



the Newton Conservators

NEWSLETTER

Summer Issue

<http://www.newtonconservators.org>

July 2000

Message from the President

The President's Annual Report

By Doug Dickson



Today marks the beginning of the 40th year in the history of this distinguished organization. This time next year, we will celebrate our 40th anniversary, the

Newton Conservators having been founded in 1961. Our mission is identical to the one set out by the visionaries (some of whom are with us tonight) who created the Newton Conservators in 1961. But the backdrop of issues and opportunities is different.

Those of you who have read our newsletter this year will know that I regard this as a transitional period in our history. We must change with the times and the times have indeed changed. We have fewer opportunities to acquire and preserve open space. Even if we had the money, the community is largely built out. But plenty of challenges remain and our mission is just as viable in this environment as it was 40 years ago when the preservation of several hundred acres of open space and many other accomplishments were still in our future.

Setting priorities for this new phase of our history has occupied a significant amount of our attention this year. The board of directors has identified six goals for the coming year or two:

1. Create a land bank for acquisition, preservation and maintenance of public open space, hopefully augmented by passage of the Community Preservation Act.

2. Strengthen the process (including broad community input) and content (taking into account current conditions and opportunities) of the year 2000 Open Space Plan revision.

3. Create and publish an easy-to-use parks and public open space report card to focus attention on maintenance, utilization profiles and improvement priorities.

4. Develop a set of options and contingency plans for preserving selected parcels of private open space so the city is prepared well in advance of unforeseen events that could threaten them. (At the top of this list I would put Kessler Woods and the Angino farm property, followed the golf courses. We also need to focus continuing attention on the Sudbury aqueduct and the MBTA stations where development is proposed.)

5. Expand education programs to improve awareness, use and appreciation of public open spaces through various media, including revised maps, cable programs, and news articles.

6. Continue an active program of support, sponsorship and advocacy for open space, waterway and land use initiatives throughout our community and region on an as-needed basis. This obviously includes proposals as they emerge, but should also anticipate pressure from corridors of activity, such as Route 9 and Needham Street, where by the nature of the areas, development issues are complex and achieving balance between commercial and environmental interests is difficult.

To support these goals, we have continued our focus this year on building the infrastructure of the

organization. Our membership continues to grow, thanks to the great ideas and hard work of our membership chair, Lucy Caldwell Stair.

Our web site continues to grow in content, thanks to Mike Clarke's assiduous updating and adding of information. Ted Kuklinski acquired our new URL--www.newtonconservators.org—and set us up on a free web hosting service to facilitate location and use of our site. When you see the ads on our lead-in page, remember that they are paying for the service so we don't have to—and remember that you don't have to read them.

We took our first tentative step this year in broadening our investment strategy, placing some of our money in a diversified index fund to improve the return on our total portfolio and our stewardship of this important resource. Most of our money continues to be held in treasury notes and certificates of deposit. Thanks to Dwight Golann and Mike Collora for providing both advice and action.

We are in the process and updating and expanding our open space maps and hope to have these available this fall. Bud Elliott is taking the lead on this project.



Newton Conservators Vice President Bill Hagar and Former President Bart Hague among the crowd at the Newton Conservators' Annual Dinner

Many other board members have contributed to our success this year: Peter Kastner managing our publicity machine, Mike Clarke, Bonnie Carter and others writing, editing and mailing our informative newsletter, Jim Broderick masterminding our restoration of Ordway Park, Judy Hepburn creating our spring and fall walks program, Bill Hagar and Bud Elliott coordinating our grants program.

The Conservators took positions on a number of open space and land use issues this year, including the constellation of developments here at

Andover Newton Theological School. We have been particularly concerned about preserving the view to the Blue Hills from the southern end of the quadrangle, the only such view still accessible to the public from Newton's hills.

We have voiced our concern about the encroachment on wetlands by the Bradford development along Route 9 in Thompsonville and have gained agreement by the developer to place the wetland area itself under a conservation restriction.

We helped gain passage of the landmark Tree Preservation Ordinance, the first to require replacement of trees lost to private development in the state and well beyond.

We played an active role in the development of a framework plan that will lead in the next phase to a new Comprehensive Plan for the city. Thanks to Bud Elliott and Norm Richardson for ably representing the Conservators in this process and prevailing in the end over a roomful of development interests. We were also active in the Flowed Meadow Planning Group. With support from Mike Clarke, Peter Kastner and our Environmentalist of the Year, Marty Sender, this remarkable piece of property will be transferred from the DPW to the Conservation Commission, where it will be managed as a passive recreation area.

And, of course, what would a year be like if we didn't have a Little League sign proposal to oppose. And oppose we did—this time at Hamilton Field. Though this year's episode was successfully resolved, the challenge remains to undo the damage from past mishandling by elected officials of requests for signs on two Little League fields, where as a result, large numbers of commercial signs disrupt the beauty and serenity of our parks.

We have also taken positions on matters before the Conservation Commission and the Parks and Recreation Commission too numerous to itemize here. We continue to monitor the work of those boards in addition to the Land Use Committee of the Board of Aldermen, the Urban Tree Commission, the Landscape Advisory Council, the Commonwealth Golf Course Board, the IPM Advisory Committee and others. The Zoning Board of Appeals adopted rules and regulations for Comprehensive Permits last fall at our urging (thanks to Mike Clarke for initiating and seeing that project through to completion) and the Parks and

Recreation Commission Manual is now in final form (thanks again to Mike).

This year, we co-sponsored a symposium on pesticide-free gardening with the Green Decade Coalition and shared newsletter content with the Charles River Watershed Association. We are a part of the coalition pressing for passage of the Community Preservation Act. Our relationships with other environmental and open space groups are strong and we intend to build on these to achieve greater regional impact. The issues we face in Newton are identical to those facing our neighbors and there is strength to be gained in increasing our numbers through joint projects and mutual support. The Chandler Pond Association in Brighton, the Green Space Coalition in Brookline, and the Waltham Land Trust are organizations with whom we have emerging relationships. Our local Friends groups continue to be important allies and formation of others is a priority, particularly in the Flowed Meadow/Auburndale Park area.

Thanks to your participation, the Newton Conservators is a strong organization, hewing today as it has in the past to its mission to promote the protection and preservation of natural areas, including parks, playgrounds, forests and streams, for recreation, education and scientific study. It is my pleasure to pronounce the organization in good health and ready to take on the challenges that await us in this new century. With your continued support, we will match over the next forty years the enviable achievements of our predecessors during the initial forty.



Peter Kastner Awards Environmentalist of the Year Award to Marty Sender for his endeavors to preserve the Charles River

Assistant Mass. Secretary of Environmental Affairs Remarks at Conservators' Annual Dinner

by Mike Clarke



The following is excerpted from remarks made by Jim Hunt, Assistant Secretary for Government Relations and Public Affairs, at the Newton Conservators' Annual Dinner Meeting. Jim Hunt is a lifelong resident of Boston who has

been involved in many local environmental and civic causes. Prior to being appointed by Environmental Affairs Secretary Bob Durand's in 1998, Jim Hunt worked for four years as a legislative aide in the Massachusetts State Senate.

Newton, the garden city, has distinctly desirable characteristics. It is a city known for its village centers, its tree-lined streets, its parks, its proximity to the Charles River, its people and their civic mindedness. Newton's history and its unique characteristics have helped make it a great place to live, offering its residents a high quality of life.

The single greatest threat to our landscape, our environment and our quality of life is urban sprawl. Just look at parts of Rte. 9; sprawl is the landscape of the shopping mall, the office park and the residential subdivision. Houses and economic development centers that were once concentrated in cities and towns, are now spread thinly over miles and miles of our landscape, connected by miles and miles of highway and away from existing infrastructure and resources.

Think about these two startling statistics:

- More than twice as much land has been developed since 1950 than was developed in the previous 300 years.
- From 1950 to 1990, our population increased by 28% but our land development increased by 188%, which is more than 6 times the rate of population growth.

Sprawl also poses a threat to our biodiversity in Massachusetts. Fragmenting large areas of woods and fields into little parcels has proven to be devastating and endangers up to 15% of our animal and plant species. Sprawl also adds to traffic congestion and air pollution by siting development away from public transportation. Sprawl development threatens our land, our air, our water,

the beauty of our landscapes and the character of our communities.

It is Massachusetts' collection of 351 unique cities and towns--each with its own community character, its diverse geographical areas, its beautiful town centers and historic places-- that help make Massachusetts a great place to live, work and raise a family.



Cottontail Contemplates Garden

The Office of Environmental Affairs, under Secretary Durand's leadership, has implemented a comprehensive program, which we call community preservation, to address urban sprawl. Community preservation encourages development to occur in the right places. We have expanded our planning for growth program into a statewide community preservation initiative designed to provide assistance to communities to help them preserve their special character as they continue to grow. Community preservation is an organizing principle that recognizes the need to balance environmental, historic preservation, economic development, housing and transportation issues.

We have held 20, community preservation summits across the state to talk about community preservation, learn about what is important to individual communities and offer ways we can assist. We ask communities to talk about what they want to preserve in their community, and what they want to change. Communities want to preserve their special character and historic downtowns. They want to save their open space as well as their water resources. They want to alleviate traffic

congestion and make plan for future growth so new municipal buildings--such as much needed schools--do not infringe upon protected open space. They want to provide more opportunities for economic development. And they want to provide housing which is affordable so their children can live in the community in which they grew up.

"Buildout maps" show what communities may look like at maximum development and project potential impacts on residential and commercial population, water consumption and school populations. These maps are intended, to help communities examine how they have grown and how they may grow in the future based upon existing zoning. They provide an opportunity for communities to determine if they are growing in the way they want and what, if any, changes they want to make. The Office of Environmental affairs is spending \$2.5 million to provide buildout maps and analysis to all communities in Massachusetts to use as a planning tool.

By signing Executive Order 418 in January, Governor Cellucci promoted a multidisciplinary approach to helping communities plan for their future. Executive Order 418 provides up to \$30,000 for each community to draft a community development plan. Community development plans will contain information about open space protection that identifies land critical to sustaining the community's water supply, new housing opportunities that span a broad range of incomes, transportation infrastructure improvements and commercial and industrial development.

We are also drafting a guidebook to assist communities in formulating these plans. The city of Newton will be hearing more about these plans and the guidebooks in late July as we distribute them to Municipalities across the state.

Newton is actively planning for future growth by devising a Framework Plan, which thoughtfully considers some of the issues we are asking communities to focus on as they plan for future growth. The Framework Plan identifies the aspects of Newton that make it special and set it apart from other Communities. It recognizes that Newton's sense of place is captured in its village structure with unique identities and neighborhood qualities. It embraces the need to provide housing opportunities for residents and open space for recreation. It recognizes the need to develop sites

appropriately and use existing buildings for residential and commercial development. And it involves a broad, diverse constituency in moving forward. All of these things will help Newton remain the garden city.

One way to ensure that communities have the funds to preserve historic structures, protect open space and provide affordable housing is to adopt the Community Preservation Act. This Act passed both the House and Senate and is now in conference committee. The Act would allow communities to establish a fund for historic preservation, affordable housing and open space. Governor Cellucci said that he will sign a Community preservation act that finances the fund through a surcharge of up to 3% of the real estate tax levy on real property in the municipality. If passed, the community preservation act could create up to \$200 million for community preservation statewide annually. If adopted at the local level, Newton could receive \$4,225,000 . Think about the open space that could be protected, the historic buildings that could be renovated or the housing opportunities that could be created if Newton had an additional \$4,225,000 for these purposes annually.

Last month, the office of Environmental Affairs released a comprehensive report about the environmental challenges facing our communities. It is our hope that by better informing the public and growing our environmental constituency, more people will want to protect, restore and sustain our state's great wealth of resources. The Office of Environmental Affairs looks forward to working with you on Community Preservation and other issues we care about so we can make a difference together.



Jim Hunt, Ted Kuklinski & Doug Dickson
answering questions at the Annual Dinner

Landscape Changes at Levingston Cove on Crystal Lake

by Mike Clarke



Levingston Cove at Crystal Lake in June 1999

Long-awaited renovations to Levingston Cove along Lake Ave. have finally begun, but not everyone is happy with the design--or lack of it. Erosion had so badly degraded one part of the Levingston Cove area near the intersection of Lakewood Rd. and Lake Ave. that the area had to be fenced off as a danger. Consequently, much of the allocated funds are being used to address erosion and water-quality issues of runoff onto and from the Cove area.

In order to provide handicapped access, most of the pathways to be constructed in Levingston Cove will be of asphalt and some of the sloped paths will have handrails. The amount of paved paths, the number of benches, and, in particular, the retaining wall shown in the picture below have generated appreciable discussion between neighbors, City Officials and other residents.

While the city's landscape planner had drafted at least two previous designs, he did not contribute significantly to the one now being constructed. The City Engineer began with one of these plans, which was drafted in 1995. The Parks and Recreation Commission approved a preliminary design, but this underwent significant changes to address erosion and handicapped access. A retaining wall was added, which the City Engineer believes was needed both for erosion control and handicapped access. The final construction plan was not presented to the Commission.

Reaction following initial construction was so strong that construction was halted. Over 150 residents signed a petition listing dissatisfactions with the construction design plans. Among the complaints were:

- The construction plans are very different from those presented at prior meetings
- It was not clear who was in charge of the process, i.e. who made the decisions about the plans
- The design encourages more intensive use of the park and will attract many more people who must drive to the site



Renovations at Levingston Cove in June 2000

A meeting between City officials and neighbors was held on the evening of June 13. Neighbors complained about the amount of asphalt paving, the size and.

A second meeting, which also involved some members of the Parks and Recreation, was held at 7:30 AM on Friday, June 23. Fran Towle, Newton's new Commissioner of Parks and Recreation presided. Discussion centered around the retaining wall, the number of benches to be placed above the wall for accessibility by those unable to negotiate the pathways, whether some paths could be made of flagstones, the need for boulders to serve as a retaining wall near the lake, and whether the cut-out areas for some benches near the lake could be minimized. A third meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 27 to be followed by an announced public meeting in the following week. For information, call Parks & Rec at 552-7120.

The flap about the design of Levingston Cove points out the need for recognized procedures for approving construction plans for our parks and recreation areas. Ultimately, stewardship for these lands resides in the Parks and Recreation Commission, which should be encouraged to develop written guidelines to prevent such costly construction delays. It is the responsibility of the Parks and Recreation Commission to: facilitate communication, ensure that all interested parties are heard, and to make their final decision based on the best available data and what is best for Newton.

Capital Improvements

by Mike Clarke

Newton has a Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for items such as improving playing fields and parks. The CIP is updated annually based upon changes in the City's capital needs and financing availability. . A Capital Improvement Project is a physical public betterment or improvement involving facilities, and, or equipment, with a substantial useful life and a cost of \$10,000 or more.

All capital project proposals are to be thoroughly evaluated in terms of their estimated impact upon the annual operating budget of the City of Newton. Capital improvements are to meet one of the following need's criteria

- Enhance protection of public health and/or safety
- Ensure compliance with state and/or federal law or administrative regulations
- Reduce and/or stabilize operating budget costs
- Prolong the functional life of a capital asset of the City by 10 years or more
- Encourage further expansion of the City's real estate tax base, employment or housing
- Improve the ability of the City to deliver services

Financing the CIP is on an established policy of pay-as-go financing, combined with prudent use of debt financing capacity.

The Newton: Conservators Newsletter appears three or four times a year. Editor: Michael Clarke. Production: Bonnie Carter, 969-0686. We wish to thank the contributors to this edition of the **Newsletter**: Mike Clarke, Doug Dickson. and Judy Hepburn.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please renew your membership for 2000.

New Member

Renewal

Name _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Individual member	\$20
Family membership	\$25
Sustaining member	\$35
Donor	\$50
Patron	\$100
Additional Contribution	\$_____
Total	\$_____

Please make check payable to: **Newton Conservators, Inc.**

Mail to:

Newton Conservators

P.O. Box 590011

Newton Centre, MA 02459

NEWTON CONSERVATORS, INC.
OFFICERS • BOARD OF DIRECTORS • BOARD OF ADVISORS • 2000-2001

OFFICERS

President: Douglas Dickson, 17 Oxford Rd, 02459	969-8661	ddickson@mediaone.net
Vice Pres: William Hagar, 248 Winchester St, 02461	964-2644	william.hagar@umb.edu
Treasurer: Katherine Howard, 84 Fenwick Rd, 02468	527-1796	howard_katherine@hotmail.com
Secretary: Judith Hepburn, 132 Stanley Rd, 02468	964-1137	hepburnj@bc.edu
Past Pres: Michael Clarke, 38 Halcyon Rd, 02459	965-5174	clarke@bc.edu

DIRECTORS

Margaret Albright, 166 Edinboro St, 02460	244-6145	albrightm@mediaone.net
Nancy Avery, 34 Beacon St, 02467	232-5280	jtavery@rcn.com
Stephanie Bacon, 541 Hammond St, 02467	734-2904	ssbacon66@hotmail.com
Corry Berkooz, 34 Janet Rd, 02459	641-0763	cberkooz@aol.com
Lee Breckenridge, 40 Oakmont Rd, 02459	527-4904	l.breckenridge@nUNET.neu.edu
James Broderick, 21 Groveland St, 02466	332-3465	formosush@mediaone.net
Larry Burdick, 180 Dudley Rd, 02459	969-0414	burdick@mediaone.net
Lucy Caldwell Stair, 46 Woodcliff Rd, 02461	928-3375	longwood@mediaone.net
Bonnie Carter, 177 Homer St, 02459	969-0686	bonniehcarter@aol.com
Michael Collora, 40 Kelveden Rd, 02468	964-3294	mcollora@dwycercollora.com
Carol Lee Corbett, 377 Cherry St, 02465	332-4015	
Ed Dailey, 67 Maplewood Av, 02459	332-6987	edailey@bromsun.com
Sheila Decter, 13 Ranson Rd, 02459	527-0840	decter@ajcongress-ne.org
Burton Elliott, 319 Highland Av, 02465	244-8920	burtonell@aol.com
Roger Feinstein, 96 Roundwood Rd, 02464	969-0942	feinstein@umb.edu
Jason Glasgow, 47 Oxford Rd, 02459	527-3107	jglasgow@emc.com
Frank Howard, 34 Fairfax St, 02465	244-7269	dandfhoward@rcn.com
Ted Kuklinski, 24 Henshaw Tr, 02465	332-7753	tkuklinski@aol.com
Eric Reenstierna, 15 Otis Pk, 02460	969-5820	
Marty Sender, 47 Kingswood Rd, 02466	244-5681	msender@mediaone.net
Andrew Stern, 56 Tyler Tr, 02459	969-9898	astern@ebglaw.com

ADVISORS

AnnaMaria Abernathy, 45 Islington Rd, 02466	244-3447	amaber@aol.com
Lisle Baker, 137 Suffolk Rd, 02467	566-7564	
Rodney Barker, 49 Woodcliff Rd, 02461	244-6949	
John Bliss, 9 Lewis St, 02458	244-6495	
Thelma Fleishman, 14 Kenwood Av, 02459	244-5598	
Sally Flynn, 33 Whitney Rd, 02460	965-6297	sally_flynn@newton.mec.edu
Bart Hague, 110 Roundwood Rd, 02464	969-3640	barthague@aol.com
Helen Heyn, 21 Alexander Rd, 02461	969-5712	
Deborah Howard, 34 Fairfax Rd, 02465	244-7269	dandfhoward@rcn.com
Jean Husher, 1686 Beacon St, 02468	527-5981	
William Jones, 92 Bullough's Pk, 02460	527-9110	
Lawrence Kaplan, 26 Parker St, 02459	527-3449	
Peter Kastner, 49 Woodbine St, 02466	244-6094	cpkastner@rcn.com
William Leitch, 69 Dexter Rd, 02460	244-0771	
George Mansfield, 312 Lake Av, 02461	969-1479	
Richard Primack, 16 Stiles Tr, 02459	332-1684	primack@bio.bu.edu
Frances Seasholes, 163 Cypress St, 02459	969-5927	
William Shaevel, 881 Dedham St, 02459	965-1534	
William Stevenson, 168 Nevada St, 02460	527-0411	stevenw@bc.edu
Roger Swain, 20 Columbus St, 02466	332-0555	rswain@primediasi.com
Verne Vance, 101 Old Orchard Rd, 02467	232-5494	
Brian Yates, 1094 Chestnut St, 02464	244-2601	byates@ultranet.com

IN THIS ISSUE:

- President's Annual Report
- Dinner Meeting Address
- Levingston Cove Renovation at Crystal Lake
- Newton's Capital Improvement Plan
- Current List of Officers, Board and Advisors

NEWTON CONSERVATORS, INC.
P.O. Box 590011
Newton Centre, MA 02459

Non-Profit Organ.
U.S. Postage Paid
Newton, MA 02459
Permit No. 55629

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED