



# Year In Review2007

Brookline GreenSpace Alliance



#### Officers

Arlene Mattison, President  
Anita Johnson, Vice President  
Marian Lazar, V.P. Publications  
Deirdre Buckley, Secretary  
Ron Brown, Treasurer

#### Directors

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Jay Veevers  
Donald Weitzman  
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#### Advisors

Michael Berger  
Isabella Callanan  
Michael Dukakis  
Corliss Engle  
Chobee Hoy

#### Member Organizations

Brookline Farmers' Market  
Brookline Soccer Club  
Brookline Village Coalition  
Brookline Youth Baseball  
Campaign to Preserve St. Aidan's  
Chestnut Hill Garden Club  
Chestnut Hill Village Alliance  
Climate Change Action Brookline  
Fisher Hill Association  
Friends of Billy Ward Playground  
Friends of Boylston Playground Assoc.  
Friends of Brookline Reservoir  
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 Lost Pond  
Friends of the Minot Rose Garden  
Friends of Monmouth Park  
Friends of the Muddy River  
Friends of the Old Burying Ground  
Friends of Sargent Pond  
Garden Club of Brookline  
High Street Hill Association  
Lincoln School PTO Landscape Committee  
Linden Parks Association  
Museum of Transportation  
Putterham Garden Club  
Restore Olmsted's Waterway Coalition  
Salisbury Road-Corev Farms

Brookline GreenSpace Alliance proudly kicked off celebrations of its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. To recognize two decades of dedication to the preservation, protection and enhancement of open space in Brookline, several special projects were planned and successfully implemented. BGSA also continued its advocacy, education and outreach efforts to improve the quality of life in our community through green space.

## Advocacy

### *Special Project: Putterham Library Garden Space*

BGSA took a decidedly different approach to advocacy with its Putterham Library garden space project. Traditionally, BGSA supports existing groups or start-up groups gathering around a perceived open space need, as with the Friends of Minot Rose Garden and their efforts to purchase a fence for the garden. Because of a generous gift from an anonymous donor, BGSA is able to allocate funds for a direct donation to a given cause; and in 2007 decided to promote the creation of a new Park Friends Group in the Putterham Circle area of Brookline with hopes of rehabilitating the garden space next to the Putterham Library. BGSA geared up to proactively advance a cause instead of limiting itself to important, but often invisible backroom support work.

This effort directly addresses an identified need for community open space in the south Brookline area. In 2006, BGSA played a very active role in the review process of the Town of Brookline Park and Recreation Commission's *Parks, Open Space and Recreation Master Plan*, advocating for passive uses of open space to ensure that survey responses requesting passive open space were addressed. The South Brookline community also participated in the process reflecting their open space concerns, and the Master Plan identified the south Brookline area in particular as lacking green spaces that offered the opportunity for community bonding.

The garden space to the side of the Putterham Library provides a prime opportunity to address this need in the short-term with a reasonable investment. The space that exists and is well-designed but worn down and is perceived as uninviting. It is situated near shops and services so could draw the community in to use the space.

Rehabilitating the space will not take exorbitant funding. A major capital investment will not be made by the Town for at least 6 years. However, funneling any amount of money into a space without the support of a lasting constituency is not prudent; and BGSA worked to generate interest in rehabilitation *and* the creation of a Friends Group.

BGSA approached Director of Parks and Open Space Erin Chute Gallentine and Library Director Chuck Flaherty to ascertain their interest in, and the viability



of, the project. Several meetings were held with the Town Officials, members from the Brookline Tree Planting Committee, and experts in landscape to determine the best, low-cost general approach to the space. Then, BGSA brought these individuals together with community members from the South Brookline Neighborhood Association, local garden clubs, and the Friends of the Public Library with hopes of finding individuals interested in creating a new group to spearhead the project and oversee the space in the future.

A special pruning day to kickoff the hands-on portion of the project was stymied by inclement weather twice in the fall, but the groups remain interested. BGSA plans on continuing to advocate for the space and for the creation of a new group to support the ongoing existence of the garden through 2008. Once a constituency is fully established, BGSA hopes its one-time infusion of funds will with additional fundraising help fill a void in the south Brookline area by creating a viable and wonderful community bonding open space.

#### *Department of Public Works Vehicle Budget*

Brookline GreenSpace Alliance continued its work to advocate for continued and enhanced maintenance of open spaces. Over the past few years, BGSA has repeatedly questioned whether the Town owns enough watering trucks. Constituents have raised the concern that the Parks and Open Space Division has not received a fair share of the DPW budget for vehicle replacement.

To further examine those issues, in 2007, as a follow up to requests made in late 2006, BGSA approached the Town and asked for information on the vehicle replacement budget. The Town has informed BGSA of an ongoing DPW vehicle survey and study, and BGSA plans to examine that report once it is released in 2008. BGSA also plans on participating in the budgeting process at the Advisory Committee and Selectmen level, as well as making relevant comment to Town Meeting.

#### *Coolidge Corner*

Brookline GreenSpace Alliance President, Arlene Mattison, continued to actively co-chair the Coolidge

Corner District Planning Council committee.

BGSA also urged the Coolidge Corner District Planning Council to strengthen plans and recommendations related to open space within their report. In

particular, BGSA suggested the Planning Council should include the goal within the report of achieving the target of 7.5



acres of open space/1000 residents in a dense area like Coolidge Corner, to reinforce a goal already established within another Town document, the *Parks, Open Space and Recreation Master Plan*.

#### *Muddy River Restoration*

Brookline GreenSpace Alliance continues to actively participate in the Muddy River Restoration Project. Arlene Mattison, BGSA President continues to sit on the Maintenance and Management Oversight Committee and its Operations Sub-Committee.

#### *MBTA Longwood Stop*

In a separate but related project to the Muddy River Restoration Project, the MBTA had plans to refurbish and enhance the T Stations along the Green Line, including the Longwood T-Stop. BGSA recognized this as a prime opportunity to advocate for enhanced accessibility for Riverway Park.

Many park users and workers from the Longwood Medical Area walk through the park and access the MBTA via steps on the park-side leading over the flood-control berm. BGSA joined with advocates for the disabled to recommend to the MBTA that in addition to adding planned ADA ramps on the street-side of the station, that ramps be added near the steps on the park-side to allow greater accessibility to the station for park users. BGSA also pushed that the changes respect the historic nature of the station's setting and the character of the neighborhood and park.

By attending multiple meetings and writing to the MBTA and Brookline Town Officials, BGSA helped

ensure that this recommendation was eventually integrated into the plan. Construction on the station and ramps is planned for the spring of 2008 and completion in the fall.

#### *Teen Center*

BGSA became aware of a plan to use Town park lands to develop a Teen Center for Brookline youth to utilize in the afterschool hours. Although BGSA supports the general concept of a Teen Center, we could not support the taking of Article 97 protected land, even for a cause as good as the one suggested.

BGSA attended several Town meetings at which the plans were presented and voiced its concerns. Plus, BGSA contacted the organizer of the plan, Paul Epstein, to discuss with him alternatives to taking park land, including the potential for a land swap.

BGSA remains vigilant about this matter and is committed to upholding the “no net loss of open space” commitment made by the Town in its Comprehensive Plan. Because it is part of the public trust in Massachusetts to provide clean air and open space for the good health and enjoyment of its citizens, BGSA has also lobbied for Senate Bill No. 542 which furthers the park land protection of Article 97.

#### *Allendale Farm*

BGSA remains concerned about the future of Allendale Farm. BGSA’s Land Acquisition Subcommittee has worked to remain informed and proactive about what can be done to ensure the future conservation of the farm.



Although BGSA believes strongly that all open space is equally important under the “no net loss” ethic, the historic and symbolic status of Allendale Farm, the oldest working urban farm in the Boston area, makes preserving this farmland particularly critical.

#### *Brookline Conservation Land Trust Taxation*

BGSA was informed that the Town of Brookline,

following a state-wide trend driven by the need to increase the tax base, was attempting to tax properties held in trust under conservation easement by the Brookline Conservation Land Trust. The Trust and the Town of Brookline proceeded to bring the matter to the legal system. A major consideration of the case is the issue of public access.

BGSA, through its Land Acquisition Subcommittee, offered support to the Trust because open spaces, even those not readily accessible to the public, offer benefits to the public in the form of habitat protection and ecological buffering, among others. While the case remains in the judicial system, BGSA’s role remains ancillary. BGSA remains in contact with the Trust and is prepared in 2008 to advocate for the open spaces protected by the Trust.

#### *D. Blakely Hoar Sanctuary and Taking of Land Adjacent to the Sanctuary*

Brookline GreenSpace Alliance was informed by abutters to the D. Blakely Hoar Sanctuary that a lot owner on Princeton Road was planning to build a house on an empty lot directly abutting the sanctuary. BGSA attended the Conservation Commission meetings reviewing the plans for the property, which could potentially destroy a migratory path for the endangered spotted salamanders, and also wrote to Town Meeting in support of the recommendation to create a study committee to examine this property and general conservation guidelines for properties directly abutting our precious sanctuaries. BGSA plans to remain involved with the progress of this property and the review of conservation guidelines.

#### *Town Warrant Articles*

Brookline GreenSpace Alliance continues to submit comment letters for Town Warrant articles that positively or negatively impact open space in Brookline, including articles dealing with zoning by-laws, land acquisition and sustainability.

#### *Carlton Street Footbridge*

Members of the BGSA board and BGSA staff continue to advocate for the Carlton Street Footbridge Restoration Project.

## Environmental Education & Community Programs

*An Enduring Legacy* and *The Muddy River Suite*

To celebrate Brookline GreenSpace Alliance's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, BGSA presented two special educational events. *An Enduring Legacy* a photographic essay of

the open spaces of Brookline, MA featured photos by Marian Lazar, Frances Shedd-Fisher, Jean Stringham, Bruce Wolff and Judy Wong



displayed in Hunneman Hall. The display served as a reminder of our shared green legacy that we rally around and of the nature in Brookline that contributes to the health and beauty of our community.

*The Muddy River Suite* was a special performance of Lorraine Hammond's musical portrait of Brookline's colonial past. This marked only the second time the Suite was performed; the unveiling of the piece occurred at Twilight in the Park, a BGSA event at Larz Anderson Park in 1993. The anniversary performance was underwritten generously by Chobee Hoy.

### *Celebrate OUR Earth*

BGSA launched a special Earth Day event, Celebrate *OUR Earth*. The event involved Park Friends Groups hosting events during the weekends around Earth Day to celebrate Earth Day by highlighting the importance of local green spaces and the people who steward them. In addition to welcoming informational tables/picnics/community work opportunities in the various parks hosted by the respective Park Friends Groups, the Friends of Hall's Pond held a sanctuary cleanup, and the Friends of the Minot Rose Garden hosted a pruning seminar.

BGSA featured a table in front of Brookline Booksmith in Coolidge Corner with informational materials and refreshments. Foot traffic to the table and response from the public was enthusiastic as people learned about the location of our many parks and the volunteer opportunities to get involved. This effort to

Act Locally was promising and BGSA plans on making this celebration an annual event, especially since this is the only town-wide Earth Day celebration in Brookline.

### *Brookline Environmental Learning Project*

Brookline GreenSpace Alliance continues to administer the free-to-the-public Brookline Environmental Learning Project, founded by Friends of Hall's Pond and expanded by BGSA to cover all sanctuaries in Brookline. The Project continued to encounter difficulties due to inclement weather, mosquito-borne viruses EEE and West Nile, and general Town policies restricting field trips into sanctuaries during seasons when the viruses were possible.

In addition there was some confusion between the Learning Project and the Town's newer, fee-based environmental education programming, which does not offer a component directly to the public schools. Many teachers, even those that were past users of the Learning Project, contacted the Town environmental educator first and by the time they were directed to BGSA, the requests were too last minute to match the teachers up with our naturalists.

Despite these difficulties, BGSA still served approximately 200 students from Brookline's public schools. The curriculum for each trip continues to be tailored to the curriculum and fits within the framework. Considering the limits to the season the number of students, although lower than previous years, is on par with previous years when considering students per month.

The continued problems have led BGSA to begin a process to reinvigorate the program. With the assistance of naturalist, Gail Fenton, and representatives from Friends of Halls Pond, BGSA began drafting a frameworks-driven plan for the program. Highlighted within the plan is the need to hire more naturalists and obtain more funding. If both of those goals are met, the subsequent step would be to approach the Public Schools of Brookline to integrate the Learning Project directly into the curriculum. Plans have been made to discuss this possibility with the K-12 Science Curriculum Coordinator as well as with Parent Teacher

Organizations or School Councils.

BGSA's Brookline Environmental Learning Project focuses on the public school program, but also includes educational walks for the general public in parks and sanctuaries. Throughout 2007, Brookline GreenSpace Alliance provided field trips for the community including a sneak peek at the new park at the Newton Street Landfill, a tour of D. Blakely Hoar Sanctuary, the Watershed Walk, a kick off to a summer of Tai Chi in the parks, and a winter Foliage Field Trip focusing on tree identification. BGSA plans on continuing its varied field trips in 2008.

The Brookline Environmental Learning Project is the only free environmental education program in Brookline, and BGSA will continue to push for the growth and success of the Project.

### *The Muddy River Film Series*

Brookline GreenSpace Alliance, along with co-sponsor and co-founder, Coolidge Corner Theatre Foundation, presented the third annual Muddy River Environmental Film Series, the only environmental film series of its kind in the Boston-metro area. This year also featured the addition of additional partner, Harvard University Center for Health and the Global Environment, who has taken over the majority of the administrative and organization tasks. The film series featured several shorts, a screening of *King Corn*, and a performance by musical group Yo La Tengo. BGSA and its partners hope to continue the annual film series in 2008.

### *Alliance Meetings*

BGSA continued to offer educational meetings for Park Friends Groups and the general public. One of the highlight Alliance Meetings was an update on the state of the environment by State Representative Frank Smizik, chairman of the joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture. BGSA is considering in 2008 increasing the number of field trips to once a month in lieu of regular bimonthly Alliance Meetings.

## **Green Umbrella/Support for Park Friends Groups**

Brookline GreenSpace Alliance's continued to work

hard behind the scenes to support the efforts of Park Friends groups. In addition to providing fiscal agent services, mailing and database services throughout the year to groups including the Friends of Halls Pond, Friends of Fairsted, and Friends of the Minot Rose Garden, BGSA made the effort to help all the groups reinvigorate their volunteer pool via the Celebrate *OUR* Earth education and outreach special event.

A highlight of the year for the Green Umbrella



program was playing a part in the purchase of a fence for the Minot Rose Garden. Over the previous year, BGSA had been holding money from a matching grant from the Brookline Community Foundation as

well as donations from individuals for the Friends of the Minot Rose Garden. In 2007, that effort came to fruition when the matching target was met.

BGSA plans to continue supporting the grassroots efforts of local Park Friends Volunteer Groups. BGSA also still plans on attempting to ramp up the technology and special projects related to the Green Umbrella Program in 2008.

## **Outreach & Communications**

In addition to the special projects, *An Enduring Legacy* and *The Muddy River Suite*, which were as much outreach projects as they were educational projects, Brookline GreenSpace Alliance printed a special fall edition of its special publication, *PLACE*, to celebrate its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. For the first time in BGSA's history, *PLACE* was presented in full color to much acclaim.

In 2007, Frances Shedd-Fisher, Editor, and Marian Lazar, VP of Publications, continued to ensure that *PLACE* is an excellent publication offering relevant information to our constituency. *PLACE* covered the

progress of various important projects throughout town that impact open space, including the new park at the former Newton Street Landfill, the Beacon Street Reconstruction Project, the renovation of the open space in front of the Main Branch of the Public Library of Brookline, and the Longwood Medical Area. Opinion editorials covering topics such as the importance of Article 97 to protecting open space and the benefits of open space brought important issues to the public. Plus, the various activities of the Park Friends Groups throughout 2007 were shown in the Friends Insert.

*PLACE* in 2007 was mailed to just under 3000 households. Although this is a slight reduction in the number of constituents mailed, this represents an increase in efficiency. The mailing list was trimmed using the database to ensure that fewer copies were mailed to outdated or wrong addresses. As is usual with all of BGSA's activities, the ability to move towards a more sustainable practice is high on the priority list, so the ability to cut the amount of paper wasted is always a goal.

#### *Website and Listserv*

Marian Lazar also continued to work tirelessly as BGSA webmaster, keeping [www.brooklinegreenspace.org](http://www.brooklinegreenspace.org) up to date with current events. In 2007, the site had more than 300 hits per week. Marian Lazar, with the assistance of Edward Hsieh, continued to update and enhance the website throughout the year.

BGSA continues to maintain and update its email listserv as a distribution method of timely information and notices to the constituency. The listserv currently has close to 400 members.

#### *Other Outreach*

By sending an introductory letter and brochure, BGSA continued to reach out to new homeowners to introduce to them the importance of open space to our quality of life and to make the case for local environmental involvement. Thanks to a major gift, BGSA also completed its new open space map and brochure which was very well received and was subsequently handed out during Earth Day.

## **Board & Organizational Development**

BGSA continued its efforts to improve our organization and structure throughout 2007 by keeping sub-committees active and Board Meetings open and honest discussions of the organization, and its positions and activities. BGSA maintained relationships with other relevant Brookline groups with an interest in land protection. BGSA participated in meetings with the Brookline Conservation Land Trust and with Brookline Community Foundation. BGSA staff and Board of Director members attended and testified at Park and Recreation Commission and Conservation Commission meetings and Selectmen's hearings.

## **Financial Report**

In fiscal year 2007, Brookline GreenSpace Alliance received \$80,971.04 and spent \$69,936.36 in expenses; \$10,000 was withdrawn from operating cash as part of our fiscal agent services to fund the purchase of the Minot Rose Garden fence, resulting in an end actual profit of \$1,034.68. 37.9% of the income came from annual memberships, 24.7% of the income came from individual contributions, 21.7% came from special event income, 13% came from corporate and foundation grants and the remainder came from investment income.

7.4% of expenses were for advocacy, 55.8% were for programming services (communications, education and Green Umbrella support), and 36.8% were for supporting services (administration and fundraising).

We would like to especially thank Brookline Community Foundation for its generous grant for operations. Most of all we thank all of our constituents throughout Brookline who annually support our work through donations and volunteerism.

BGSA is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.





**ADVOCATES FOR OUR GREEN SPACE HERITAGE**

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