

PLACE

Spring 2015

Children + Nature



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Chestnut Hill Garden Club
Chestnut Hill Village Alliance
Climate Change Action Brookline
Fisher Hill Association
Friends of Billy Ward Playground
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Friends of Carlton Street Footbridge
Friends of Corey Hill Park
Friends of Cypress Field
Friends of Dane Park
Friends of Emerson Garden
Friends of Fairsted
Friends of Griggs Park
Friends of Hall's Pond
Friends of Harry Downes Field
Friends of Hoar Sanctuary
Friends of Larz Anderson Park
Friends of Lawrence Park
Friends of Leverett Pond
Friends of Linden Park
Friends of Littlefield Park
Friends of Lost Pond
Friends of Minot Rose Garden
Friends of Monmouth Park
Friends of the Muddy River
Friends of the Old Burying Ground
Friends of the Paths and Park on Aspinwall Hill
Friends of Sargent Pond
Friends of Waldstein Park
Garden Club of Brookline
Larz Anderson Auto Museum
Lincoln School PTO Landscape Committee
Linden Parks Association
Salisbury Road-Corey Farms Neighborhood Association

Editor

Marian Lazar

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Children and Nature

Children and nature seem like a natural combination. Let them out and they'll explore and play and get dirty. Yet, this is no longer true. *Last Child in the Woods* by Richard Louv brought together a body of research indicating that direct exposure to nature is essential for healthy childhood development and for the physical and emotional health of children and adults. He described how American childhood has moved indoors during the last two decades, taking a mental and physical toll on today's kids. The negative impact of decreased time outdoors includes a doubling of the childhood obesity rate—accompanied by an incremental hundred billion dollar cost to our health care system—as well as declining creativity, concentration, and social skills.

Studies show outdoor time helps children grow lean and strong, enhances imaginations and attention spans, decreases aggression, and boosts classroom performance. Time spent in nature—even a walk through trees in an urban park—can have a positive impact on mental and physical health and the ability to learn. Exposure to nature can improve resistance to negative stresses and depression.

If you were introduced to the outdoors as a child and enjoy spending time outside, the idea that someone wouldn't want to spend time exploring the outside world may seem hard to believe. What could be more interesting for a young child than overturning rocks in a creek while searching for crayfish or exploring the open spaces near their community? Exposure to the outdoors plays a critical role in fostering learners that appreciate and care about the environment. (quote from eeweek.org blog)

As we all spend increasing time indoors and in thrall to our digital devices, it's more important than ever to create parks and protect close-to-home spaces where families, everyone, for that matter, can get outside. Here our children can stretch their limbs, shed excess pounds, build muscles, and exercise their imaginations. For a while, anyway, they abandon their screens and keyboards to enjoy in-the-flesh social networks of family and friends while exploring the World Wide Web of nature. (from Land + People, magazine of the Trust for Public Land, tpl.org)

“Evidence suggests that children and adults benefit so much from contact with nature that land conservation can now be viewed as a public health strategy.”

– Howard Frumkin, MD, and Richard Louv, author of *Last Child in the Woods*

Healthy Parks=Healthy Brookline

I recently attended an Advisory Sub-Committee meeting in which Erin Gallentine, Director of Parks and Open Space gave an excellent, detailed presentation about the maintenance of our parks and open space areas in Brookline. She clearly articulated the Division's organizational structure, management responsibilities, staffing and services provided. At one point I had the opportunity to speak. I described how important and vital our parks and open spaces are to the residents of our community.

Brookline's close proximity to downtown Boston and the Longwood medical area and local colleges makes Brookline attractive to many potential residents but also makes our green spaces even more important. For the last fourteen years, all the effort to not only upgrade a basic level of maintenance, but to beautify Brookline and improve neighborhood parks, has greatly contributed to a higher quality park and open space system and to why people are moving to Brookline.

With the recent trend toward an increasing number of pre-school and school aged children we have an even greater need for green space and play areas in our often crowded neighborhoods. Study after study show the importance of outdoor play and the many benefits it provides children. More park and playground use means the need for even more maintenance. We are now at a crucial point in deciding the future level of service we can provide in our parks. It would be a travesty to deprive our children, and all our citizens, the health, well-being, and beauty we currently enjoy and value in our park system.

The Park and Open Space Division serves the entire townf—from toddler to senior citizen, and to lower our standards for any reason is unacceptable. Our parks and open spaces are not only our back yards, but our front yards. They provide gathering places that build safer, healthier, connected neighborhoods and provide a quality of life that is why many of us stay in Brookline.

I encourage all our citizens to support full funding of the Parks and Open Space budget.

*John T. Bain, Chairman
Park and Recreation Commission*

Guest Editorial

BGSA questions selectman candidates

1. How will you show your commitment to preserving open space in Brookline, as outlined in the Open Space Plan and the Comprehensive Plan?
2. Do you believe we can equitably balance all of Brookline's needs; can we maintain the 50/50 split between the needs of the schools and the demands for other Town services?

Bernard Greene

1. I will show my commitment to preserving open space in Brookline by considering open space measures coming before the Board of Selectmen with careful consideration of the needs and concerns of all competing interests involved and making decisions on the basis of that review and the values that are stated in the Town's most current Open Space Plan. In general, I do not believe that existing parks and other established green spaces should be reduced for non-open space uses. Parcels of land acquired as a result of abandonment, fire, or other reasons should be included in the town's inventory and used for open space uses, such as micro parks or playgrounds, community gardens, or other similar uses, if possible, until another use appropriate to the neighborhood and not inconsistent with the Town's overall environmental goals becomes available.

2. We cannot fail to equitably balance all of Brookline needs, especially the needs of the Town for funding of services and open spaces and the needs of the schools, which are the foundation of the Town's economic and social viability.

Nancy Heller

1. As a Town Meeting Member, I have supported efforts to preserve and protect open space, like Skyline Park, Fisher Hill Reservoir and the Wetlands Protection By-Law and have voted to maintain budgets which support our open spaces.

In the Open Space Plan, several goals are outlined in Section 9, and I am committed to supporting the objectives as enumerated. I am especially concerned that Brookline continues to lose open space to development and believe that this is one of our toughest challenges. I am a Petitioner of Warrant Article 17 for the Spring 2015 Town Meeting. That Article focuses on 40B development and seeks amendments to the state statute to correct problems with the law. One such problem is that 40B projects do not have to be concerned with the loss of open space and one goal of the Article is to change the statute in that respect. One of the principal reasons that I am opposed to the development of Hancock Village is the loss of open space.

Furthermore, I will not support efforts to build a new school on park land, like Amory Park. Taking park land for a school would be a devastating loss of

open and recreation space, and completely contrary to our goals and objectives.

2. As school enrollment grows, it becomes more difficult to maintain the 50/50 split between Town and School budgets. One of the reasons that I am a strong supporter of the override is to protect Town budgets from school enrollment pressures. As I have done as a Town Meeting Member and an Advisory Committee member, I will continue to be committed to the balancing of Town and Schools needs if elected as Selectman. A high quality Town has many parts and if we undermine one part, we jeopardize the whole.

Pamela Lodish

1. Solutions to town problems should not be solved by the reduction of green space. I appreciate the value that open space brings to Brookline. I understand that it is a public benefit. If elected to the Board of Selectmen, I will continue to advocate for maintenance and stewardship of existing open space even in tough financial times.

When Runkle School was rebuilt, I was an active participant. I urged the school planners to decrease the footprint and increase the

Please

massing in order to preserve more open space. Despite the critical need for more classrooms, the plan that was selected destroyed much of the open space that previously surrounded the school. I, along with many of my neighbors, advocated for a “greener” plan. Recently when the B Space Committee floated the idea of building a school on Amory Park, I was horrified. Solutions to town problems should not be solved by the reduction of green space. I was an active neighborhood participant in the creation of Fisher Hill Park.

2. We are at a difficult time in Brookline. A large general override is on the ballot in May. I will be voting no on the General Override and if elected, will support a smaller \$5-5.5M override that can be approved in June, or an election soon thereafter. With just 17% of Brookline’s residents with school age children and 65% of our budget going to the schools, resources for parks, police, fire, and library are already compromised. We must be prudent with school expenditures in order to be able afford these other very important services. The 50/50 split has worked well for the Town. The problem is the unnecessarily large general override and the larger than needed debt exclusion for the Devotion School. If the \$7.65M override passes, it will put funding for all other town services at risk.

MK Merelice

1. If the Selectboard and relevant department heads do not regularly review the Open Space Plan and the Comprehensive Plan, I will set up review sessions to evaluate how the town is doing in meeting its goals. This includes no net loss of open space, adequate funding for the Parks Department, and finding ways (public and private) to make both the built and natural environments conducive to healthy and enhanced living.

I will work with department heads to help them understand the inter-relatedness of their various functions and being stewards of the environment.

I believe it’s clear from my environmental activities as a citizen who installed solar panels and lives conservatively, as a political leader in the Green-Rainbow Party and member of the Green Caucus of Town Meeting Members, and as a board member of the Brookline GreenSpace Alliance that I am committed to the values of the BGSA.

2. When the town is faced with urgent demands such as school enrollment rates, it can be challenging to step back (as the town did in the late 1990s when it conducted weekend workshops entitled “Future Search”) and look at the steps needed today to become a town that works for everyone, regardless of income level and neighborhood.

I am an advocate for the override. Although I respect the concerns

of opponents, I believe the override reflects a thoughtful response to the educational needs of Brookline’s children. Simultaneously, children need a healthy environment, and currently Brookline children (according to the Health Department) suffer a high rate of asthma. To be fiscally responsible means taking a balanced approach to all the services that make Brookline work for everyone. And without an override, it would prove impossible to live with a 50-50 split between the school and town budgets.

Larry Onie

1. It is very important that we preserve the open space in Brookline. Encouraging citizens to utilize the open spaces and educating them about the open spaces are ways in which to build constituencies which will support green spaces.

One of the largest open spaces is The Country Club. Maybe Sandy Batchelder, who is both a member of The Country Club and the Brookline Diversity Inclusion and Community Relations Commission could make arrangements for Brookline residents to be able to do bird watching and cross country skiing at The Country Club.

2. I believe we can equitably balance all of Brookline’s needs if we are creative and fiscally responsible. We need to receive legitimate and honest information from the School Department.

Vote May 5

An Interview With Brookline's Environmental Educator

Marian Lazar recently met with Stephanie Springer to learn more about her job and her plans for the Environmental Education program in the Recreation Department



Marian Lazar: Can you tell me about your background?

Stephanie Springer: I grew up in Northern California, where my family often camped and enjoyed outdoor activities. I was fascinated with nature from a young age and always enjoyed playing outdoors. As an undergraduate at the University of the Pacific, where I studied Biological Sciences, I became interested in teaching science, but I realized that I did not want to teach in a formal school setting.

My first job was as an education intern at a small aquarium in Savannah, Georgia. The program allowed children to stay overnight and explore the local marshes and beaches. From there I moved on to a one year position at the Jekyll Island 4H Environmental Center, and then to the W. Alton Jones Environmental Education Center in Rhode Island. In between I had worked at the Brookline Summer Nature Camp as the director. In 2011 I returned to the Boston area and became the full time Environmental Educator.

ML: What is an Environmental Educator?

SS: My position as the Environmental Educator is full time and year round. I essentially work as a professional naturalist, coordinating all of the outdoor education and adventure programming through the recreation department. This leads to a variety of programming that changes with the seasons, and in the summer I run a Summer Nature Camp, based at the Soule Recreation Center. Four sessions are offered for two weeks each where each session is for

a different age group; 5 and 6 year olds; 7 and 8 year olds; 9 and 10 year olds and 11 to 13 year olds. The program features a daily theme and discussion and field trips to investigate the material presented.

Our field trips are usually to Brookline's amazing parks and sanctuaries but also include trips to local farms and state parks. The two youngest groups also learn about growing food at the Brookline Community Foundation garden. The 11 to 13 year olds enjoy overnight camping at Mt. Cardigan in New Hampshire and in Gloucester. In addition to the summer camp we offer a preschool program for parents and children called Nature Explorations in the



fall and spring. We meet in a different park or sanctuary every week and explore its natural features.

I also offer nature themed enrichment programs to the Soule preschool and to the Brookline Early Education Program (BEEP). Family programs include kayaking, cross-country skiing, fishing, full moon hikes, a camp out at Larz Anderson park and maple sugaring (the most popular, with more than 70 participants).

In November, I visit each Brookline kindergarten and talk to the children about flower bulbs. Then we go outside and plant bulbs with the Parks and Open Space Division. In addition to working with the schools, I am also available to lead scout hikes and nature themed birthday parties. Some of my time is also devoted to programs like Brookline Day, the Community Garden at Larz Anderson park and interacting with the park rangers from the Parks Division.



ML: What do you like best about the job?

SS: I enjoy the freedom to innovate and create new programs. For example, I want to extend my programming reach to teens so I've created the Brookline Youth Outdoors Club for teens 14 to 17. The club is free to join; prices for group excursions vary and include kayaking, camping, and hiking. I would say my favorite age group though are the 9 and 10 year olds at summer camp. Children at that age are both eager to explore and able to do it.

ML: What direction would you like the program to take?

SS: I would like to grow the teen program and increase our interaction with the public schools, perhaps offering field trips and supplemental education lessons for older grades.

Photographs of children in various Environmental Education programs, courtesy of Stephanie Springer.





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Brookline GreenSpaceAlliance
is a non-profit, membership
organization, dedicated to the
protection and enhancement of
open space in Brookline

CPA

The Norfolk County Registry of Deeds collects fees based on recorded real estate filings in each community in the county. This money is forwarded to the Massachusetts Department of Revenue and is then distributed to communities that have adopted the Community Preservation Act (CPA).

In 2014 the registry collected **\$163,040.00** from Brookline transactions. Of this amount the Town received **\$0.00**. For more information see the registry website at www.norfolkdeeds.org.

Advocacy



Left to right with Congressman Kennedy at center: BGS Board Members Deborah Rivers, Frances Shedd Fisher, Rob Daves, Deanne Morse, Jean Stringham. Photo by Frances Shedd Fisher

In **January**, GreenSpace board members met with Congressman Joseph Kennedy, III to urge him to ask President Obama to include authorization and funding for the completion of the full Muddy River Project in his budget.

In **February**, the Alliance hosted a well attended Friends Group Coffee. Erin Gallentine, Director of Parks and Open Space discussed construction progress at Fisher Hill Reservoir Park. In addition to her presentation, she also fielded questions from members of Friends Groups on issues in their parks.

March saw board members testifying before the Capital Subcommittee of the Advisory Committee on the need for adequate funding for the Division of Parks and Open Space.