

# *the* Newton Conservators NEWSLETTER

FALL ISSUE

SEPTEMBER 1984

## LAND USE FORUM

The first forum of the 1984-85 series on land use sponsored by the League of Women Voters and the Newton Conservators will take place on Tuesday, Oct. 2, at the First Baptist Church in Newton Centre.

This program will provide a rare opportunity to learn how two of the key members of the Board of Aldermen and two people involved in development see the effect of development on the city and the community.

Carol Ann Shea is President of the Board of Aldermen, long-time member of the Land Use Committee, and Newton realtor. Cynthia Greem is Chair of the Land Use Committee and attorney. James A. Miller was Newton's first full-time Planning Director and is now a consultant in planning and development. Alan J. Green is a developer and member of the Newton Conservation Commission; "The Gables" in Newton is one of his projects.

SAVE THE DATE!

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 2

7:45 p.m.

"WHO PROFITS FROM CHANGE?  
PRIVATE VIEW--PUBLIC VIEW"

Panelists: Carol Ann Shea  
Cynthia S. Greem  
Alan J. Green  
James A. Miller

First Baptist Church, Newton Centre  
(corner of Beacon & Centre Streets)

(This is the fourth in the series of land use forums that began in January. Earlier speakers were Terry Morris, Barry Canner, and Lawrence Susskind.)

## CALENDAR

September 22	- Saturday	- 9:00 a.m.	- Walk in Webster Conservation Area (see p. 5)
September 30	- Sunday	- 8:00 a.m.	- Fall Bird Walk in Novitiate Park (see p. 5)
October 2	- Tuesday	- 7:45 p.m.	- "Land Use Forum: "Who Profits from Change?"
October 14	- Sunday	- 9:00 a.m.	- Charles River Pathway Walk and/or
		- 3:30 p.m.	- Picnic at Auburndale Playground (see p. 5)



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Member,

Our activity for the year is concentrating on a few major areas.

We are continuing the series of land use forums that we co-sponsor with the League of Women Voters. The forums are designed to help Newtonians inform themselves about the issues and plan intelligently for the future as the city faces increasing economic pressures. The discussion that followed our June forum with Prof. Lawrence Susskind on negotiation and mediation in land use disputes was stimulating--there are no easy solutions to land use issues, but some approaches are fairer and more fruitful than others. Our October forum, with four of the major players in Newton's land use decisions, promises to be equally worth while.

A number of walks through Newton's open spaces are planned. Not only are these walks enjoyable, but also we hope that by acquainting more people with what Newton offers, we are building a stronger constituency for maintenance and acquisition of park and conservation land. Active public support becomes increasingly important as the density pressures that we are all aware of continue to mount.

In addition to these public programs, the Board is continuing its cooperation with the City and the Combined Jewish Philanthropies to plan and implement the development of the Novitiate Park. And, of course, we try to keep ourselves and you, our members, abreast of issues as they occur.

Perennially, we wish to involve more members in the Conservator activities. Rotating board meetings among directors' homes may tend to inhibit attendance by members-at-large, but we wish to emphasize that our board meetings are open. We invite you to attend the meetings on the first Thursday of each month. Please call one of the officers to learn the place.

We also need your help! I cannot do better than reprint Sally Barnett's appeal in the Newsletter four years ago--times have changed, but the needs have not. Please call one of the officers if you can help.

AnnaMaria Abernathy

## AN APPEAL

The work the Conservators are able to do depends on the volunteer efforts of its members. If you can contribute in any way--working on a committee, leading walks, typing, collating, writing, publicity, art work, photography, etc.--please let us know. If you can contribute background information on issues such as land use planning, techniques of land preservation, tax advantages for those who donate land for open space--please let us know. If you have a special interest you would like to pursue, and which is compatible with the goals of the Conservators--please let us know. Some potential projects include "Adopt-a-brook" (learning about and developing community support for the protection of a Newton brook), developing nature guides, identifying potential bicycle trails, publicizing the potential of the Charles River and Aqueduct pathways, and research projects in natural resources (land preservation, air and water quality, etc.).

Sally Barnett, 1980.

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## NEWTON CONSERVATOR OFFICERS, 1984-85

President:	AnnaMaria Abernathy	244-3447
Vice-		
President:	Peter Kastner	244-6094
Secretary:	Fiora Houghteling	969-7764
Treasurer:	Virginia Taplin	527-1928
Past-		
President:	Bart Hague	969-3640

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The Conservators Newsletter appears approximately four times a year.

Please send items for the next issue to one of the editors:

Tony Wallace	or	Lavina Tomb
48 Nickerson Rd.		34 Waterston Rd.
Chestnut Hill 02167		Newton 02158
(965-4431)		(332-0818)

Membership chairman: Jean Thompson (244-9472)





On the Charles River at Novitiate Park

Photo by Linda Mackey

#### NAHANTON STREET PARKLAND UPDATE:

##### Novitiate Park and the Winchester Street Recreation Area

This spring, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the City, the Newton Conservators and the Combined Jewish Philanthropies, to work together on a park plan proposal for the Novitiate Park and the Winchester Street Recreation Area, two adjoining city-owned sites.

The Quint Foundation grant to the Newton Conservators and a matching amount from the CJP provided funds so that contracts could be arranged with a park consultant, William Giezantanner, and landscape designers, William Pressley Associates. Representatives of the three groups have been meeting monthly since late in 1983, and formed an overall plan for the park. At a public meeting on June 3rd at the Jewish Community Campus, the initial proposal for the park was explained and discussed, and those attending visited the site to view the topography and better visualize the various passive and active uses planned for the park.

The major park entrance will be the present entrance to the Winchester Street Recreation Area. Parking and the need for a roadway to a drop-off point by the playing field were major challenges in the plan. Planting of shrubs to screen parking areas, and some trail work and renovation of the old Infirmary building for park use is also planned.

Since this meeting, the Pressley Associates have constructed a large model of the entire site. If you are interested to see the model, call Peter Kastner (244-6094) or Carol Morrison (332-6539). Friends of the park are encouraged to make their ideas and suggestions concerning the development of the park known to these Conservator directors or to Fran Towle, Deputy Commissioner of the Parks and Recreation Department (552-7120).

On Aug. 31, the city made application for 80% State (Urban Self-Help Program) and 10% Federal (Heritage and Water Conservation Fund assistance for Phase I of the development.

Carol Morrison



## LAND USE NEWS

St. Sebastian's Country Day School

9 acres in Newton

6 acres in Boston

The trustees of the school offered to sell the site to the State for its police academy on June 15, but the offer was rejected by the State division of capital planning and operations because the \$3.4 million price was too high. According to newspaper reports, the trustees will offer "around ten acres" of the site for the police academy at a price they hope will be acceptable, and sell the remainder for single family homes.

Lacy Estate

29 acres

Nahanton/Winchester Street  
Newton Centre

One of the few remaining large estates in the city, the Lacy Estate has been purchased by Newton developer Jack Antaramian. Barnes Engineering Co. is doing the topographic studies of the site, and Sasake Associates will do the land plan for the development. The "Residence A" zoning would permit approximately 40 single-family homes. The City's 1981 Open Space Plan noted the significance of this tract, stating that, "The Conservation Commission is interested in maintaining the visual open space of the Nahanton Street Valley from the Charles River to Dedham Street. Any future development of a portion or all of this estate or the Charles River Country Club would increase the Conservation Commission's concern for maintaining this visual corridor."

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## BULLOUGH'S POND

The Bullough's Pond Association is in process of organizing as a non-profit organization with the single purpose of preserving the pond. With the active cooperation of the Parks and Recreation Department and the City Engineer's Office, they are making good progress. Not only has an application been filed for assistance under the Mass. Clean Lakes Program, but this summer a team from the Mass. Dept. of Environmental Quality Engineering (DEQE) Division of Water Pollution Control made a baseline water quality survey of the pond. Its report will determine whether the pond will qualify for a "feasibility study" grant from the state, which in turn might lead to partial State funding for necessary work to restore the pond. Old photos of recreational use of Bullough's Pond will be needed for inclusion in the grant application. If you can help, or for more information, call Betsy Leitch, at 244-0771.

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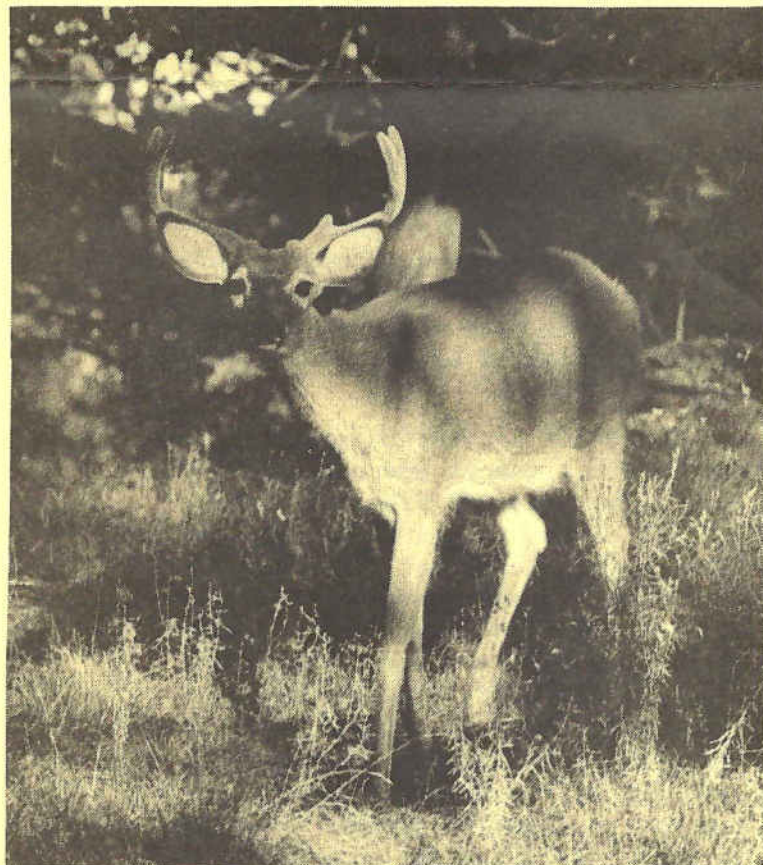


Photo by Linda Mackey, 9/8/84

DEER IN NEWTON - Do you know where to find them? Come on our Sept. 22 walk (see p. 5).



### CONSERVATOR WALKS

Last May the Newton Conservators hosted our two traditional annual walks, the Mother's Day Bird Walk and the Charles River Pathway Walk.

The Bird Walk is such a favorite that we have added a walk on Sept. 30 to observe the fall bird migration. Beginning birders have the opportunity to mingle with our more experienced birders for excellent guidance on these occasions.

Last May's Charles River Pathway Walk was an exhilarating experience for the few participants. Bill Giezentanner, our park consultant and Pathway Planner, has agreed to lead it again, this time in October, when we should have the added bounty of fall foliage and, hopefully, a cool sunny day! See details of both walks below.

#### SCHEDULE OF FALL WALKS

Come walk with us - See Newton's deer, observe the bird migration, the fall foliage, walk along the Charles River. Bring your kids, your camera, a picnic!

DATE AND TIME	DESCRIPTION	LOCATION
<u>Sept. 22</u> Saturday 9 a.m. (approx. 1 hr.)	<u>Webster Conservation Area.</u> Walk around the <u>Deer Park</u> and through <u>Houghton Garden.</u> Leader: Verne Vance (232-5494)	Meet at the Deer Park - at end of Suffolk Road near Clovelly Rd. (off Hammond St.)
<u>Sept. 30</u> Sunday 8:00 a.m. (approx 2 hrs.)	<u>Fall Bird Walk, Novitiate</u> <u>Park.</u> For beginners and experienced birders. Leader: Jean Thompson (244-9472)	Meet at Winchester Street Recreation Area parking lot - between Wallace and Nahanton Sts.
<u>Oct. 14</u> Sunday 9:00 a.m. for all day hike, or join at 10:30 or 12:00 and/or Picnic at 3:30 p.m.	<u>Fifth Annual Charles River</u> <u>Pathway Walk</u> and <u>Picnic</u> at Auburndale Playground The walk along the Charles begins at Novitiate Park or you may join at several points along the way or meet at Auburndale Park for the picnic. Hot coals for the grills & fireplaces will be provided; picnic tables and open restrooms. Leader: William Giezentanner Information: Toni Wallace (after 5 p.m.: 965-4431)	9:00 a.m.: Meet at Novitiate Park parking lot on Nahanton Street. 10:30 a.m.: Join at Upper Falls/ Hemlock Gorge/Silk Mill Dam (near Mills Falls Restaurant) 12:00 noon: Join at the Fyffe Footbridge, Cordingly Spillway (near Gregorian Rug Co., Rte. 16). Lunch break. 3:30 p.m.: Meet at Auburndale Playground - Commonwealth Ave. to Melrose St., north on Melrose, left on West Pine St. Transportation back to Novitiate Park will be provided to hikers.



Editorial:FLOOD PLAIN/WATERSHED PROTECTION  
ZONING AMENDMENTS

The Land Use Committee and full Board of Aldermen have yet to act on the amendments to Newton's Flood Plain/Watershed Protection Zoning Ordinance (FP/WPZO) that were petitioned by the Planning and Development Department a year ago (described in the Oct. '83 Newsletter). The amendments result from a detailed study of Cheese Cake, Paul and South Meadow Brooks that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) completed in 1981, at the request of the City of Newton. These areas were not included in the original Ordinance because the data developed by the recent study was not available. Now the designated Flood Hazard Areas along sections of these brooks must be included in the Ordinance in order to avoid suspension of the City of Newton from the National Flood Insurance Program.

Passage of the amendments had been held up by residents of the Paul and South Meadow Brook areas who were led to fear loss of their freedom to make changes on their property. (In fact, relief from the rules can be obtained through variances by the Zoning Board of Appeals or by special permit from the Board of Aldermen.) Some homeowners have proposed alternative arrangements excepting their land from application of the FP/WPZO, but this would be contrary to Section 4 of General Laws, Ch. 40 A, the Zoning Enabling Act, which requires uniform application of zoning regulations throughout the City.

The threat of Newton's suspension from the Federal Flood Insurance Program is real. It would lead to great difficulty for property sales and property assessments throughout Newton, and greatly increase the cost of

insurance for homeowners in Flood Hazard areas. The deadline for full Board of Aldermen action is Sept. 17, as the 90-day period for action on the amendment expires on Sept. 28.

The Newton Conservators hope the board of Aldermen will take official action before then to adopt the amendments.

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## ANNUAL MEETING REPORT

At the annual meeting of the Newton Conservators on May 22, Helen Heyn, Secretary of the Newton Conservation Commission, was given the Environmentalist of the Year Award for her unstinting efforts to acquire, protect, and maintain Newton's legacy of open spaces over many years.

Bart Hague, outgoing president, stressed the need for a defined, long-term, city-wide plan to preserve remaining open areas in the city.

Deborah Howard, Assistant Secretary, Executive Office of Environmental Affairs and Conservator Director, spoke about the State program for funding open space and recreation projects. The long list of initiatives includes restoration of parks and town commons, and acquisition of riverside sites for parkland.

Mrs. Howard also discussed the EOE's efforts to solve the critical problem of providing adequate sewer services for the Boston metropolitan area. She urged support for a new Water and Sewer Authority, so that the quality of life in this area may be maintained and improved.

The meeting concluded with the election of the new officers and directors.

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## TAXATION OF NEWTON'S GOLF COURSES

Much concern was voiced in the press last spring when Newton's golf courses were classified as commercial property, with steeply higher assessments than in the past.

Lisle Baker, on behalf of the Conservators, argued without success to the Board of Assessors that the golf courses should be taxed as open space, at a lower tax rate.

Faced with much higher taxes, all three of the golf courses have applied and been approved for assessment under the Chapter 61B program of the Massachusetts General Laws. Under this program, implemented

in 1979, the golf courses pay only 25% of the assessment as "commercial property" so long as the land remains undeveloped. If, at any time, the owners choose to develop, the other 75% of the tax, plus interest, must be paid to the city, for taxes going back 10 years. This provision is an incentive to preserve the open space. In addition, the city has the option to purchase the land.

The following table represents the tax impact for the three golf courses, "after adjustment for billing error as abatement" (Assessor's Office). Amounts are rounded to the nearest \$100.

	<u>Charles River</u>	<u>BraeBurn</u>	<u>Woodland</u>
Total Tax Assessed FY 84	\$246,800	\$305,400	\$218,100
Potential 61B Allowance	-141,200	-174,500	-120,400
Net Tax FY 84	105,600	130,900	97,700
FY 83 Tax	78,900	147,600	107,900

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HEMLOCK GORGE REHABILITATION  
PROJECT

This item is from the Newton Upper Falls Community Development Corporation's 1984 Annual Report:

"NUFCDC is very proud of its efforts to restore and rehabilitate Hemlock Gorge. This valuable resource has long been neglected, but this year NUFCDC worked to document its rich history and its current condition, as well as to begin preparing a rehabilitation plan. This project received invaluable assistance from the Community Assistance Program of Harvard University Graduate School of Design's Department of Landscape Architecture....

The Hemlock Gorge Project of the Community Assistance Program represents the beginning of NUFCDC's long range plan to restore the park as well as Echo Bridge. Toward this end, NUFCDC has joined the Mass. Association of Olmsted Parks. Hemlock Gorge was also included in the sites for the Public Lands Clean-up Project, and permission has been obtained from the MDC to carry out

clean-up activities. NUFCDC will undertake the preparation of a rehabilitation plan and appropriate fundraising activities during this next year."

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also at Hemlock Gorge:

## THE SILK MILL DAM POWER PROJECT

The firm of Cortell Associates has submitted to the several city and state agencies that will have to approve the proposal, a plan to restore the old hydro installation that used to run the machinery at the Silk Mill (at the Mills Falls Restaurant) to generate an estimated 275 kw of electricity with an average annual energy production of 1325 megawatt hours. This is the amount of power used by 300 average households in one year. The MDC and US Fish and Wildlife Service are collaborating with Cortell Associates so that the new fishway which is planned for the site and the rehabilitated power plant will be compatible.

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I would like to renew my membership in the Newton Conservators \_\_\_\_\_ .

I would like to join the Newton Conservators \_\_\_\_\_ .

Enclosed find my check for the membership category indicated below:

— Member \$5.00

— Sustaining Member \$25.00

— Family \$10.00

— Patron \$100.00 — Additional Contribution \$

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
(street) (village) (zip)

Please make checks payable to Newton Conservators, Inc.

Please send this form and membership dues to: Membership Chairman, Newton Conservators, P.O. Box 11, Newton Centre, MA 02159

Dues and contributions are tax-deductible.