



A PUBLICATION OF  
 BROOKLINE GREENSPACE ALLIANCE  
 FALL 2004

# Place

*“Place is the vessel in which the spirit of community is kept.”*

## FOCUS Brookline Golf Club At Putterham Meadows

*By Frances Shedd Fisher*

Most people see golf courses as rolling meadows with occasional pools of sparkling water, edged by magnificent trees. Naturalists appreciate the unmanicured areas, the “rough” that provides habitat to birds, foxes, deer and wild flowers. This aptly describes Putterham Meadows, Brookline’s 119-acre municipal golf course in south Brookline, designed by the golf course architectural firm of Stiles and Van Kleek and built by the Town of Brookline in 1931. To a golfer, and likely true for the 40,000 or so golfers that play Putterham, “The first tee is a magical place on the opening morning of a new season. Dew on the fairway ahead glistens in the sun’s first rays. The manicured green in the distance beckons. The air is crisp, and as golfers wait to hit their first shots, hope trumps reality—ever so briefly.” (Wall Street Journal, April 19, 2004.)

Clearly, these expanses of open space and, in the case of Putterham, “bordering vegetated wetlands,” provide benefits and an experience that goes well beyond that of a popular recreational resource. But how does Putterham measure up in meeting its stated recreational mission? In a course enhancement summary dated August 1999, preparatory to the course’s first major improvements begun in 2001, the Northeast Golf Company said of the course “...the course lies at some of the lowest elevations of a 400-acre watershed. Though routed over a challenging piece of property the holes play nicely.”

However, serious questions have arisen in recent years related to the financial viability of the course under its current management scheme. In 1989 the course was established as an enterprise fund under Mass enabling legislation and has subsequently paid its own way plus returning to the Town an aggregate of \$1.8 million after all expenses, including debt service related to the recent course improvements. In 1988, the last year the course was

maintained by Town employees, the Town’s subsidy to cover the operating loss at Putterham was \$140 thousand. In 1989, the first year maintenance was contracted out, the operation returned \$80 thousand to the Town after expenses.

While the course has contributed to the Town’s revenue pool each year since 1989 (with one exception when in 2001 winter kill required the closing of the course for three months), the \$200 thousand annual fee set several years ago to be paid by the



Man and nature in harmony at Putterham Meadows.  
 Photo by Marian Lazar

enterprise fund to the Town was not met in fiscal year 2004. While the \$200 thousand annual fee may be seen as a somewhat arbitrary figure, it is widely believed that some level of contribution, beyond paying their way, should be provided by municipal golf courses. The theory is that resources owned by the community should be maximized for the benefit of all taxpayers. This point of view has led

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This issue contains the annual insert describing Friends groups activities.

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# Open Space Updates

## Carlton Street Footbridge

The Design Review Committee for the Carlton Street Footbridge, currently chaired by Selectman Michael Sher, has worked collaboratively to produce a proposal for an historically sensitive restoration of the footbridge entrance to Riverway Park. The proposed plan emphasizes accessibility and provides important improvements in the adjacent park. After reviewing many design proposals for the project, the Committee voted unanimously to support a design scheme that has now also been endorsed by the five relevant boards and commissions. The approved design will restore the bridge in its current location as originally built. In addition, the Committee proposal would create handicap accessibility via ramps at the Longwood T stop, which will open the park to a wider range of mobility-impaired citizens. The Committee also recommended regrading at the Netherlands Road entrance to Riverway Park to further facilitate handicap accessibility.

Along Chapel Street the Committee suggests that the MBTA replace the existing chain link fence with a split rail fence and landscape the slope down to the T tracks, possibly under a long-term maintenance agreement between Brookline and the MBTA.

The design process has been skillfully facilitated by Andre Martecchini of Ammann and Whitney, and with the able assistance of the Town's engineering staff. The Engineering Department will be discussing this proposed design with the Massachusetts Historical Commission, and a Selectman's public hearing is planned for late October. An application for a Transportation Enhancement grant (TEA-21) is expected to be submitted to the Metropolitan Area Planning Council by the end of October. The current schedule projects completion of construction by December 2007.

The following residents comprise the Committee: from the neighborhood, Ed Cutler (also a member of the Emerald Necklace Citizens Advisory Committee), Dick Garver, Steve Kanen, and Pam Zelnick; representing Town commissions, Randolph Meiklejohn, Conservation, Kathryn Link, Parks & Recreation, Robert Sneirson, Commission for the Disabled, George Garfinkle, Preservation, and Fred Levitan, Transportation Board. Captain John O'Leary of the Brookline Police Department provided constructive advice in areas of police expertise. Members of the public,

including representatives of Brookline GreenSpace Alliance and the Friends of the Carlton Street Footbridge, actively participated in the process.

## Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Planning Committee met in June to discuss community feedback to the draft comprehensive plan for Brookline. At that meeting, sub-committees were formed to address specific issues including affordable housing, parks, open space and natural resources, community and neighborhood preservation, as well as the overall format and readability of the document. The sub-committees were given the task of re-writing sections of the plan over the summer and to incorporate feedback from the community.

As a member of the parks, open space and natural resources sub-committee, Brookline GreenSpace Alliance made several key suggestions for improving this section of the plan. Overall, we felt there was not enough emphasis on the urgent need to protect significant remaining parcels of land such as Allandale Farm and that there needed to be a greater commitment on behalf of the Town for funding land acquisition. In addition, we felt that the plan under-emphasized the importance of protecting natural systems such as the urban forest and wetlands, and did not do enough to recognize the tremendous contribution parks and open spaces make toward improving public health, economic vitality and the future sustainability of the community. Since the sub-committee met in July, a new draft for the plan elements has been compiled. The sub-committee process is scheduled to end in September, with a meeting of the full Comprehensive Planning Committee planned for October.

## Open Space Plan

Like all communities in Massachusetts, Brookline is required to have an up to date "Open Space Plan," not only to qualify for state funding such as self help, urban self help, land and water conservation grants, but to help plan for the protection of critical parks, open spaces, natural areas and natural resources. The State recognizes the fact that Massachusetts loses over 16,000 acres of land a year to development and that many communities are losing important parts of the "green infrastructure" that provides

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# Message from the President

By Arlene Mattison

Brookline has a proud heritage of green spaces. The formation of the Town itself is tied to the significance its founders placed on open space. As we approach the celebration of Brookline's incorporation, we celebrate our founders' vision and we reflect on the importance of our work now to ensure their intent of a community with beautiful open spaces and land preserved for future generations.

One act of generosity which will provide a green corridor along Route 9 and a buffer for the Reservoir is the granting of a conservation easement by Margaret Richardson. The granting of a conservation easement is a tool stewards of the land can use to protect land from development or other intrusions. Much of the green we appreciate as citizens of Brookline is privately owned. What will Brookline look like in the future and how healthy a community will it be if much of the

privately owned land is developed? Brookline GreenSpace Alliance hopes Mrs. Richardson's generous example will be followed by others who own significant open land which, if lost, will change forever Brookline's landscape. The Town must do what it can to promote such gifts.

The Town must also protect existing public open space. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts provides protection in Article 97, a law that requires a 2/3 vote of the Legislature to change the use of parkland. From recent discussions it is clear that a greater understanding of this law and which properties it protects is necessary. [See discussion of Article 97 below.] The using up by the Town of existing unprotected public open spaces must be cautioned against. Every effort should be made to find solutions which do not build on public open spaces.

Zoning law changes proposed in the draft Comprehensive Plan can also be used to protect open space. More pro-active communities are taking advantage of land acquisition opportunities to protect significant private open space for future generations. While it is challenging to acquire land in a place where real estate values are so high, the value added to a healthy future may be priceless.

We at BGSA hope to inspire the keepers of the land. How hollow our celebration of the birth of our Town would be if we do not consider the quality of life we are passing on. Let's pool our generosity, creativity, and love of our land and trees to create a future richer even than our past, and leave natural beauty and a healthy environment which can be appreciated and celebrated every day by Brookline citizens, now and for generations to come.

## Article 97 – How Much Open Space Does It Protect?

By Frances Shedd Fisher

Article 97 of the Amendments to the Massachusetts Constitution establishes the right of the people to clean air and water, freedom from excessive and unnecessary noise, and the natural, scenic, historic and esthetic qualities of their environment. The office of the General Counsel for the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs has indicated that land that is under the care and control of either the local Conservation Commission or Parks and Recreation Commission is considered protected under Article 97. Land taken or acquired for park or recreation purposes or as conservation lands may not be disposed of or used for other purposes absent a stringent public process comprising:

- The unanimous consent and recommendation of the controlling local commission;
- A 2/3 vote of Town Meeting that the land be used for another municipal purpose;
- A special act of the State Legislature approved by a 2/3 vote of each branch.

Note, however, that school grounds are not protected unless they are separate parcels that come under the jurisdiction of the Parks and Recreation Commission. In Brookline, there-

fore, Longwood Playground, Pierce Playground, and Cypress Field and Playground are protected, while play areas adjacent to the other school properties, such as New Lincoln School, are not protected as open space. Traffic squares and circles are not protected. The Historic Town Green is protected, however, due to stipulations at the time of the sale to the Town by First Parish in Brookline in 1848.

The five acre covered reservoir in Fisher Hill is not protected under Article 97 and is now being planned for development by the Town. Prior to the passage of Article 97 in 1973, a five acre playground on Boylston Street acquired from John Lowell in 1907—Lowell Playground—was sold in 1960 for an office park. Consider how that land might have served to supplement our recreational playing fields needs.

In 2002, when it was discovered that Monmouth Park and the adjacent site of the Brookline Arts Center were in a somewhat ambiguous situation in terms of protection, a clarifying warrant article granting protection under Article 97 was approved by Town Meeting. Soon, the Front Landfill in the

Newton Street project will automatically become protected land due to a permitted change in use and the assumption of control for recreation purposes.

Interestingly, it is not altogether clear if Larz Anderson Park is protected under Article 97. While it certainly would be under the language of the constitutional amendment, given the terms of the bequest to uses "limited to recreational and educational uses," the Town could theoretically locate a school in the park without going through the legislative process outlined above—a conflict with Article 97. The parks use protection under the terms of the bequest is, in a sense, stronger than protection under Article 97 as it appears it cannot be changed legislatively. All the same, the ambiguity raises questions.

The Open Space Planning process beginning in this fall is expected to revisit the question of Article 97 protection in Brookline. Brookline GreenSpace Alliance will be represented and participate in that process.

*(Erin Chute, Director of the Brookline Parks and Open Space Division, consulted on this article. Marian Lazar, BGSA V.P. of Publications, contributed to this article.)*

## The Golf Club at Putterham *(continued from page 1)*

to a determination by the Town Administrator's office that alternative management schemes should be investigated.

A Request for Proposals for contracting out or privatizing management of the course has been prepared in order to test the cost/benefit of that approach. Currently, the course is run with two full-time employees, the director of golfing and the golf pro, plus four seasonal employees, with 10% of the Recreation Director's salary allocated to course operation. In the area, Newton and North Reading, among others, have been totally privatized, while Cambridge and Worcester manage their courses, including maintenance, internally. The cost of contracting out course maintenance at Putterham is currently \$469 thousand per year, well within the experience of other golf courses – public and private, according to Putterham golf director, Jack Neville. In a private management arrangement a guaranteed fee would be paid to the Town by the managing company. This has led some to question what would happen in the event unusual weather or other circumstances led to the management company losing money – would they attempt to cut back on maintenance or raise fees to assure they made up the loss? Chair of the Park and Recreation Commission, John Bain, is against privatizing the course for just this reason. Recreation Director, Bob Lynch, believes it may be better to move the other direction, to bring maintenance back in-house. According to Lynch, in 1988 the Town used 10 full-time employees to maintain the course but, with modern management techniques, should be able to do the equivalent job with three full time employees plus seasonal workers.

The question remains as to why operations are less profitable than in the past. Weather is a major variable in New England and has had a major impact at Putterham in three of the last four years. (According to Neville, Putterham has 10 wet holes compared with other golf courses, which typically have three or four wet holes.) If the current management scheme worked favorably in the past, is it fair to say that the combination of weather and

the downturn in the economy account for the decline in revenues? Sean Cronin, deputy Town Administrator, observes that the operation of a golf course follows a fairly simple business model: the important variables are location, quality of the course including maintenance, and the cost of play. Contributing, but of lesser importance are the amenities. At Putterham the pro shop added \$40 thousand to operating revenues last year, and the Grill on the Green returns 12% of gross revenues to the Town under a net lease; these amenities more than carry their weight.

According to Judy Dore of the Newton Recreation Department, Putterham is



### **BROOKLINE GOLF CLUB ARRANGEMENTS THAT BENEFIT TOWN RECREATION AND COMMUNITY PROGRAMS**

- ⇒ BU golf team uses Putterham in exchange for Town use of BU hockey arena.
- ⇒ Northeastern golf team uses Putterham in exchange for Town use of Northeastern's football field.
- ⇒ Beaver Country Day golf team uses Putterham in exchange for Town use of their fields for soccer.
- ⇒ Park School golf team uses Putterham in exchange for Town use of Park School fields.
- ⇒ Pine Manor golf team uses Putterham in exchange for Town use of Pine Manor fields.
- ⇒ Brookline High School Junior Varsity golf program uses Putterham.
- ⇒ Various Town golf tournaments for charity and community programs are played at Putterham.

the best municipal course in the area. "The course is so beautiful, I just love to be there. It's a great location, has a great putting green, good food in the clubhouse, and parking. What else could you want?" Dore runs four golf clinics, a special ed clinic and a tournament for Newton kids, all at Putterham. When asked why at Putterham, she said, "Newton's teaching area isn't as nice as Putterham's, and the teaching at Putterham is so good. Also, Putterham is the only municipal course that is open year-round." When told that the operation might be privatized, Dore commented, "What a shame. Why would you do that? The people there are so nice, particularly to kids, and the course is well-maintained."

And still, for fiscal year '04 golf revenues were down about 9% at Putterham, comparable to Newton but better than Hingham's 12% reduction. Golf Datatech, an industry reporting company, reports that from August '03 through November '03 golf rounds played were down 6.8% in New England. It is tempting to say it is all due to a cyclical economic downturn coupled with unusually wet and cold weather. But golf analysts and the National Golf Foundation, quoted in a major focus article in the Wall Street Journal of April 19 of this year, note that the game of golf has grown by only about 1.5% a year for the last 10 years. The reasons given – too expensive, too time consuming, competition from other interests, doesn't provide enough exercise, too challenging (only 0.1% of golfers shoot par per the U. S. Golf Association). Brookline's fees for residents and non-residents are considered to be in the affordable range, but Putterham is subject to the other issues. This brings some to the conclusion that a change in management may not solve the perceived problems. In any case, it is clear that Brookline is fortunate to have such a widely respected recreational resource and magnificent greensward. This analysis of the Brookline Golf Club enterprise is meant to educate golfers, Town Meeting members and open space advocates about one of Brookline's premier open spaces.

# An Historic Profile: Putterham Meadows

by Marian Lazar

Brookline began to acquire land for parks and playgrounds in the 1870's. Farsighted citizens and town officials foresaw that as the town lost its rural character, land prices would soar and residents would need public open space for recreation. After the passage by the state legislature of the Playgrounds Act in 1893, the rate at which property for playgrounds was purchased increased. Appropriations of \$100,000 were authorized in each of the years 1896, 1900, 1903 and 1906 for purchase of land in the less developed parts of Brookline.

Between 1899 and 1908 the Park Commissioners purchased several parcels of land in the Putterham area for future public recreation and playgrounds. The area was sparsely populated and the land was inexpensive. A 125 acre parcel was acquired for \$58,307 in the area bounded by Newton and Hammond Streets. No immediate use was designated for the land, and other than some tree planting and pruning, no improvements were made.

The original appearance of Putterham Meadows was much like the remaining undeveloped woodlands in this area—notably Lost Pond and D. Blakely Hoar Conservation Sanctuaries. Most of the land was marshy with accumulations of peat up to 20 feet deep in some places. The rest of the area was wooded upland covered with thin rocky soil. Chestnut trees were still the dominant species in northern woodlands at that time. In addition, there was a large stand of very old hemlock trees on the hillside above the current parking lot. (Unfortunately, many of these trees have died in recent years due to infestation by Woolly Adelgid.)

The first change to the property occurred in 1907, when local citizens requested construction of a bridle path. This path ran for about a mile from Hammond Street to the intersection of Newton and South Streets, roughly following the modern property line between the town land and The Country Club.

In 1926 the Park Commission granted the use of Putterham Meadows to the Brookline Bird Club for use as a bird sanctuary. Members of the bird club contributed money and bird food to keep the sanctuary feeders stocked. The area was considered easy to reach, barely

a mile from the trolley on Boylston Street.

In 1923 a petition to build a golf course at Putterham was filed by Edward Baker and seventeen others and was referred to the town engineer, Henry A. Varney, for consideration. No further action was taken at that time. In June 1928 another petition was filed by Philip G. Bowker, Mrs. L. B. Schick and 3,700 others. The town appropriated \$3,000 in June 1929 to study the question and a committee of five citizens was appointed. The committee approved the idea of building a golf course.

To create enough space for an 18 hole course, it became necessary to exchange some parcels of land with the adjoining Country Club. Two land trades resulted in the town ceding 162,606 square feet to The Country Club and receiving 210,704 square feet in return. Additional small parcels were purchased in 1930 and 1939, the latter for use as a turf nursery.

Once the necessary land was acquired, proposals were solicited from golf course architects. Two conditions were made: the course could not encroach on the hemlock grove, and no hole should be laid out so as to cause the danger of a sliced shot going into an adjoining street. The final plan for the course took advantage of every variation in the natural topography, changing it as little as possible to contain costs.

In June 1929, the entire country was riding the crest of a financial boom. Before the end of that year came the historic crash in the stock market. Assuming that conditions

would soon improve, the town in Special Meeting, September 1930, appropriated \$164,500 for building the Golf Course and \$72,000 for constructing the locker building.

Due to the large amount of wetland it was necessary to drain the course. Some ditching was done as early as 1910 to move the water in a westerly direction into Sawmill Brook. Changes in the drainage contributed to the death of many of the older trees.

As the work progressed, huge stumps, many deep in the peat and more than 20 feet in diameter, were encountered requiring heavy machinery to remove them. Large quantities of dead trees and stumps were disposed of by burning in the uplands, away from the flammable peat.

The course opened on July 10, 1933. At that time the fairways were crossed by many open, water-filled ditches. Players crossed over these on planks, and miles of screening kept balls from falling in. For years after the course was completed, winter frosts forced old stumps and roots up through the peat, which had to be removed in the spring before the fairways could be mown.

The open ditches are gone now, replaced by concrete pipes covered with soil. The trees have prospered and the course has matured into a valuable town asset.

For more information on the construction of the Putterham Meadows Golf Course go to <http://www.brooklinegolf.com>



The first fairway at Putterham Meadows Golf Course on an autumn afternoon.

Photo by Marian Lazar

# A Conversation With Margaret Richardson

By Hugh Mattison

*This interesting interview shows the connection among the landscape, history and culture of our community. Mrs. Richardson's gift to the Town and its citizens continues a Brookline tradition of generosity established in an earlier era by David Sears, Larz and Isabel Anderson and others.*

**HM:** We're here today in June 2004 visiting with Margaret Richardson in her historic house on Boylston Street in Brookline's Fisher Hill neighborhood. Much of this beautiful area was designed, in fact, by Frederick Law Olmsted.

**MR:** But not this particular land.

**HM:** Peggy, you recently donated a conservation restriction on this property to the Town. Can you tell us more about this?

**MR:** Well, we had the chance to purchase and save empty land that connected with the land we already had on Boylston Street. The two lots form our conservation easement, which is a no-build zone. There are some very old trees here. The two portions of the land were once one estate that belonged to the Boylston family, then the Hyslop family, then the Lee family, to which my husband belonged. And Henry Lee, I believe, planted the enormous old trees. Some people from the Arboretum came and were interested in the age of the trees. There is a cork tree that is as old as the Arboretum; that puts it at 1880. Henry Lee lived here just before then. From what I know, he was interested in trees. There is a big copper beech and a cucumber magnolia, which is unusual. I think he also planted the big elm.

**HM:** How long have you lived here?

**MR:** I started living here with my husband in about 1960. He grew up in this house.

**HM:** And his name was, of course, Richardson.

**MR:** His name was Peirson Richardson, mostly known as E. P. He was one of three brothers.

**HM:** Lee, Boylston, Hyslop—those are famous names from this area.

**MR:** The Lees bought this place in 1850 as a retirement or summer place. Henry Lee senior came here half the year for 10 years, until about 1860 when he died. His son, so-called Colonel Henry Lee, built a large brick house right next door, and his father lived in the house we lived in. They lived the rest of the year in downtown Boston, I think around where Temple Place is.

**HM:** How old is this house?

**MR:** A portion of the house was apparently built in the 17th century. It has been added onto at least three times. Originally, a Boylston married a Gardner. The Gardners had a lot of land here in Brookline, and they built a house for the couple. It descended to

“I believe firmly in open space in urban areas and that was one big motivation for the easement. I believe in open space for psychological reasons for all of us, but also for the ecological benefit for conservation. And I think it's kind of in crisis.”

Peter Boylston, and he sold it to his brother Zabdiel Boylston. Their mother was Suzanna Boylston, who became the mother of John Adams, the second president. John Adams came here as a youngster. The land was originally an orchard.

**HM:** You created this easement out of two separate properties, so in a sense you created something that is more than the sum of its parts.

**MR:** Once we had the added piece of land, then it obviously belonged together. And also,

because of the reservoir across the street and the part of Boylston that's farther in town that is still nice and green, we thought it would be a grand idea to continue the green. At first it was going to be plain woods. And then it turned into having so many different trees it's a bit of cultural landscape. It shows a certain period of planting.

**HM:** What accessibility will the public have to this conservation area?

**MR:** Well, it's not really a park because I have no way to maintain it as a park considering liability, but for special purposes or with special permission, we'd be happy to share it. And we hope people will enjoy it as they go up and down Boylston Street.

**HM:** Is the easement in perpetuity?

**MR:** The easement is forever, but the land can be bought and sold subject to the restriction.

**HM:** So we can assume that many generations will enjoy your generosity.

**MR:** I hope so. And I hope there will always be trees, not obviously the same ones, but some way to continue. I believe firmly in open space in urban areas and that was one big motivation for the easement. I believe in open space for psychological reasons for all of us, but also for the ecological benefit for conservation. And I think it's kind of in crisis.

**HM:** By opening this land to the public in a limited way and preserving it you're continuing the Olmstedian philosophy that open space has a restorative and social value. Thank you very much.

**MR:** Yes. You're welcome. It's nice to talk about it, and I'm really glad we could accomplish it, though it took a lot of work.

*Interview was transcribed by Erica Mattison and edited for PLACE by Frances Shedd Fisher. Hugh Mattison is Chairman of the Tree Planting Committee.*

# Brookline Needs An Appropriate Tree Policy

By Hugh Mattison and Frances Shedd Fisher

We all acknowledge the benefits that street trees and trees in our parks provide – cleaner air, bird habitat, fragrant spring blooms, graceful summer shade, beautiful fall color, an often dramatic winterscape, and screening and privacy. Most also understand that today's street trees are beset with challenges – drought, winter road salt, and constrained growing conditions. Less often mentioned, however, are the trees on private property, which far outnumber Brookline's 11,000 street trees. It is these trees growing in more favorable conditions that form the backdrop of our urban forest. It is the majesty of the grand trees with spreading limbs that inspire awe and respect as the champions of this backdrop. Sadly, these venerable trees will not live forever even if afforded the best care, but care and protection are necessary if we are to share these trees with our grandchildren.

Generally less well understood is the fact that our heritage trees, once lost, can never be replaced. It isn't just a matter of waiting a couple of hundred years—the environmental conditions that favored a life long enough for our ancient oaks and beeches to reach majestic proportions no longer exist. It is, frankly, a crime when mature members of our urban forest are felled unnecessarily. But this is happening on a regular basis right here in “leafy” Brookline. It is important that those of us who understand the urgency of this situation work together to raise the alarm. The importance of our mature tree canopy to our general well-being cannot be over-estimated.

Of course diseased trees and trees that have become hazardous must be taken down. And, on occasion, hard choices must be made, for example where a tree is undermining the foundation and integrity of a house. Brookline GreenSpace is not suggesting we should abandon common sense. We are proposing our constituency join with us in taking a proactive, leadership role in investigating ways to protect our green infrastructure. Worthy citizens like Peggy Richardson understand the value of trees and open space to a healthy community. (See “A Conversation with Margaret Richardson” on page 6.) Each

of us can contribute by following the values Mrs. Richardson's gift incorporates—care for nature and community.

We think the time is right to take a stand. BGSA Executive Director, Tina Oddleifson, tells us that she gets more calls on the subject of tree removal, asking what can be done to stop the destruction, than any other single subject. See photo below for an example of the outrage suffered recently by residents of Wellington Terrace, just off Cypress Street.

The neighbors quickly circulated a petition censuring the property owner for the unneighborly removal of so many mature trees. Now we must focus energy on beginning the hard work of designing Town policies that assure a process for thoughtful, sensible consideration before significant trees are removed, and sanctions that support enforcement. Such policies raise consciousness, perhaps the most effective way to change behavior.

The work has begun, but it will be up to us to move the agenda forward. See the GreenViews column by Fred Perry reproduced on

the BGSA website [www.brooklinegreen-space.org](http://www.brooklinegreen-space.org)—in which Perry outlines a modest proposal that is expected to be introduced at the Spring Town Meeting. Town Hall is on the move as well. The Town's Tree Warden, Tom Brady, has recently designed a model tree protection agreement with stringent sanctions to protect the heritage trees at St. Aidan's. The property owner and the construction company who will develop the St. Aidan's site have signed the agreement. Neighbors and Brookline GreenSpace Alliance will assist the Tree Warden in keeping a watchful eye to assure the agreement is honored. Development is the enemy of trees, but the conservation easements and maintenance plan designed to protect the historic copper beech and other heritage trees at St. Aidan's established the framework for protection in that instance; the rest is up to us. We have proved we can make a difference in Brookline if we choose to.

*(Hugh Mattison is Chair of the Tree Planting Committee. Frances Shedd Fisher is editor of PLACE.)*



The clear cutting of this lot was done without notice or process that would have provided an opportunity for input from neighbors and the Town's Tree Warden.

Photo by Linda Hamlin

# Events

## *garden party*



### SCENES FROM BROOKLINE GREENSPACE SPRING GARDEN PARTY

On a lovely day in June friends of the Alliance gathered in the garden of Louise and Bob Bowditch.

- 1** Arlene Mattison, Alliance President, with Kate Bowditch, Vice President.
  - 2** Elisabeth Mundel, Chair of BGSA Development Committee, greets guests.
  - 3** Bob Durand, former Secretary of Environmental Affairs, addressing the gathering.
  - 4** Guests Peter Stringham and Hugh Dunlap and other guests in background.
- Photos by Harry Mattison.



Arlene Mattison, President of Brookline GreenSpace Alliance, and Barbara Mackey, Co-Chair of the Friends of Hall's Pond, greet guests at a late summer tea at the beautifully restored house once home to Minna Hall, a founder of Mass Audubon. The current owners of the house, Dan Dougherty and Jerry Izzi, generously opened their home and garden for the benefit of the Brookline Environmental Learning Project, a program originally established by the Friends of Hall's Pond as the Hall's Pond Learning Project.

Photo by Bruce Wolff

## *summer tea*



# Activities in Our Parks



3



2



4



5



6



7

## PARKS FOR PLAYING, LEARNING AND RELAXING (AND SOMETIMES WORKING)

- 1 Arlene Mattison at October 3rd Festival in the Park, holding an invasive bittersweet vine strangling a tree branch.  
Photo by Bruce Wolff
- 2 Lazy summer day at Amory Park.  
Photo by Marian Lazar
- 3 Mary Dewart and Wallis Wickham Raemer in a late summer game at the recently renovated Longwood Playground.  
Photo by Jean Stringham
- 4 See-saw in the park.  
Photo by Jean Stringham
- 5 Creating new tree friendly tree pits.  
Photo by Tom Brady
- 6 Marian Lazar leading a recent walk at Lost Pond.  
Photo by Bruce Wolff
- 7 Getting ready for fall soccer at Cypress Field  
Photo by Marian Lazar



1

# Biking In Brookline And Green Dog Trial



In the spring 2004 issue of PLACE we asked readers for feedback on two issues. The first question we posed had two parts: “what would you propose generally to make transit biking safer and more convenient in Brookline; or if you are a non-biker, what are your views on the impact of bikers on pedestrian and auto transit safety?” On the question of proposals to assist bicyclists, this from bicycle enthusiast and advocate Anita Johnson: “I would like bike lanes and ‘share the road’ signs on major through streets; I would like roads without potholes or manhole cavities; I would like bike parking hoops on sidewalks in commercial areas, like the ones in Cambridge; I would like respect from drivers and care paid when opening car doors.”



Some cities have signs that remind drivers that bicycles have equal right to use the roads.

Photo by Marian Lazar

Another reader responded “I realize bike riders have a right to be on the streets and are

contributing to a healthy lifestyle and a cleaner planet, but I get angry when they don’t obey the rules of the road and when they ride on the sidewalks endangering pedestrians. Many who ride bikes in traffic seem to think that no rules apply to them. They create hazard which makes people resent them.”

In response to our second question on how the Green Dog trial is going, we had the following letter from Kathe Geist: “Brookline Avenue Park seems as clean or cleaner than it was before the Green Dog trial. I especially like the fact that we have posted rules, so everyone is on notice to clean up. (I tell my dog that if she gets in a fight, they’ll throw us out. Even on that level it’s nice to be able to invoke a “higher authority.”) In some of the other parks where I’ve heard complaints I think the problems often come from a multitude of already illegal activities that have nothing to do with Green Dog—dogs wandering around sans owners and people running their dogs off-leash at night.

“An additional comment: we have plenty of trash barrels around the baseball diamond at Brookline Avenue Park, but just as there are dog owners who leave messes, players and fans, kids and adults, sometimes leave terrific messes.” [Editor’s note: tax dollars for services go farther when citizens “Pitch in”! Thank you for the added comment, Kathe.]

We heard from several residents that omitting Winthrop Park from the trial made no sense. Paul Levitt explained after investigating, “It

turns out that when the Parks Commission published the final list, they accidentally omitted Winthrop Park. They will not correct the error until after the program expires next summer, and will require that the entire public hearing process be repeated.”

In a separate correspondence Levitt commented, “While I appreciate the effort that has gone into the development of the Green Dog program, as a new dog owner I’ve run up against a number of shortcomings and irrational limitations of the program. A case in point is the arbitrary time restriction, which makes it impossible to exercise a dog after work. I object to being forbidden to use the parks paid for by my tax dollars for even two or three hours a day, with every other use given priority over the real and legitimate need of dog owners. I also object to the waste of resources involved in draconian enforcement of rules when the police should have better things to do.”

Finally, another writer took the opposite point of view. “It seems the dog owner lobby is pretty powerful in Brookline when about 1,500 dogs and their owners are given so much special attention, often at the expense of young children and other fragile users of our parks. I like dogs, but think their owners should be heavily fined if they don’t clean up after their pets, whether they are on or off leash.”

See [www.brooklinegreenspace.org](http://www.brooklinegreenspace.org) for complete list of parks included in Green Dog trial.

BGSA is pleased to be included in this year’s Simon Evening of Giving. The Mall At Chestnut Hill will be opened Sunday evening, November 21 for a special shopping night which includes discounts, door prizes, and entertainment. Ticket price of \$10 will go in its entirety for charitable purposes (70% to BGSA, 30% to Simon Youth Foundation). Please support BGSA in this fun way. Call 617 277-4777 to purchase.

# Wetlands

## What are they and why do they have value?

By Tina Oddleifson

The term 'wetland' can be hard for some people to associate with an urban—suburban area like Brookline. While most Brookline residents know about and value our conservation sanctuaries like Hall's Pond and Lost Pond, we don't have a major "swamp" like the Everglades, so what do we mean when we talk about the urgent continuing need to protect wetlands in Brookline?

The answer lies in the important function that even the smallest wetland area provides. Like an absorbent sponge, wetlands collect rainwater and help prevent the enormous costs associated with flooding—something that Brookline residents have experienced first hand. They also filter out contaminants, cleaning up storm-water runoff before it reaches waterways like the Muddy and the Charles Rivers. And they provide some of the most diverse and important wildlife habitat in our Town. Losing these resources impairs the water quality in our area streams and rivers, increases the likelihood of flooding and its associated costs, and reduces declining habitat even further—and with it the opportunity to teach our children important lessons about our environment.

Each encroachment on a local wetland may

not seem all that important, but collectively they are adding up. According to the Brookline Conservation Commission, Brookline has experienced a sharp increase in the number of wetland filings by those planning to build homes in areas covered by the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act. (WPA), the law used to enforce wetlands protection in our state.

The WPA was established to address the protection of water supplies and sources, flood control, pollution prevention and fish and wildlife habitat. The act establishes a public review process for projects that could potentially impact areas such as rivers, streams, banks, freshwater wetlands, coastal wetlands, dunes, flats, marshes, swamps etc. that are subject to regulation under the WPA; and allows these areas to be regulated by local conservation commissions and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

Unfortunately, the law has deficiencies that have forced 168 communities in Massachusetts to develop their own local wetland bylaws in order to mitigate the amount of wetland destruction and disturbance that is still allowed under the WPA.

For example, the WPA provides little protection for intermittent streams, small or isolated wetlands or vernal pools that have not been previously certified – many of the types of wetlands found in Brookline. Although the WPA requires a 100 foot buffer zone between a wetland and new development, this offers limited protection for these resources and often results in increased pollution, eutrophication (the process by which organic material such as algae accumulates and slowly replaces oxygen, eventually destroying a wetland) and the spread of invasive, non-native vegetation. In addition, the law still allows for a wetland to be disrupted or destroyed entirely under certain conditions.

Brookline's soon to be released comprehensive plan will recommend the adoption of a local wetlands bylaw to enhance the protection and oversight of remaining wetlands in our community. The built-up nature of our community makes it all the more important that we protect our remaining wetlands. It will be up to us to ensure this important conservation measure develops the public support it will need for adoption.

### Yes! I want to protect Brookline's GreenSpace heritage for generations to come.

As a member of the Alliance you'll receive our newsletter, periodic e-mail alerts to keep you informed of timely meetings and events affecting open space in Brookline, as well as invitations to educational forums and events on open space issues in our community.

Contributions are tax deductible. Neighborhood Associations and Friends groups are invited to join the Alliance. Please call 277-4777 for information

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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Mail to BGSA  
40 Webster Place  
Brookline, MA 02445

### Get Connected!

**Visit** our website at [www.brooklinegreenspace.org](http://www.brooklinegreenspace.org) and find updated information on hot topics, events and other information about open space issues in Brookline. You'll also find an open space map, directions to sanctuaries, and contact information for all the Park Friends Groups in Brookline.

**Join** our email list serve and you'll receive important updates and information on events, meetings, and other time-sensitive information pertinent to open space in Brookline. Just send us an email at [bgsa@world.std.com](mailto:bgsa@world.std.com) to let us know you want to join.

**REGARDING WARRANT ARTICLE 11**

## Cell Tower Siting

Warrant article 11 proposes that a cell tower be placed in Walnut Hills Cemetery. The intent of the article is to address poor cell telephone reception in South Brookline by permitting the Town to lease space for a tower among the trees at historic Walnut Hills Cemetery. Brookline GreenSpace Alliance believes further discussion is warranted and other options should be reconsidered before a decision is made to place a cell tower in Walnut Hills Cemetery, or any other public open space .

## Updates *(continued from page 2)*

important environmental, economic, recreation and health benefits to a community.

Brookline's current open space plan ends in 2005 and a committee has been formed to start the process for updating and revising the plan for 2005 - 2010. Tina Oddleifson from Brookline GreenSpace Alliance, Roberta Schnoor and Anna Eleria from Brookline Conservation Commission, and Selectman Michael Sher will be co-chairing this planning process, which will begin in early October.

Brookline's current open space plan, which involved a thorough analytical process, has been used as an example for other communities around the state. Because of the extensive amount of planning that has gone into Brookline's Comprehensive Plan, and because our current open space plan already lays the groundwork for future actions, this planning effort will be focused primarily on the action items needed to advance many of the conservation goals outlined in the 2000 - 2005 plan. If you have questions about this planning process or would like to know more about participating in public meetings, please contact Tina Oddleifson at 617-277-4777.

## Save Trees Join our Growing E-Mail List!

You'll receive notices of important meetings, events and activities related to open space in Brookline, along with updates on projects and other information. It's a great way to stay in touch with our environment. Email [bgsa@world.std.com](mailto:bgsa@world.std.com) to sign up.

## Brookline Businesses for the Environment

Brookline GreenSpace Alliance thanks the following Brookline Businesses for supporting our work!

Amory Architects

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The Pear Tree

Whole Foods Market

Thanks to Software Tool and Die for hosting the Brookline GreenSpace website – [www.brooklinegreenspace.org](http://www.brooklinegreenspace.org)



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