



## Newton Conservators E-Bulletin

Thursday, November 21, 2019

... Newton's land trust working to preserve open space since 1961



Photo of Webster Woods by John Chadis (c) 2019

## November

Dear Members and Friends,

Thanksgiving is just around the corner and as always we are very thankful for your continued support. Your membership helps sustain our free walks, lectures, open space monitoring, invasives removal, advocacy, and more. We hope you will renew your annual membership or consider newly joining for the coming year. Our annual membership renewal letter will be coming soon.

Webster Woods is the hot topic this month and, having passed the Community Preservation Committee, it will be going before the **City Council in the days ahead (Monday, November 25 and Monday, December 2)**. Read below for the most recent developments and check our website for loads of background information! Our next Newton Conservators Newsletter (in final preparation) is devoted to Webster Woods as well.

See below our Events listing including upcoming public meetings on Webster Woods, and other open space related events such as a lecture on Cold Spring Park and the Annual Newton Christmas Bird Count! Also check out a recent [podcast](#) on Monarch Butterflies and Milkweed! **Of special note, the community meetings for NewCAL scheduled for this evening, November 21, and next month on December 12 have been cancelled pending rescheduling in January.**

Happy Thanksgiving! A good way to burn some calories after dinner would be to take a walk in one of our great parks or conservation areas - maybe even head over to Webster Woods!

**Ted Kuklinski**  
President, Newton Conservators

## Webster Woods Update

The last several months have certainly been memorable for Webster Woods advocates! Here we details some additional information on the latest developments:

### History and Background

History buffs will appreciate a very interesting and complete take on the Webster Woods property and its history from none other than its namesake, **Edwin Webster** (1867-1950). A mysterious letter from Mr. Webster was recently discovered and can surprisingly can be viewed at <https://newtonconservators.org/webster-letter/>. This is a very engaging "must read" for historical context! A handy collection of links to original articles and documents related to Webster Woods over the years can be found at <https://newtonconservators.org/webster-conservation-area-articles-and-documents/>.



On October 7th, Newton Mayor Ruthanne Fuller through the Newton Conservation Commission filed a proposal with the Newton Community Preservation Committee (CPC) to authorize the issuance of \$15.2 million in bonds for the purchase of 17.4 acres of land in Webster Woods. Read about it at <https://newtonconservators.org/webster-cpc-proposal/>. The actual proposal can be found on the city website

at <http://www.newtonma.gov/gov/planning/cpa/projects/webster.asp#2019-acquisition>.

### Public Hearing before the CPC

On Wednesday, November 6, the public hearing before the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) took place in the City Council chamber before a packed audience, with many supporters holding "Save Webster Woods" signs or or wearing spotted salamander buttons.

Most of numerous speakers spoke passionately in favor of the city's acquisition of Webster Woods including two eloquent students from BC environmental groups. Thomas J. Keady Jr, VP of Governmental and Community Affairs at Boston College, not surprisingly called for the Committee Preservation Committee to not fund the acquisition.

Newton photographer John Chadis gave his public hearing testimony in the form of large prints of photos he had taken in Webster Woods. Check them these beautiful pictures out at <https://newtonconservators.org/chadis-webster-woods/>.

BU Professor Richard Primack noted the scientific value of Webster Woods at the hearing and in a recent Newton Tab article: <https://newton.wickedlocal.com/news/20191108/newtons-webster-woods-living-laboratory>

Here are some links to press coverage of the public hearing:

- BC Heights -- <https://bcheights.com/2019/11/07/public-hearing-held-in-newton-for-webster-woods-acquisition/>
- Newton Tab -- <https://newton.wickedlocal.com/news/20191111/newton-takes-steps-on-funding-to-acquire-webster-woods-by-eminent-domain>
- Boston Globe -- <https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/globelocal/2019/11/11/newton-residents-pack-public-hearing-webster-woods/zFwBvfrllbMXeWFJPl99NP/story.html>

## CPC Deliberation on Webster Woods Proposal

On Tuesday, November 12, the CPC deliberated on Webster Woods in a packed room at City Hall. This meeting almost did not happen - BC had filed for an injunction that would have prevented the meeting from taking place (alleging violation by the CPC of the Open Meeting Law) but it was denied by a judge and the meeting was held. And in the related injunction document was the indication that "The University has plans in progress and anticipates future development of the entire HPP Property." Note that HPP refers to the entire Hammond Pond Parkway parcel.

At the CPC meeting, after some clarifications and discussion, the matter finally came to vote on three components of the Webster Woods proposal - the funds for the property itself, funds for monitoring the Conservation Restriction, and funds for legal expenses. The good news is that the CPC voted in favor on all three motions, recommending the expenditure of \$15.7 million from the Community Preservation Fund to acquire from Boston College 17 acres of Webster Woods, as proposed by Mayor Ruthanne Fuller in October.

The final recommendation from the CPC to the City Council is worth a read and can be found online at <http://www.newtonma.gov/civicax/filebank/documents/99951>.

It includes an interesting map showing support for Webster Woods (to a petition) across the city and NOT just in the immediate vicinity of Webster Woods!

The Newton Conservators' announcement on the meeting is at:  
<https://newtonconservators.org/cpc-recommends-webster-woods-funding/>

For those who are wondering about the cost of the Webster Woods acquisition over time, Dan Brody, member of the Newton Conservators Board, has prepared an analysis showing that this purchase will still leave 90% or more of CPA funds available for other purposes.  
<https://newtonconservators.org/webster-woods-can-the-city-afford-it/>

Here are links to recent press on the CPC result:

- BC Heights -- <https://bcheights.com/2019/11/13/preservation-committee-passes-webster-woods-acquisition-city-council-vote-soon/>
- Newton TAB -- <https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/newton/2019/11/12/proposal-take-webster-woods-backed-community-preservation-committee/5AkHaUnz4omBhIOY6xT2mO/story.html>

## Webster Woods Moves on to City Council

Next it will be passed on to the City Council "Committee of the Whole" on Monday, November 25 in Council Chambers at 7 pm. If successful there, the matter will be passed on for a possible full City Council vote Monday, Dec 2.

Most current City Councilors have weighed in on Webster Woods in a candidate questionnaire before the recent City Council elections (<https://newtonconservators.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/2019-Candidate-Responses.pdf>) However, BC will be also likely be trying to sway councilors against acquisition leading up to the committee and council votes.

## Recent Developments

In the Boston Globe online we find: "As Newton mayor pushes land taking, Boston College urges residents to oppose it", [https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/newton/2019/11/19/newton-mayor-pushes-land-taking-boston-college-urges-residents-oppose/EnjgSE1xHyY2daQWkb5OjJ/story.html?s\\_campaign=newtonreport:newsletter](https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/newton/2019/11/19/newton-mayor-pushes-land-taking-boston-college-urges-residents-oppose/EnjgSE1xHyY2daQWkb5OjJ/story.html?s_campaign=newtonreport:newsletter)

Perhaps you also saw the one of the headlines in the most recent Newton Tab, "Mayor disputes claims by BC " <https://newton.wickedlocal.com/news/20191114/newtons-mayor-fuller-rebuts-bc-claims-about-webster-woods-land-taking>

In Mayor Fuller's recent city update she reports:

*The City Council will consider all aspects of the Webster Woods acquisition at a "Committee of the Whole" meeting on Monday, Dec. 2, paving the way for a final vote by the end of the year.*

*I am convinced that preserving the 17.4 acres of undeveloped forest off Hammond Pond Parkway at Webster Woods is in the best interest of Newton. Eminent domain is a serious decision. I made this decision only after months of talks during which Boston College made clear that they would not commit to the permanent preservation of the woods. In a recent legal document, Boston College confirmed this, writing, "The University has plans in progress and anticipates future development of the entire HPP [Hammond Pond Parkway] Property." We need to act to preserve the open space for generations to come.*

*Newton's Community Preservation Committee last week voted to use Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds to pay for the bond payments over 30 years to acquire the land at a cost of \$15.2 million, plus legal costs. Even with this substantial investment, funds remain available for the other important initiatives - additional land preservation and recreation needs, affordable housing, and historic preservation.*

Mayor Fuller answers some possible questions you may have in this recent update:

<http://www.newtonma.gov/civicax/filebank/documents/100012>

## Boston College Letter

You may have been in one of the many households in Newton which recently received a "Dear Neighbor" letter from Boston College's Thomas J. Keady Jr, Vice President, Governmental and Community Affairs ( [keady@bc.edu](mailto:keady@bc.edu)), giving BC's perspective on the Webster Woods acquisition. Or, you may have gotten a "polling" phone calls on behalf of BC, or an earlier letter sent to BC alumni, students, or employees. For those who may not have seen it, here is the letter itself:





## BOSTON COLLEGE

OFFICE OF GOVERNMENTAL AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

November 11, 2019

Dear Neighbor,

I write to you today in my role as Vice President for Governmental and Community Affairs at Boston College to raise concerns regarding the City of Newton's plans to seize by eminent domain 17 acres of BC's property at 300 Hammond Pond Parkway.

The Newton Community Preservation Committee has \$14 million in a fund for affordable housing, historic resources, open space, and recreation land, currently with at least 28 projects vying for funding. All of those projects—from affordable housing and public parks/playgrounds to historic preservation—would lose out if the Mayor and City Council proceed to direct the entire fund to pay for Boston College's land. The City also has additional urgent priorities to address that require funding, including schools in need of substantial upgrades, teacher salaries, fire stations, and the unfunded pension liabilities for municipal workers.

The City of Newton could have purchased the 300 Hammond Pond Parkway property during the 2014-2015 period, but declined. The City of Newton has appraised the value of the 17-acre parcel at \$15.2 million, but the current value of the property is likely far in excess of the amount budgeted by the City. If the City proceeds to take the land by eminent domain, the difference between Newton's appraisal and the award determined by the courts will be absorbed by Newton taxpayers. To give some land cost perspective, two years ago Hebrew College sold 7 acres for \$18 million and this fall, Newbury College's 8-acre campus sold for \$34 million.

Boston College has been a good neighbor and an engaged member of this community since 1913. Newton taxpayers deserve better than to be subjected to an ill-advised and expensive eminent domain proposal.

If you agree, please contact your Newton City Councilor at [citycouncil@newtonma.gov](mailto:citycouncil@newtonma.gov) or by calling 617-796-1210, and Mayor Ruthanne Fuller at [rfuller@newtonma.gov](mailto:rfuller@newtonma.gov) or 617-796-1000.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Keady, Jr.  
Vice President, Governmental and Community Affairs  
Boston College

HOPKINS HOUSE, 116 COLLEGE ROAD, CHESTNUT HILL, MA 02467  
TEL: 617-552-4787 FAX: 617-552-8659



It is a bit disappointing to have received this letter from our neighboring stellar institution of higher learning since a number of points in the letter show apparent misunderstanding by BC of the CPA and how funds are budgeted in Newton.

It is implied that the entire roughly \$14M current CPA fund would be allocated to Webster Woods this year to the detriment of other housing, historic, recreation, and open space projects. It ignores the fact that there are guaranteed allocations to other uses and that this expenditure is bonded over multiple years as has been done in the past for CPA projects such as Angino Farm.

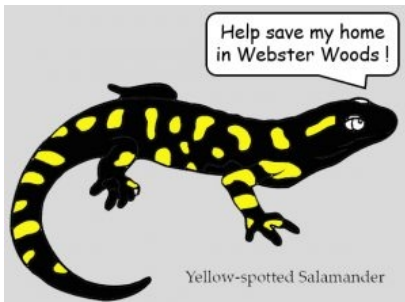
The letter also implies that Newton's other priorities, such as schools, teacher salaries, fire stations, and unfunded pension liabilities would be affected, although these monies come from a

different source and are unaffected by CPA expenditures.

It is claimed that the City could have purchased the property previously, and perhaps it would have been if the City Council had actually been made aware of the offer by the temple rather than to just the previous mayor. The Board of Aldermen had expressed strong support for the acquisition at that time.

The city's valuation of the property was determined independently for the back portion of the property which has certain deed restrictions on usage and includes wetland restrictions - which makes comparison to higher valuations of other properties cited as something of a misleading "apples to oranges" situation.

## What You Can Do



Thanks for all the support for Webster Woods you have shown by survey participation, and letters, emails, and personal discussions with CPC and City Council members. For a quick summary of what you can do now visit: <https://newtonconservators.org/save-webster-woods-what-you-can-do/>

Because of the upcoming consideration by City Council, communication with city councilors is of most importance. Many councilors have weighed in favor of the acquisition

before the recent election in our questionnaire: <https://newtonconservators.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/2019-Candidate-Responses.pdf>. Call or write to City Councilors - contact info is available at <http://www.newtonma.gov/gov/aldermen/boalisting/default.asp>. Emailing to [citycouncil@newtonma.gov](mailto:citycouncil@newtonma.gov) is an easy way to communicate with the entire council!

BC students from [BC EcoPledge and Climate Justice](#) who spoke at the CPC hearing have been circulating a petition within BC in support of saving Webster Woods and have just contacted everyone who has signed so far asking them to email the City Council in support of the woods and to protest BC's plans to develop them. If you know anyone in the BC community--alum, faculty, staff--please forward on this petition: <https://forms.gle/Ur73xiugs3ZM9KgU8> and perhaps encourage communicating their support for saving Webster Woods directly to BC.



There are still yard signs, buttons, and car magnets available from the Friends of Webster Woods (<https://www.facebook.com/fowwnewton/>)! "Save Webster Woods" signs are usually available outside at 180 Elgin St, Newton Centre and some are on the front porch at 24 Henshaw Terrace in West Newton. Look for the "Save Webster Woods" yard sign.

Stay up to date on all the latest information on our website at [www.newtonconservators.org](http://www.newtonconservators.org).

## Upcoming Events

**Thursday, November 21, 7 pm - CANCELED!**

**Thursday, December 12, 7 pm - CANCELED!**

**NewCAL Community Meeting**

**Newton Education Center Room 111, 100 Walnut Street**

**<https://newtonconservators.org/events/newcal-community-meeting-4/>**

The note below has been posted on the project website: "Please note that we have decided to postpone the NewCAL community meeting scheduled for this Thursday, November 21, as well as the meeting scheduled for Thursday, December 12. We will let you know the date and time of the January meeting as soon as it is scheduled. This is a particularly busy time of year for all of us. We want to put our heads together and come back to the community with some thoughts about the process, communication, site possibilities and challenges related to NewCAL in general and the Newton Centre Triangle parking lot in particular. We look forward to listening and collaborating with members of the community as we move toward finding the best location for NewCAL. Thank you!" If you are interested in seeing videos of recent meetings, please visit:

<https://newcal.projects.nv5.com/>



**Monday, November 25, 6:30 pm**  
**Webster Woods - City Council Committee Meeting**  
**Newton City Hall - Room 205 OR Council Chamber (TBD)**



The City Council will be meeting as a "Committee of the Whole" to discuss the recommendation of the Community Preservation Committee to acquire Webster Woods. This is in lieu of separate committee meetings which would normally be the case with CPA project consideration. Public comments would not be made at this session but showing of support by emails or letters ahead of time, or attendance at the actual meeting are encouraged.

**Monday, November 25, 7 pm**  
**Cold Spring Park: A Green Oasis in the Heart of Newton**  
**Newton Free Library**

This event will feature two experts discussing Cold Spring Park. Alan Noguee will talk about the many faces of the park— a 67-acre green oasis in the heart of Newton, with a great diversity of habitats and ecosystems. He will discuss its history and problems, and describe how the Friends of Cold Spring Park is addressing them.

Eric Olson will talk about the ecology of one of the most fascinating habitats in Cold Spring Park, the red maple swamp. Few people in Newton are aware of the extent of this habitat, and fewer still of the efforts underway to rescue it from an aggressive invader, the glossy buckthorn shrub.



Alan is a career environmental advocate, having worked for 40 years to clean up our energy systems. He spent 17 years with the Union of Concerned Scientists, most recently as Director of Climate and Energy Strategy and Policy. He established the Friends of Cold Spring Park to help preserve, protect, and improve it.

Eric Olson is an ecologist at Brandeis University, where he teaches field biology among other environmental courses. His habitat restoration successes include the conversion of a mowed campus hillside into a wildflower meadow that is in regular use by Brandeis biology classes. He has been a frequent leader and participant with Newton Conservators' invasive plant pulls. The event is organized by Green Newton and cosponsored by the Newton Conservators. More information: <https://www.greennewton.org/event/cold-spring-park-a-green-oasis-in-the-heart-of-newton-talk/>

**Monday, December 2, 7 pm**  
**City Council Consideration of Webster Woods**  
**Newton City Hall - Council Chamber**



If the City Council Committees recommend Webster Woods on November 25, it is possible that City Council would vote on acquiring Webster Woods at this session of City Council. It would require a 2/3 majority of the Council (16 out of 24 Councilors would have to approve. Watch for further notice as the date draws closer. Showing of support by emails or letters ahead of time, or attendance at the actual meeting is encouraged.

**Sunday, December 15, 7 am (5 am for Owling)**

**Annual Newton Christmas Bird Count (CBC)**

**Meet at 1 Raeburn Terrace, Newton Highlands**

<https://newtonconservators.org/events/join-the-audubon-christmas-bird-count-2/>



This year's annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC) in Newton takes place on the Ides of December starting around 7 am. After all, the early birder gets the birds counted! This is the 120th year of the CBC and helps to measure changes in population of our avian species (and perhaps more global trends such as climate change). Perhaps you have heard that North America has lost more than 1 in 4 birds in the last 50 years. How do we know? Partially from the annual Christmas Bird Count! See

<https://www.audubon.org/news/north-america-has-lost-more-1-4-birds-last-50-years-new-study-says>

In Newton, birders will meet at 7 am at 1 Raeburn Terrace in Newton Highlands (Raeburn is off Hillside which is off Walnut). Owlers (the real early birds) usually meet at the same location at 5 am. The group usually hits a few good spots and tries to call in the owls. At 7 am, groups will be formed to go off to various open spaces throughout the city to count all the birds that they see. The most common question of course is "how do you know you don't count the same bird twice?" Well you can't know for certain but we try our best! Beginners are welcome to accompany some of the more experienced birders (bring binoculars and dress warmly).

Most of the counting is done in the morning. You are welcome to join the counting even for a short time if you like. Tallies are made by afternoon and consolidated with tallies from other areas within a 15 mile Greater Boston count circle. Your questions about the count can probably be answered at <http://www.audubon.org/conservation/join-christmas-bird-> If you are interested in joining the count this year, please email Pete Gilmore([petegilmore79@gmail.com](mailto:petegilmore79@gmail.com)).

## Podcast on Monarch Butterflies

Monarch butterflies contribute to the health of our planet - they are some of the great pollinators. However these amazing creatures face many difficult situations, whether due to the excessive use of pesticides or the effects of climate change among others. They rely on the availability of milkweed, but the reality is that there is a lack of suitable milkweed for their egg-laying and as a caterpillar food source.



Perhaps you attended one of our Monarch Workshops in the spring or fall or read the [article](#) in our newsletter on raising Monarch Butterflies yourself. Recently, your editor had the pleasure of being interviewed for a podcast produced by Newton resident JC Giraldo for Episode 10 of his Circular Podcast series ( [www.circularpodcast.org](http://www.circularpodcast.org)) on environmental issues. This November episode is entitled **The Real Monarchy : Monarch Butterflies and Milkweed** (<https://circularpodcast.org/2019/11/07/ep-10-the-real-monarchy-monarch-butterflies-and-milkweed/>). Give a listen and watch out for more local Monarch Workshops next season! JC will be following up with additional podcasts based on other nature related interviews right here in



Newton!

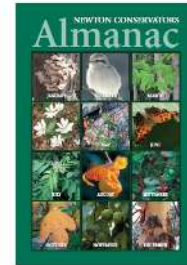
If you are interested in attracting Monarchs, a key step is planting milkweed. If you would like some free Common Milkweed seeds and are in the West Newton vicinity, stop by 24 Henshaw Terrace and feel free to grab a ripe milkweed pod from the stalks next to the sidewalk. One pod contains a large supply of seeds which are easily separated from the white fluff that makes them airborne. These particular pods have mostly been wrapped with a small rubber band to prevent the seeds from flying away. Find information on planting at <https://www.americanmeadows.com/perennials/milkweed/how-to-grow-milkweed> or many other sources on Google.

## Membership & Publications!



Did you know that you can Join the Newton Conservators online. And consider a gift membership for a conservation-minded friend. New members get a trail guide as well!

Visit <https://newtonconservators.org/membership/> for details on membership options. Did you know that you can register and pay for membership, events, buy a copy of our Almanac or newly revised Trail Guide, or make a donation to the Newton Conservators online? The Trail Guides and Almanac are also available at your local Newton Bookstores. Shop Local! **Our Trail Guide and**



**Almanac make great holiday gifts!**

**Mission:** *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.*



## RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP OR JOIN TODAY!

YES, count me in! I want to be a nature steward and help Newton Conservators protect and preserve the natural areas in our community.

Please renew/accept my tax-deductible membership at the level checked below:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Directors' Circle <b>*NEW!</b> | <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Family Membership          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$125 Patron                         | <input type="checkbox"/> \$35 Individual Membership      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Donor                          | <input type="checkbox"/> \$15 Student Membership         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$75 Sustaining Member               | <input type="checkbox"/> Additional Contribution \$_____ |

Want to make an even bigger impact?  
Help us support these conservation areas:

Woodcock Meadow \$\_\_\_\_\_  
Ordway Endowment Fund \$\_\_\_\_\_  
Land Stewardship Areas (Dexter Rd., Bracebridge Rd.)  
\$\_\_\_\_\_

\*Contributors at this level receive a copy of the Newton Conservators Almanac. All new members receive Walking Trails in Newton's Parks and Conservation Lands.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I would like to volunteer!  
Please email me.

Please make checks payable to Newton Conservators, Inc. and send to P.O. Box 590011, Newton Centre, MA 02459, or visit [NewtonConservators.org/membership.htm](https://NewtonConservators.org/membership.htm) to renew/join online. Consider including Newton Conservators in your estate planning. Contact us at [president@NewtonConservators.org](mailto:president@NewtonConservators.org).

- E-Bulletin Editor Ted Kuklinski, Newton Conservators ([ebulletin@newtonconservators.org](mailto:ebulletin@newtonconservators.org))

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US

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