

Annual Meeting

After months of pandemic cocooning, the Newton Conservators emerged to talk all about caterpillars and moths at their 59th Annual Meeting.

Originally scheduled for May 6 at American Legion Post 440, the dinner-free gathering was held virtually on October 21. But while the dinner was gone, “free” also meant more as the Conservators threw open the virtual doors and invited the general public in to enjoy the festivities.

Featured was Newton’s own caterpillar expert, Sam Jaffe. Jaffe, Director of The Caterpillar Lab, presented “Caterpillars: The Whole Story.” The multimedia presentation used photos and a live microscope to explore butterflies, moths, plants, parasitoids, and the many caterpillars positioned at the center of it all (see Sam Jaffe’s article “Arriving at the Whole Story” above).

As is traditional at the annual dinner meeting, the Conservators made awards in three categories to people or groups who have advanced the cause of open space conservation in Newton.

Directors’ Awards are given each year to individuals or groups who have made a significant contribution to the preservation of open space in Newton. This year the Conservators honored three city employees who, as Conservators’ President Ted Kuklinski observed, are more than employees. “I consider them friends, and friends of open space.”

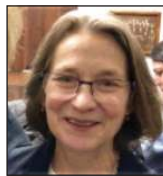


Bob DeRubeis: In the course of 32 years, DeRubeis, the recently retired Newton Parks, Recreation and Culture Commissioner, worked for five Newton mayors. The Conservators recognized DeRubeis, “In gratitude for his many decades of stewardship to our Garden City parkland in his

leadership roles with the Newton Parks and Recreation Department.”



Alice Ingerson: Long-time Community Preservation Committee Program Manager Ingerson notably oversaw the proposed use of CPA funds to assist in the acquisition of Webster Woods. The Award comes “In gratitude for her role in shepherding so many of our open space related Community Preservation Act projects through the government process.”



Ouida Young: As City Solicitor, now retired, Young served on the Webster Woods Advisory Panel for Newton’s most significant open space acquisition in a decade. The Conservators acknowledged her “In gratitude for her role in clearing the legal hurdles for open space projects over decades as Solicitor in the Newton Law Department.”



The Charles Johnson Maynard Award is given each year to recognize efforts “to improve biodiversity, habitat reclamation, and natural resource protection.” Charles Johnson Maynard was a well-known naturalist, ornithologist, author, and publisher who was born and lived in Newton from 1845 until his death in 1929. The 2020 award was presented to **Alan Nogee**, the Founder of Friends of Cold Spring Park.

Nogee, a long-time Newton resident, has had a 40-year career working to clean up our energy system. He spent 17 years with the Union of Concerned Scientists, as the Clean Energy Program Director and Director of Climate & Energy Strategy & Policy. He drafted the original Massachusetts Renewable Portfolio Standard Bill and led

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the environmental and consumer coalition that won its passage in 1997. The Conservators singled out Nogee “For his leadership and tireless efforts to establish and lead the Friends of Cold Spring Park, raising public awareness and support to protect and enhance this large, diverse, and beloved open green space.”



The Webster Woods Team

Row 1: Rory Altman, Councilor Lisle Baker, Peter Barrer, Suzanne Berne, Dan Brody

Row 2: Kathy Cade, Suzanne Carleo, Mayor Ruthanne Fuller, Alissa Giuliani, Jeff Goldman

Row 3: Barney Heath, Ken Kimmel, Rebecca Mayne, Eric Olson, Richard Primack

Row 4: Steve Small, Jennifer Steel, Beth Wilkinson, Jonathan Yeo, Onida Young

Environmentalists of the Year:

The Environmentalist of the Year Award, first presented in 1981, goes to the individual or group that has made the greatest contribution to the protection of Newton’s environment. Through incredible teamwork that started in earnest in the summer of 2015, the Conservators noted, Webster Woods officially was saved as city-owned open space in perpetuity in December 2019. That

significant accomplishment, which will be enjoyed by many generations of people to come (and the plants and creatures that live in the woods), was accomplished through a combination of political skill, legal expertise, political acumen, financial and land-use analysis, the ability to communicate scientific knowledge in a clear and engaging way, and just plain hard work by many. The Conservators note with pride that then-president Beth Wilkinson chaired the Webster Woods Advisory Panel, and two other board members and three advisers served on it.

It’s not every year that the Mayor takes the microphone at Annual Meeting, but Mayor Ruthanne Fuller “Zoomed” in to accept the award on behalf of all those awarded Environmentalist of the Year.

“There’s something stunning about the word ‘perpetuity,’ the Mayor reflected.” Because of this large group of people, I think all of us should feel really good that in perpetuity Webster Woods is going to be there for all of us to have for generations and generations and generations of Newtonians”

The Conservators also paused to take sad note of the deaths of two former Directors. The world was a different place on February 15 when Deborah Voss Howard lost her battle with Alzheimer’s disease. A former state deputy undersecretary for environmental affairs, Deb served the Conservators as both a director and an advisor. She also sat on the board of the Massachusetts Audubon Society and served on the Newton Conservation Commission and the Urban Tree Commission. In 2011 Deb and her husband Frank received a Directors’ Award for their lifetime of service to the Conservators, to conservation and to Newton.

On June 30 former Board member Octo Barnett passed away after a long illness. Octo, a pioneer in medical informatics, and his wife, Sarah, were early active members of the Conservators and were enthusiastic attendees at our annual meetings. Octo’s activity, while he was on the board of directors during 2009-13, focused on the Webster Conservation Area. The Conservators remain mindful of Octo’s insistence on the need to maintain conservation restrictions on City properties.

Next year’s Annual Dinner Meeting — our 60th! — now is scheduled for Wednesday, May 5, 2021, at American Legion Post 440. On that date we plan to celebrate this year’s award recipients in person. Possibly with real caterpillars and butterflies! ♦

✿ Margaret Doris

🌿 Duane Hillis 🌿



We are sad to report that our former board member, Duane Hillis, passed away on November 3. Duane was President of the Friends of Nahanton Park for 30 years and received our Environmentalist of the Year Award in 2016 as part of the Woodcock Meadow team. He had received the same award in 2006 for his instrumental work on the CPA acquisition of Angino Farm (now Newton Community Farm). He was also the force behind our video open-space advocacy with the Environmental Show on NewTV, where he produced our first episode on “Saving Newton’s Last Farm.” Duane was truly a force both of and for nature and a conservator in the truest sense of the word.