

# Newton Conservators' 60th Anniversary Annual Meeting – October 27, 2021



Ted Kuklinski provided a summary of organization's activity over the past year, reporting on the change in leadership, the grants program, the efforts on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ), and on our recent awards given out the previous month. He also provided updates of our land management, conservation restrictions, invasive removal, and land stewardship endeavors. Our public outreach continues through our recently modernized website, our walks and webinars series, the newsletter, e-bulletins, and social media. We also have vibrant liaisons with friends' groups, the Riverside Greenway project, the Pollinator Working Group, and the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition.

Despite our best intentions of having a traditional annual dinner meeting since early 2020, making reservations at American Legion Post 440 and arranging a caterer for a delicious dinner, we have had to cancel in-person plans four times already due to the dogged persistence of Covid 19.

Last year, thanks to our webinar experience, we managed to have our first ever virtual annual meeting and election all via Zoom — including an awards announcement and an inspiring talk by Newton native Sam Jaffe remotely from the Caterpillar Lab in New Hampshire. After the optimism early this summer, when things were looking up, the dreaded Delta variant put us all in a Covid-induced funk once again. Our plans for a big in-person 60th Anniversary Celebration this Fall were again put on hold. We persisted this year, and once again we held our annual meeting virtually on Wednesday, October 27.

Outgoing president Ted Kuklinski welcomed the participants and voiced the acknowledgment that we are on the ancestral land of the Massachusett and Pawtucket tribes. Ted also noted the organization's gratitude to the sponsors for the annual meeting program over the years. Newton Girl Scout Troop 3451, which provided table centerpieces in years past for our dinner meetings, surprised us with a video of the construction of a virtual centerpiece for our meeting.

The treasurer's and audit committee reports on 2020 were sent in advance to meeting registrants and are available on our website ("About Us/Board of Directors"). Special thanks were given to the committee members and especially to treasurer Katherine Howard. The organization's assets increased in 2020 due to strong donations and growth in the investment value, and membership increased as well as more folks discovered the value of our outdoor spaces and attended some of our free programs.



Nominating committee chair, Pete Gilmore, presented the slate of officers and directors. The slate was elected unanimously with one abstention. Taking over the reins as co-presidents were two experienced Conservators, last year's VP, Chris Hepburn, along with Bill Hagar (a former president). Alice Ingerson, a new board member this past year, assumed the vice presidency



while Katherine Howard and Mike Clarke continue as treasurer and secretary respectively. New to our board this year

was Samantha Corbin. AnnaMaria Abernathy and Diane Tillotson joined our Advisory Board this year.



Mayor Ruthanne Fuller, one of the recipients of our most recent Environmentalist of the Year Award, remarked on the contributions the Newton Conservators has made over the last six decades, particularly focusing on the recent acquisition of Webster Woods.



The board of directors of Newton Conservators bestowed its first ever Lifetime Achievement Award upon AnnaMaria Abernathy for her decades of invaluable work in preserving and maintaining open space in Newton. AnnaMaria was a member of the board from the late 1960s through 2021, President from 1984 to 1986, and served as secretary from 2003 through 2020, and received our Environmentalist of the Year Award in 1993.

During her first two decades on the board, AnnaMaria was instrumental in preserving 13 acres of what had been the historic Norumbega Park, now the Norumbega Park Conservation Area in Auburndale. Everyone who enjoys our parks and conservation areas across Newton owes a debt of gratitude to AnnaMaria for her work to preserve them.

Various longtime members of the Conservators recounted episodes in the organization's history with which they were most familiar in "A 60 Year Retrospective," beginning appropriately with AnnaMaria Abernathy. She reviewed the time when booming development and institutional expansion caused a group of people concerned for the city's remaining parks and wildlife habitats to form the Newton Conservators in 1961 to preserve open space. She noted that she was fortunate to learn from other women of that time such as Helen Heyn, Thelma Fleischman, and Jean Husher. In later years, she cited the importance of leaders such as Sarah Barnett, John Bliss, Bart Hague, Peter Kastner, and Lisle Baker.



*Environmental Science Program*

She commented on the early successes of the Conservators including Norumbega Park and part of the Webster Conservation Area, and remarked on the establishment of Ordway Park, the Conservators role in the creation of the conservation areas at Kennard, Houghton Garden, Dolan

Pond, and Sawmill Brook, as well as the establishment of the Environmental Science Program (ESP).



David Backer related the later history of the ESP noting that the Conservators played a major role in keeping this summer program running for over 50 years — developing the next generation of environmentalists. He shared an engaging video where participants in the program related how important the ESP was in their lives.



Judy Hepburn described the evolution of our popular trail guide publication from its inception in 1981 to the current spiral bound version produced by Judy, Pat Robinson, and Lucy Stair, complete with info on each parcel along with well thought-out maps showing trails and other features.

Mike Clarke provided some of the history of the Conservators in the

1980s and 1990s when Flowed Meadow and Nahanton Park were established, and a grants program started. Mike introduced the Conservators'



role in passing the Community Preservation Act (CPA) that enabled the city to purchase land adjacent to the Dolan Pond Conservation Area and partner with Habitat for Humanity and the Newton Housing Authority to create several units of affordable housing. Mike noted that during Beth Schroeder's tenure we published our beautiful and useful Almanac.



Doug Dickson explained the role of the Conservators in renovating Weeks Field by coordinating with neighborhood and soccer interests. This type of coalition building of housing, historic, and recreation interests, with leadership from

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Jim Broderick, helped bring about the passage of the CPA in Newton by a narrow margin in a once in a lifetime opportunity. The early adoption allowed a doubling of CPA funds due to a high match percentage early on. There were great open space opportunities to use CPA for such projects as Kessler Woods and Angino Farm, which otherwise may have been lost. The role of the Conservators in holding CRs was institutionalized by the legal requirement of CRs on CPA acquired property. Dickson remarked on the importance of looking back over the past 60 years and taking stock, taking pride in the past and continuing the good work going forward.



Jane Sender then told of her experience as president, during which time we also finalized the conservation restriction on the Newton Commonwealth Golf Course, thanks to a collaboration with City Councilor Lisle Baker. She also noted that we took on our first conservation restriction on a private property, the

Wilson family's beautiful, wooded lot with a public access path through the property — a complicated process that the Conservators helped expedite. Saving even small open space areas in places like Newton can be crucial for wildlife.



Beth Wilkinson pointed out our important legal role in holding and monitoring conservation restrictions (CRs) for the city on portions of the Crystal Lake shoreline including #20 Rogers St. next to the Crystal Lake bath house, Elgin Street, the Newton Commonwealth Golf Course,

Newton Community Farm, 30 Wabasso St. (next to Purgatory Cove), Webster Park (adjacent to Dolan Pond), and the Waban Hill Reservoir at Heartbreak Hill Park. Chris Hepburn has made sure our CR monitoring procedures are in place and followed.

Beth noted the importance of our website ([newtonconservators.org](http://newtonconservators.org)), which was established in the 1990s, as an invaluable resource for Newton

that has been enormously improved upon since. Our printed newsletter has been increasingly important for sharing our work with members and the community. In 2015, we began a collaboration with the Riverside Greenway Working Group, which has been supported by the Solomon Foundation and Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) grants. The work is ongoing, with many more exciting connections to be reestablished as part of the redevelopment of the Riverside area. Rehabilitation of the Pony Truss Bridge was done in 2013, and the Pony Truss Trail was completed just this past year.



PHOTO: TED KUKLINSKI

*Pollinator Garden at Newton City Hall*

to establish a pollinator demonstration garden at city hall.



PHOTO: KEN MALLORY

*Bare pond in Webster Woods*

Our most major accomplishment in the past few years was our work with the city to preserve the 17-acre portion of Webster Woods that was owned by Boston College and was at risk of being developed. Beth described the whole community working together to preserve the land through a wonderful and inspiring process that took more than four years, ending in December 2019. Walks, signage, articles, and even buttons with a salamander mascot all helped raise awareness. She



PHOTO: TED KUKLINSKI

*Invasive plant pullers at Dolan Pond*

credited this success to the involvement of many organizations (Conservators, Friends of Webster Woods), the City (Mayor Fuller, Councilors, Planning, Legal, CPC, Working Groups), and ordinary citizens.

Incoming Co-President, Chris Hepburn, discussed how the Newton Conservators' 60 years of accomplishment has made a



difference in Newton and the ways in which we will continue to preserve and protect its open space through our many outreach programs including the newsletter, website, social media, walks, talks, webinars, and our grants program to fund environmentally oriented projects. We will continue to hold and monitor CRs for the city including those for CPA land acquisitions, which require CRs, as well as strive for CRs on all Newton parks and conservation land. In the next year or so we expect to produce a new trails and maps booklet for park and conservation land.

and for them to consider volunteering for our various action groups. In this way we hope to continue our mission for another 60 years and beyond. He adjourned the official meeting, but many participants stayed around to continue the discussion on Zoom informally.

Please take heart for the future! With Covid hopefully waning, with kids getting vaccinated, folks masking up more, and more people getting first shots and boosters, local society may achieve some degree of herd immunity. We may then be able to have a true traditional celebration back at Post 440 on May 4, 2022, where we can celebrate our 60 years face to face.



While new open space in Newton is becoming harder to come by, Newton Conservators will be on the alert so that when we look back in another 10, 20, 50, or 60 years, we will continue to have made a difference! ♦

Co-president Bill Hagar thanked our membership for its past support and asked for their contributions to continue

✍ Ted Kuklinski and Michael J. Clarke, *(with thanks to Dan Brody)*



### Conservation Restriction (CR) Monitoring



- In Process (CPA Acquisitions)
  - Kessler Woods
  - Webster Woods
- City
  - Crystal Lake
  - Elgin Street Conservation Land
  - Newton Community Farm
  - Newton Commonwealth Golf Course
  - Rogers Street (#20)
  - Waban Hill Reservoir – Heartbreak Hill Park
  - Wabasso Street (#3)
  - Webster Park (near Dolan Pond)
- Newton Conservators
  - Awtrey Dell
  - Dexter Woods – Prospect Park
  - Ordway Park
- Private
  - Bracebridge Road (Wilson Conservation Land)



## 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 | <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 special funds:**

Woodcock Meadow \$\_\_\_\_\_ Trails Fund \$\_\_\_\_\_

Ordway Endowment Fund \$\_\_\_\_\_

Land Stewardship Areas (Dexter Rd., Bracebridge Rd.) \$\_\_\_\_\_ Other \$\_\_\_\_\_

Memberships run for the calendar year. 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/](http://newtonconservators.org/membership/) to renew or join online. Consider including Newton Conservators in your estate planning. Contact us at [president@NewtonConservators.org](mailto:president@NewtonConservators.org).

