredible benefits they already enjoy as a result of CPA funding: Kessler Woods and the Forte addition to Dolan Pond nature preserve. As Conservators we continue to look for opportunities to preserve open space in any way we can. If it is a farm and it costs "market value" then so be it. Once that farm is developed then it will never again be open public space!

*** Charles River Watershed Association 2004 Annual Meeting – Wednesday, Nov. 17, 6:30 pm**

James Fallows, the National Correspondent to the Atlantic Monthly, will be the featured speaker at the Annual Meeting of the Charles River Watershed Association (CRWA). As part of the organization's celebration of 39 years of innovative environmental work. Fallows is known for his insightful reporting on foreign policy and domestic issues. He is the recipient of both the American Book Award for non-fiction, for his book National Defense, and the National Magazine Award for his article on the consequences of victory in Iraq, called "The Fifty-First State?" He is chairman of the board of the New America Foundation, and was chief speechwriter for President Jimmy Carter. The meeting will be on Wednesday, November 17, 2004, 6:30 PM at the Marriott Hotel in Newton. In addition to Fallows' lecture, the meeting will include a buffet, awards, and a brief business meeting. The dinner is \$50 per person, and \$500 for a table of ten. Reservations by November 14th. Call (781)788-007 ext. 231 for more info or visit their website at <http://www.crwa.org>.

*** Open Space Groups in Neighboring Communities**

There are groups in other neighboring towns that also sponsor walks and open space related events. Among these are the Brookline Green Space Alliance, <http://www.bgsa.net/>, Weston Trails and Forest Association, <http://www.westonforesttrail.org/calendar/>, the Wellesley Trails Committee, <http://www.ci.wellesley.ma.us/nrc/trails/walk.htm> and the Waltham Land Trust, <http://www.walthamlandtrust.org/calendar.html>. Please check out their websites for more info to help you get into the local outdoors.

*** About the Newton Conservators**

This email newsletter is sponsored by the Newton Conservators, a local organization that promotes the protection and preservation of natural areas, including parks, park lands, playgrounds, forests and streams, which are open or may be converted to open spaces for the enjoyment and benefit of the people of the City of Newton, Massachusetts for scientific study, education, and recreation. It further aims to disseminate information about these and other environmental matters. A primary goal is to foster the acquisition of land and other facilities to be used for the encouragement of scientific, recreational, educational, literary, and the other public pursuits that will promote good citizenship and the general welfare in the City of Newton. Please visit our website at <http://www.newtonconservators.org> or contact us at 617-969-6222 or the address below.

If you would like to join the Newton Conservators, please send your name, address, phone and email address (if you wish email alerts) to The Newton Conservators, Inc., P.O. Box 590011, Newton Centre, MA 02459. Membership Options are the following: Individual \$25, Family Member \$35, Sustaining Member \$50, Donor \$75, Patron \$100. Membership is tax deductible. Your membership includes the Newton Conservators Newsletter and emails and invitations to participate in guided tours of local conservation areas, lectures, and other programs and activities. You will also receive by mail a copy of the new Newton Conservators open space map book, "Walking Trails in Newton's Park and Conservation Lands".

The Board of Directors of the Newton Conservators meets monthly usually on the third Wednesday of the month at 7:30 pm (usually at City Hall). Members are welcome to attend. If you wish to attend you can contact the us to confirm the date, time, location, and agenda.

*** Walking Trails in Newton's Parks and Conservation Lands**

The map guide put out by the Newton Conservators is a great resource for those who would like to explore Newton's open space. It would make a great stocking stuffer – it fits nicely in a stocking or in a back pocket. Many folks have been observed out in our conservation areas, trail guide in hand. It is available by web, mail and also at Newtonville Books and New England Mobile Book Fair. Walking Trails in Newton's Parks and Conservation Lands may be purchased for \$7.95 online at www.NewtonConservators.org or by mailing a check payable to The Newton Conservators, Inc. to The Newton Conservators, P.O. Box 590011, Newton Center, MA 02459. Sales benefit The Newton Conservators, a nonprofit citizen advocacy organization which actively promotes the acquisition, creation, and preservation of natural open spaces for the people of Newton. Since its formation in the late 1950's, The Newton Conservators has been instrumental in safeguarding more than 200 acres of open space in Newton, creating several major public parks, and enacting ground-breaking environmental ordinances with respect to the protection and preservation of trees, wetlands and clean air, and the conservation of energy.

*** About Newton Conservators Nature Notes**

If you would like to be more directly kept apprised of future nature related events, walks, lectures, and exhibits, you are invited to join the Newton Conservators sponsored "Newton Conservators Nature Notes" email list by sending an email request to dolanpond@aol.com or contacting Ted Kukulinski (617-969-6222). Newton Conservators Nature Notes is automatically sent to members of the Newton Conservators who provide their email addresses as one of their membership benefits. Newton Conservators Nature Notes may be found online at <http://www.newtonconservators.org/naturenotes.htm>. You are welcome to submit any items for this sporadic newsletter via email to the same address. Please feel free to forward our newsletter to others you feel might be interested in the information contained herein.