

# 25 years of greenspace advocacy

# PLACE

Spring 2013

Brookline GreenSpace Alliance is a non-profit membership organization dedicated to the enhancement of open space in Brookline by supporting citizens in caring for their green spaces.



## The Parks Issue

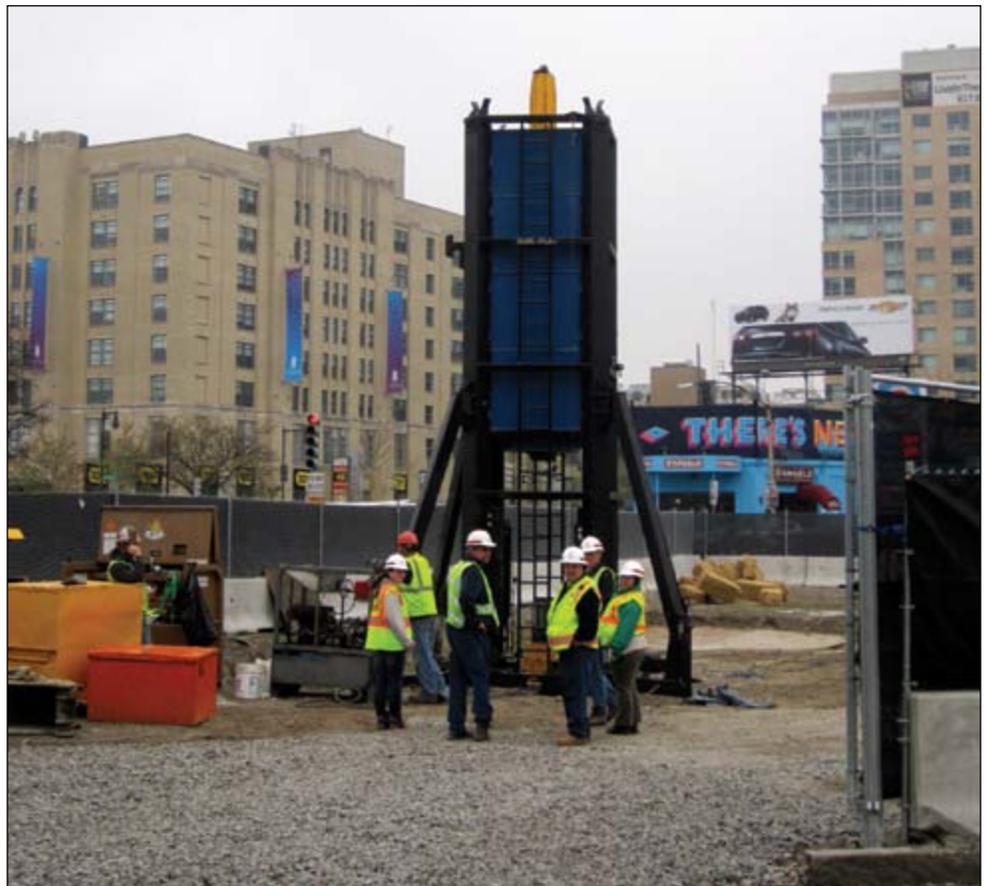
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## Muddy River Restoration Project - Update

by Hugh Mattison

Three months into the Muddy River Restoration Project, and the Landmark Center Area at the old Sears building looks more like a public works project than a flood control and environmental restoration effort. Screened chain-link fencing now surrounds the Phase 1 Project area from the culvert at The Riverway to the Fens Bridge at Avenue Louis Pasteur. Selected trees have been cut down, shredded and spread as mulch to protect the soil. Massive cranes point skyward amid the rumble of heavy earth moving equipment. From time to time, traffic is stopped to accommodate statnamic testing to determine the proper depth of the shafts needed to support the concrete culverts and wing walls to be installed in the Riverway area, under Brookline Avenue and near Avenue Louis Pasteur. Other

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Statnamic testing at Brookline Avenue and The Fenway

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Marian Lazar

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# BGSA Annual Meeting 2013

by Deborah Rivers, AIA LEED AIP

This year's annual meeting of the Brookline GreenSpace Alliance (BGSA) represented the culmination of the celebration of the organization's twenty-fifth year. It was held on Earth Day at Wheelock College's Brookline campus. The meeting was preceded by a tour of Longwood Mall led by Tom Brady, Tree Warden and John Sears, whose ancestors planted the stately beech trees which are the feature of the Mall. President Arlene Mattison gave the welcoming remarks, followed by Ron Brown's Treasurer's report. Anita Johnson introduced new Board members Nancy Madden, Clint Richmond, Marilyn Ray Smith, and Peggy Ueda who were unanimously voted in along with returning Board members Harry Bohrs, Arlene Mattison, Fred Perry and Bruce Wolff.

In introducing Erin Chute Gallantine, Arlene highlighted the Alliance's role in holding the conservation restriction for the Fisher Hill



John Sears standing next to the sign about his great great grandfather, David Sears, and the planting of the Longwood Mall. Photo by Jean Stringham



Beech trees on Longwood Mall. Photo by Jean Stringham

Reservoir Park, which she said is consistent with the organization's mission "to preserve, protect and enhance the open spaces of Brookline." Erin made a presentation about the proposed Fisher Hill Reservoir Park, illustrated with drawings by landscape architects Klopfer Martin Design Group. She stated that the design of the park reflects a balance of conservation and community recreation needs. Among the proposed features of the park are Kite Hill, the Promenade with water rill, bioswales for stormwater management, and creative play elements. Mattison urged the audience to support the Park and Open Space Division's \$1.2 million request to Town Meeting to fund the park.

The evening's formal program concluded with Jean Stringham honoring the many donors who contributed to the Tree Grove for the Fisher Hill Reservoir Park. The fundraising goal has been met and Brookline GreenSpace Alliance will be able to contribute 25 trees celebrating its 25th anniversary and the volunteer efforts that have made Brookline parks special. Her remarks were followed by a reception.

# Parks Update

In preparing this issue of PLACE I had the opportunity for a wide-ranging conversation with Erin Chute Gallantine, Brookline's Director of Parks and Open Space. We discussed Brookline's parks; what's happening now, updates, renovations and of course Fisher Hill Reservoir Park. We also touched on the issues of sustainable maintenance and accessibility.

**ML:** Can you explain your maintenance strategy for the parks. What is zone management and how is it evolving?

**ECG:** The town is divided into four geographic zones that include parks, playgrounds, school grounds and town grounds: North Brookline, Brookline Village and an area south of route 9, South Brookline and a new zone for the Emerald Necklace. The Emerald Necklace zone was created to take better advantage of the maintenance provided by the crews through the Maintenance Collaborative. The collaborative was conceived with the Massachusetts Department of Correction, Boston and Brookline parks departments and the Emerald Necklace Conservancy to provide essential maintenance work in the parks through a pre-release vocational training program. The program equips crew members with job skills that will facilitate re-entry into the workforce and their communities and provides much needed maintenance in the landscape. Crews receive classroom and on-the-job training in horticulture and landscape maintenance from professionals paid for through the Emerald Necklace Conservancy, and make a contribution to society by maintaining the park landscape.

A separate Emerald Necklace zone allows the zone manager to oversee the corrections crew and build institutional knowledge of the Necklace parks to provide ongoing management consistent with the park master plan. This approach will help the Town hone the proper skills and knowledge over time to maintain the Emerald Necklace most efficiently and effectively once the Muddy River Restoration Project is complete.

In addition to these zones, there are three town-wide overlay zones covering athletic fields, horticulture and cemetery. A new section has been opened at the Walnut Hills cemetery. This is also a good place to mention that there is a need for new cemetery trustees.

Currently, we are reviewing the zones and how crews are distributed; what unique talents and training they can provide. One goal is to create new and rewarding challenges for zone managers. We have strong staff and crews who do a good job despite a loss of full time staff and seasonal employees over the last 10 years.

We now do things differently, with greater efficiency, better equipment and more skilled staff. We also balance staff work and contractors. Contractors provide the regularly scheduled maintenance at Skyline Park, Beacon Street and all school properties. Town crews address litter, trash, playground, athletic field conditions and special requests. Contracted crews, such as the outsourced forestry crew, have heavy equipment that the town doesn't own and can provide those services more efficiently. In addition to their other tasks, the Operations Manager generally oversees the contract crews that are performing special projects and capital improvements and the General Foreman oversees the contract crews that are providing regularly scheduled maintenance. Special projects at school and athletic fields are managed by town staff.

**ML:** What park projects are happening this year?

**ECG:** Work at Clark Playground is almost complete. The goal in this park (and all our parks) is to address safety and accessibility needs and create places for multigenerational use that serve all ages and abilities in the community

**ML:** I've noticed the seating areas that have been installed there.

**GCG:** Yes. We want to have different ways for people to gather; to design a comfortable place for all park users. An opening celebration will be held on Saturday June 15<sup>th</sup> from 1-3 pm.

Billy Ward Playground is in the middle of construction. Our goal is to have a soft opening by mid-summer. This is a very

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## Muddy River Restoration Project (continued from page 1)

work includes soil borings and sampling, survey, and observation well installation.

By mid-July, traffic management changes will occur including relocation of the Landmark Center exit driveway, re-routing outbound traffic from Brookline Avenue around the Sears rotary, and a traffic signal will control the congestion that occurs when traffic from Park Drive merges with traffic exiting The Riverway. The Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), which controls the Project, will shortly begin work on the installation of the concrete shafts that will support the Brookline Avenue culvert. This will allow the existing 7 x 9-foot pipe to be replaced with a 10 x 24-foot precast concrete arched culvert about 330 feet long which will extend from Brookline Avenue under the existing jughandle road (which will be removed) downstream to the upstream end of Upper Fens Pond. Then the existing pipe will be sealed and filled with concrete slurry.

While Phase 1, primarily soil and sediment excavation and roadway construction, deals with the area from The Riverway culvert to Avenue Louis Pasteur, Phase 2 will extend upstream through Brookline to Wards Pond and downstream to the Boylston Street bridge. It will involve dredging of invasive Phragmites, sediment removal, and shoreline stabilization, all of which will deal with flood control which has been funded. Although Phase 2 is independent on completion of Phase 1, funding for construction of desirable environmental restoration features (historic shoreline recreation and plantings) may require additional funding, some of which may need to be non-federal. ACOE hopes to start the design of Phase 2 relatively soon. For further information see BGSA website - [brooklinegreenspace.org](http://brooklinegreenspace.org) and Facebook page, as well as Army Corps and Muddy River MMOC websites.



Trees have been cleared from Upper Fens Pond to reveal the River and to allow for future replanting

## Open Space Plan Update

by Roberta Schnoor, Brookline Conservation Commission

Every five years the Town of Brookline undertakes a formal open space planning process. An open space plan that has been approved by the State is a prerequisite for many environmentally-related grants for which Brookline may apply and is also a valuable planning tool for the community. Led by the Conservation Commission, the plan committee includes representatives from many boards and commissions within town as well as non-profit groups and committees with an interest in the local environment. Brookline GreenSpace Alliance is an active participant and, in the last two plans, has been a co-chair of the process.

The most recent plan, Open Space 2010, was the culmination of a process that took place throughout 2010 and the plan was published in May 2011. In addition to highlighting the ongoing need to protect important open spaces in Brookline, the current plan recognizes the growing threats posed by climate change and the links between open space and public health.

The Action Plan created as part of each Open Space Plan always casts a very wide net. This is in part a recognition that many town organizations and committees are involved in advancing the goals of the plan. This approach also gives Brookline the latitude to pursue future opportunities, which may involve grant applications, which are not necessarily apparent at the time the plan is being finalized. For the Conservation Commission, however, there is always the question of how to prioritize the many Action Plan items in terms of our Commission's interests and abilities and what we perceive to be the most important next steps.

Following the State's approval of Open Space 2010, the Conservation Commission decided to choose five areas identified in the Action Plan where we would focus our attention. We have formed ourselves into subcommittees, each of which is charged with assessing

and advancing progress in a particular area.

The areas are as follows:

- Unprotected Open Space
- Green Corridors
- Accessibility
- Watersheds and Infrastructure
- Habitat and Wildlife

In 2012, the subcommittees began to meet and develop information.

The Unprotected Open Space group decided that a better understanding of conservation restrictions currently held by the town would be an important precursor to seeking new restrictions. The group has conducted five site visits to properties currently under restriction and has been evaluating tax treatment of properties under restriction.

The Green Corridors group is working on mapping existing green corridors and identifying reliable data sources for the mapping. These sources include bird databases, recording of birds directly, road kill data and others.

The Accessibility group has been evaluating with the town the impact of changes in federal accessibility guidelines. Future plans include obtaining information on links between public transportation and open space and determining how to publicize this information.

The focus for the Watersheds and Infrastructure group is on working with the Town Engineering staff to identify some projects where new technologies and techniques could be implemented. These discussions are ongoing.

Finally, the Habitat and Wildlife group is considering several ideas, some connected to Green Corridors, including a town-wide awareness project related to a particular species.

The Conservation Commission is hopeful that this focused approach to advancing some of the Open Space Plan goals will yield some positive results!

**Yes! I want to support the local environment.**

Join online: click the [Join Us](#) link on our home page [brooklinegreenspace.org](http://brooklinegreenspace.org)

### Stay Connected

Visit [www.brooklinegreenspace.org](http://www.brooklinegreenspace.org) to learn about open space issues and upcoming events.

E-mail updates save trees and let us keep the community better informed. Please send your email address to:

[info@brooklinegreenspace.org](mailto:info@brooklinegreenspace.org)

## Recognizing Heritage Trees

by Phil Shabecoff, Brookline Tree Planting Committee

**T**owering above a private garden on a corner of Garrison Road is a magnificent old tree, its gnarled and twisted trunk at least four feet in diameter at chest height, its branches, thick with slender leaves in season, spread out into the street. It must be well over 100 years old.

The tree is an elm and, tragically, like many elms, it is suffering from disease. But Tom Brady, Brookline's tree warden, thinks it can be saved. If it can, it should be because that tree deserves recognition and respect for its age, its beauty and its imposing presence in our community.

Without a doubt, there are many more trees in our town that are worthy of such recognition and, when possible, protection. That is why Brookline's Tree Planting Committee, or TPC,

is currently developing a heritage tree program to single out those trees worthy of being honored for their age, their size, their beauty, their rarity. If a tree is a recognized landmark in a community, or, has historical or cultural significance, it should also be recognized.

The Tree Planting Committee consists of three town residents appointed by the Board of Selectmen. Its primary responsibility is to advise the tree warden on the placing and species of street trees to be planted. It also holds hearings on requests to remove street trees. The committee was established in 1886 and is believed to be the oldest institution of its kind in the nation. This Committee believes that a heritage tree program will be a valuable contribution to the appreciation and preservation of our urban forest as well as of individual trees.

A heritage tree program is a work in progress, and details such as what triggers designation and who administers the program have still to be decided. The TPC is leaning, however, to several broad outlines of how to move forward. First of all, the program would be voluntary. The nomination of trees on private property for heritage designation would be made by property owners, or if by others, such as members of the TPC, only with the owner's consent. Nominated trees would be evaluated by the Town Arborist, perhaps with the participation of the TPC to determine if they meet criteria for recognition. Trees in parks, on streets and other town property would be nominated by the Town Arborist and evaluated by the full committee. Specific criteria are still to be decided.

Trees selected for heritage designation would be recognized with a certificate from the town and included on a registry of heritage trees kept at town Hall. A registry might also be maintained in the Library, and on a separate page on the Town's website if approved by Town officials.

*Continued on back page*

## Parks Update (continued from page 3)

difficult space. The park is small and in a very dense neighborhood. The change in grade adds to the challenge.

The design review process has been completed and construction will start in the fall at both Warren Field/Eliot Playground on Eliot Street and Waldstein (Dean Road) Park.

At the Old Burying Ground we are working in a private-public partnership with the Friends of the Old Burying Ground to restore the landscape, preserve the stones/monuments and stabilize the tombs. The Friends hired conservators to draw up an assessment plan for the whole burying ground. They are currently providing support for restoration of the historic fence circling the Cook Family Plot; an ornate fence in poor condition. The Burying Ground is open to the public from dawn to dusk.

**ML:** *What changes have you made to maintenance practices to make them more sustainable?*

**ECG:** We choose areas for less mowing. An example is the wet meadow at Larz Anderson Park, above the lagoon. This damp area is hard to mow but becomes a maintenance challenge if left unmown, as larger plants such as sumac move in. We are trying less frequent mowing of athletic fields and open mall areas; cutting every 9 - 12 days to see how it works.

Heavily used areas such as Emerson, Knyvet, Olmsted Parks need special care, especially this spring after a winter of heavy snow damage. Athletic fields are cut twice a week from April to June, once a week July and August, twice a week September and October, depending on growth. Cutting is important for strong root growth, but tractors on the fields are not always cutting. They also aerate and fertilize. The crews have the tractors and they use them to further the turf restoration program goals of the Division.

All athletic fields are irrigated, either at night or in the early morning. There is a delicate balance between the needs of teams and those of maintenance.

**ML:** *What else is happening in the parks?*

This summer Parks and Open Space will again sponsor three outdoor movies at

Devotion, a central location accessible by public transportation. At Allerton Overlook in Olmsted Park we will cosponsor a concert and movie with the Emerald Necklace Conservancy. The Recreation Department will present concerts at Emerson Garden.

**ML:** *What about long-term plans?*

**ECG:** We are working on plans for Fisher Hill Reservoir Park. Town meeting will consider a \$1.2 million additional appropriation for the park. Why is this necessary? The park budget was established in 2003 and was never adjusted for inflation. At that time there were no engineering studies of the site. In addition, site conditions deteriorated over the last decade including decline in the condition of the gatehouse. The final design also developed solutions for stormwater management and accessibility. The additional funding will allow preservation of the historic gate house (\$300,000 to stabilize the building and restore the exterior); the promenade; the water rill; the woodlands plantings. This park is a legacy for the town for years to come. We have no other park like it in town. It will contain unique features; the GreenSpace Grove, the wet meadow with boardwalk, kite hill, comfort station; a multigenerational facility, fully accessible to all. Now is the time to fund the project fully.

**ML:** *What about accessibility? Are our parks accessible to everyone?*

**ECG:** The Park and Recreation Commission takes full accessibility very seriously, including paths, play areas, seating. The goal is to create parks as community gathering places for people of all ages and abilities. All parts of Fisher Hill Reservoir Park will be accessible.

At Waldstein and Warren parks there will be accessible perimeter and interior walking paths, geared to all ages; moms with strollers, kids on riding toys and bikes and older residents.

For those unable to physically negotiate the parks, there are video tours available on the Park and Open Space website.

**ML:** *Thank you for your time.*

*Brookline GreenSpace Alliance has reached its fund raising goal for the GreenSpace Grove and will present the park with 25 trees in celebration of our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary.*

*Town Meeting funding is a singular opportunity to create a new park in Brookline. The last acquisition of land for outdoor recreation space was in the early 1970's.*



The Beech tree at St. Aidan's. Photo by Jean Stringham



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## Recognizing Heritage Trees (continued from page 6)

As the list of significant public trees grows over time it might be the basis for guided tours of Brookline's notable trees.

The program would serve several goals. One is to give an incentive to property owners to keep significant trees healthy for future generations. Another is to call community attention to these special trees and the need to protect them. It would recognize property owners who protect their trees. And, finally, it would promote appreciation of the value of trees and their importance in our daily lives.

As Tom Brady noted, "our urban forest has been a characteristic of Brookline since its founding." Despite the stresses of pollution, insect infestation and other assaults on trees, our forest is still thriving thanks to the care and resources devoted to it by the town and private property owners. There are now an estimated 50,000 to 60,000 trees in the town, over 11,000 of them on our public streets alone.

Our trees are of inestimable value. They provide beauty and shade; they give character to our streets and neighborhoods, add color to the

landscape and soften the harsh outlines of manmade structures. Trees reduce air pollution, help protect health both physical and mental, produce oxygen, conserve water and soil, save energy, reduce noise and provide habitat for birds and other wildlife. It is well documented that trees add value to real estate and, conversely, that the absence of trees is characteristic of impoverished urban communities.

A Heritage Tree Program, even a voluntary one without legal protection of significant trees, will encourage the care and longevity of important trees.

### From Whole Foods Brookline:

On Friday, April 26th in honor of Earth month, Arbor Day and our very first community giving day in the Brookline community we hosted the Brookline GreenSpace Alliance as our first 5% day recipient! Members from the BGSA came by in two shifts to table at our store and chat up their great non-profit and make connections with the community. We're excited to kick off our history with such an amazing group of people and can't wait for our next 5% day!



At left; Jessica Willson shopping at Whole Foods. Above: President Arlene Mattison with Hugh Mattison and Frank Caro. Photo by Jean Stringham.