

ABOUT THE NEWTON CONSERVATORS

The organization's purposes and activities are set forth in our mission statement:

Newton Conservators Inc. 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 Newton 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. In order to accomplish these purposes, the Conservators solicit funds and other gifts as is appropriate to carry out its goals. It is further empowered to use and invest these assets.

Our citizen action organization was formed in 1961, n at a time when Newton was subject to new pressures by developers. Route 128 was 10 years old, and the Mass Pike extension to Boston had just opened, and Newton was seen as perfect for hotels and tall buildings.

Initially, in order to build support, the NC worked on small projects. Obtaining a change in the zoning laws to forbid stripping of loam and sod, and requiring a special permit for grading changing topography by more than three feet. The first major cause came in 1962, with the Marriott Hotel's petition for a spot zone change to permit construction of a large hotel on the banks of the Charles River. The Conservators lobbied successfully to protect the shoreline and set limits on the hotel's size both then and in subsequent years when the Marriott made further demands.

Other achievements include the following:

- 1963, the Conservators were instrumental in getting Newton to adopt a state provision (enacted in 1957) for a Conservation Commission whose commissioners included a number of Conservators.
 - 1971: Ordway Park (1/2 acre in Newton Centre) was willed to the Conservators by Priscilla Ordway, together with \$20,000, the base of our endowment.
- 1974, a group of conservators did the first Open Space Survey of the City.

1971: Dolan Pond Conservation Area

1980: Nahanton Park, which we also helped design

1981: Newton Commonwealth Golf Club

•1981: publish a map of Newton's open spaces, a 25¢ document that introduced many residents to our parks and open spaces

• 1983: Flowed Meadow Conservation area

•2002: with other groups, succeeded in having Newton adopt the Community Preservation Act

• 2003, we published the 56 page *Walking Trails in Newton's Park & Conservation Lands* with the trails and history of each of the 27 public open spaces that had been acquired by that time

More recent accomplishments have been

2003-07: Webster Park Forte property acquired –temporarily held by the Conservators – enlarging the Dolan Pond Conservation Area and providing land for Habitat for Humanity housing.

•2004: acquisition of 25 acres of Kessler Woods

•2005: Newton Angino Community Farm, 2.25 acquired entirely through efforts by the Conservators.

2007 & 2008: two properties acquired, enlarging the City's beachfront on Crystal Lake.

Monitoring of meetings of several aldermanic committees and city commissions: Land Use Committee, Zoning and Planning Committee, Zoning Board of Appeals, Conservation Commission, Parks and Recreation Commission, and Community Preservation Commission has been essential to achieving our goals. In sum we have been instrumental in preserving over 350 acres of open space and creating several major parks for public enjoyment. Equally important, we have helped to defeat land use and zoning proposals that ran counter to our goals, and to modify others, often aiding neighborhood groups. In short, the Conservators and the Newton League of Women Voters are the two organizations in Newton that serve as watchdogs for the general interest to whom the aldermen listen with respect.

Other activities, open to the public, undertaken over the years:

• Occasional forums on land use

• Ongoing: Spring and fall guided walks

• Ongoing fall and spring lectures.