

Place

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

*From a speech delivered in
Boston by Donald Rypkema,
consultant to the National Trust
for Historic Preservation, at
the 1999 Annual Meeting of
HistoricMassachusetts (HMI)*

PLACE is published twice
a year, in spring and fall, by
Brookline GreenSpace Alliance,
370 Washington Street,
Brookline, MA 02445

This issue contains the annual insert
describing Friends groups' activities

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BGSA supports passage of the CPA Question 4, on November 7th

By Jay Gonzalez

On November 7th, Brookline voters will have the chance to vote on whether or not the Town should adopt the Community Preservation Act (the “CPA”). Communities that adopt this state legislation receive a match to additional revenues raised locally for certain community purposes. Among other important opportunities, the CPA presents Brookline with the chance to generate new revenues for protecting and enhancing our valuable green and open spaces, and for the creation of new active and passive recreational spaces. Funding is needed for these purposes, and the CPA offers Brookline taxpayers the most fiscally responsible way of addressing these needs.

OPEN SPACE A COMMUNITY PRIORITY

Protecting, preserving and enhancing open space have been identified as top priorities of the Town. Informed by a planning process that took more than four years and involved the input of hundreds of town citizens, consultants and town officials, the 2005-2015 Brookline Comprehensive Plan states as one of its primary visions and recommendations that: “Public open space throughout the Town will be preserved and enhanced, and every opportunity will be taken to add new open spaces and programming. To the extent possible, efforts will be made to preserve and protect private open spaces.”

THREAT OF DEVELOPMENT

According to the Town’s 2005 Open Space Plan, there are over 750 acres of unprotected open space in Brookline. This unprotected land includes 13 priority parcels, five acres or larger, which the Open Space Plan identifies as having significant environmental value. Some of these parcels are at risk of development. And many have significant scenic value or potential for active recreation. In addition, these natural green spaces serve important functions for our community, including protecting wetlands, promoting ground-water infiltration and flood control, and providing

habitat for native plant and wildlife species.

NEED FOR ADDITIONAL RECREATIONAL LAND

In addition to more playing fields, Town residents consistently call for more walking and bike trails and more pocket parks in our denser neighborhoods. Based on statistically valid surveys of Town residents and interviews with interest groups, the Town’s June 2006 Parks, Open Space and Recreation Strategic Master Plan concludes that the Town needs to acquire 36 acres of land by 2010 to meet its passive and active recreation needs and for conservation purposes. The Master Plan estimates the recommended land acquisition and other improvements will cost between \$12.2 million and \$18.9 million over the next six years, and between \$57.6 million and \$62.6 million more over the following 6 to 12 years.

NEED FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO TOWN-OWNED PARKS

Many of our publicly-owned parks and recreational lands are in need of improvements. There are currently approximately \$6.2 million of park, recreation and open space projects on the Town’s 5-year capital improvements plan that would be eligible for funding under the CPA, including the acquisition of the Fisher Hill Reservoir, the construction of a playing field and passive recreation areas at the Fisher Hill site, improvements to Riverway, Brookline Reservoir, Larz Anderson and other sites. In addition, Town officials have identified approximately \$12 million of other CPA-eligible park, recreation and open space improvements that the Town does not plan to carry out due to a lack of funding, including improvements to Amory Playground and Emerson Garden.

THE CPA – HOW IT WORKS AND WHAT WE GAIN

If the Town adopted the CPA on November 7th, it would generate a significant stream of new revenue for the Town dedicated to the acquisition, creation, preservation, rehabilitation and restoration of: open space, recreational lands, affordable housing and

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Beacon Street Project: Summary Observations and Analysis

By Edward Hsieh

Throughout Brookline, projects to improve the quality of life in our bustling Town happen all around us, but none is more apparent than the \$15.8 million Beacon Street Traffic Improvements Project (with about 75% of funding from state and federal sources). Since April of 2006, after 10 years of stop and start planning, contractors have been steadily working block by block, starting at the Cleveland Circle end of Beacon Street, ripping up the curbsides abutting the MBTA tracks and the sidewalk rights-of-way and installing curb resets, curb extensions and expanded tree pits, readying for the planting of 300 additional street trees next year.

This work is accompanied by a slew of parking and traffic headaches as lanes are blocked and parking spaces are chopped up to facilitate installation of improved parking and lane features. But temporary inconveniences should result in greater convenience and, eventually, a greener "boulevard," closer to Frederick Law Olmsted's vision for this historic street. In planning the improvements, the Town looked back to the Olmsted design for inspiration. Over the years, piecemeal, cost-constrained changes had overcome much of the grace of the 19th century design. A return to the use of natural materials, such as granite steps flanked by plantings along the pathway stairs at Summit, Fairbanks and Brandon Hall, improve aesthetics while imparting a sense of character and stability. Along these same lines, pre-cast dark rock accessibility ramps will replace the glaring yellow rubber ramps.

Along with convenience and aesthetics, the project goals include the accommodation of multiple users. For example, the plan calls for a designated bike lane on the inbound side of Beacon Street. This will be created by shrinking the sidewalk-side parking lane and the right lane. These changes respect the historical features of Beacon Street

while helping return the road to its multi-use heritage.

Although almost all agree the project has positive features, some citizens criticize the work that is underway, arguing that the original plan shows green for the entire length of Beacon. The critics contend that the existing weeds are less offensive than the gravel being installed in parts of the narrow strip adjacent to the MBTA track. According to Town personnel, much of this



Large construction vehicles ripping out pavement near Englewood Avenue. Photo by Judy Wong

concern and confusion arises from a misunderstanding of plans presented to the public.

To allay constituent fears and to ensure that Beacon Street is not becoming a concrete

and rock wasteland, we consulted with the lead engineer on the project, Bill Smith, and will continue to remain in contact with him throughout the course of the project. Consulting with Mr. Smith has led BGSA to conclude that the Town's Department of Public Works is doing its best to be sensitive to open space concerns within the limits of the approved budget and busy location. Further, in looking at the actual plans, rather than the summary plan on the Town's website -- admittedly misleading -- it does appear to BGSA that the implementation has so far followed the approved plan. All the same, it appears the critics have succeeded in getting DPW's agreement to consider changing the approved plan. We elaborate on this in the article on page 3 entitled "Beacon Street: the Approved Plan, its Rationale and Controversies." After reviewing and considering the facts and expert opinions, Brookline GreenSpace believes the real concern should be whether the fiscal limits that initially inhibited expansion of the scope of the project will also hinder future maintenance once the project is complete. We expand on our concerns in a BGSA editorial on page 11.

Beacon Street: the Approved Plan, its Rationale and Controversies

By Edward Hsieh

The initial confusion over the green improvements included as part of the Beacon Street Traffic Improvements Project likely stems from the simplified plan presented to the public, which can be viewed on the Town's DPW website in PDF format. The PDF simplifies the green improvements into a single category, labeled "landscaped areas"; the green markings that represent these landscaped areas span the median and sidewalk rights-of-way all along the length of Beacon, giving the misleading impression that Beacon Street will feature an abundance of plantings along the entire corridor. However, the details are lost in the simplification.

As project engineer, Bill Smith, explains, the landscaped areas shown on the design are not meant to represent a corridor of grass. Instead, these areas are designated as locations where the approved designs of the consulting landscape architect, Carol R. Johnson Associates, will be installed in 2007. Mr. Smith noted that the role of the landscape architect was greatly expanded during the public process of the project, especially compared with other traffic improvements projects. Open space advocates, including BGSA, convinced the Department of Public Works that the Beacon Street project presented a unique opportunity to beautify the Town while providing traffic improvements.

The plans presented to the Town by the landscape architect were approved by the citizen Design Review Committee for the project, by the Advisory Committee, and by the Preservation Commission. These plans were the ones being acted on until the end of August 2006, despite any misconception that the work was straying from the Town approved plan. In the approved design plan, the areas marked for landscaping vary in scope, with some being the lush green expanses desired by the public, while others are pragmatic designs. In



Olmsted's tree-lined Beacon Street before the ravages of Dutch Elm disease and frequent, damaging construction, circa 1912. Photo courtesy of the Brookline Historical Society.

both cases, however, the landscaping is first enabled via the curb resets that are part of the traffic improvements. The actual landscaping is mostly scheduled for spring 2007.

Along the street-side of the MBTA median, the curb resets have been designed to minimize spillover from street waste and salts used during the winter season. This protection increases the chance of survival for plantings along the tree lawn, the area of the median that hosts the plantings.

A similar tactic is being used on the track-side



Newly set curb extension temporarily filled with existing large gravel, near Englewood Avenue. Photo by Judy Wong

of the tree lawn. The ballast placed along the border between MBTA land and Brookline land reduces spillover from the tracks into the planting area of the tree lawn. In some areas, like the length of the median between

St. Mary's Street and Carlton Street, a pre-cast ballast featuring two buttresses is being tested to see if it will eliminate the spillover. Ironically, the weeds that currently give a sense of green are an indication that harmful spillover has occurred previously because silt and sand, the most prevalent spillovers from the track, muffle plantings, providing a good base for weeds to grow, while the chemical wash-over typically creates an environment too harsh for anything but weeds. In some cases, the weeds that survive are invasive species. The goal is for the ballast to successfully limit the weeds while enhancing the planned plantings.

DPW plans to fill the majority of the tree lawn with landscaping gravel to accentuate existing and additional tree pits. This has been determined to be the most efficient use of the narrow areas of the median. The gravel is low maintenance; helps combat wash-over, especially chemicals from the MBTA; reduces weeds; and acts as a natural percolator for water destined for the roots of the trees along the track. The gravel will increase the chances of survival of trees planted along the MBTA

median, while restricting weeds. In locations along the median where there is sufficient area, mulch and loam will be installed instead of gravel and ground cover planted.

According to Bill Smith, the choice of gravel was not driven solely by budget and was the result of a collaborative process involving DPW and Brookline Tree Warden, Tom Brady. A significant issue for DPW personnel in preferring gravel in the narrow areas adjacent to the tracks is the requirement by the MBTA that a flag man be present during maintenance.

This is often a logistical and scheduling issue, significantly complicating timely maintenance. DPW examined various forms of gravel to find the one most visually

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historic buildings and landscapes, the permitted community uses under the Act. The new revenue would come from two sources: (1) a 3% surcharge on real property taxes, and (2) state matching funds. Over the next six years, it is projected that the Town will generate approximately \$33 million for CPA purposes.

MODEST SURCHARGE TAX AND PROGRESSIVE EXEMPTIONS

Based on current tax rates and assessed values, the CPA surcharge amount for the owner of a median-valued Brookline residence would be \$104 a year. One of the reasons the surcharge tax is relatively modest is that \$100,000 of the value of every residential property will be exempt from the surcharge. For those who live in their Brookline residential property, this \$100,000 exemption is on top of the residential exemption that applies to the regular property tax bill, which was \$165,014 in fiscal year 2006, for a total exemption of \$265,014. Even more important, the CPA surcharge tax, although modest, will impose no burden at all on those in our community least able to afford it. Low-income families (e.g., household income of less than \$66,150 for a family of four) and low and moderate income seniors (e.g., household income of less than \$67,280 for a couple aged 60 or older) will pay nothing – they are totally exempt from the surcharge tax. The CPA surcharge tax is consequently the most progressive property tax the Town is authorized to charge its taxpayers.

MILLIONS OF DOLLARS OF STATE MATCHING FUNDS

The best part about the CPA is what taxpayers get for their modest investment – millions of dollars of state matching funds. The CPA state matching funds are paid from registry of deed filing fees that are deposited into a state trust fund dedicated to the sole purpose of matching CPA surcharge tax amounts raised locally by CPA communities. Unlike other state revenues, these dedicated funds are not subject to annual appropriation by the state legislature – they are required by law to be distributed to CPA communities. This is the primary reason why CPA matching funds are about the only type of state aid to municipalities that has not been cut

over the last five years. Brookline residents have paid over \$2 million in registry of deed fees that have been distributed to CPA communities, while Brookline has received \$0 of these funds.

To date, CPA communities have received state matching funds equal to 100% of the amounts they raised locally. Based on projected registry of deed filing fee revenues and the number of CPA communities that will be entitled to share those revenues, it is expected that the percentage matched by the state will decrease in the next couple of years. Even so, conservative estimates of the amount of state matching funds Brookline will receive over the next six years is approximately \$12 million, or 55% of the total amount it raises in local surcharge revenues. It should also be noted that, if state matching funds ever fell to a level that made the CPA no longer worthwhile for Brookline, the Town could revoke its adoption of the CPA.

GOOD PROCESS FOR APPROVAL OF CPA EXPENDITURES

Expenditure of CPA funds must be approved by Brookline's elected Town Meeting. These funding decisions must be based on recommendations made to Town Meeting by a new Community Preservation Committee that will be established if the Town adopts the CPA. The Committee will be composed of one member of each of the following boards and committees: Board of Selectmen; School Committee; Advisory Committee; Parks and Recreation Commission; Conservation Commission; Housing Authority; Housing Advisory Board; Preservation Commission; and Planning Board. Under the bylaw adopted by Town Meeting establishing the Committee, the Committee will be required to hold at least one public hearing a year, to accept applications from Town residents for desired projects, to consult with relevant Town boards and committees, to consult Town planning documents and to integrate its recommendation-making process with the Town's regular budget-making process.

CPA PROPOSAL ACHIEVES TWO TOWN OBJECTIVES

The proposal voters will consider in November was crafted by a Selectmen-appointed CPA Study Committee. The Study Committee spent

four months carefully researching and evaluating the CPA and developing a proposal that best addresses Brookline's needs. The proposal achieves two important Town objectives:

(1) it results in significant new revenues to pay for needed projects like those described above that the Town would not otherwise have the resources to fund; and (2) it provides relief to the Town and school operating and capital budgets. Adoption of the CPA would accomplish the latter by using a portion of the CPA funds for projects and other costs the Town currently plans on paying for with other Town money, thereby freeing up such money for other operating and capital budget purposes. This will get us millions of dollars of state matching funds and progressive exemptions for our taxpayers – neither of which is available with a regular override tax.

CPA – GOOD FOR BROOKLINE

Brookline open space resources are integral to the character, health, and livability of our community. This includes lands currently at risk, not owned by the Town, such as Northeastern's Parsons Field and Allandale Farm. Adoption of the CPA will not provide the funding necessary to address all of our open space needs. We will also need to explore other creative solutions. Adoption of the CPA will, however, provide the Town with an estimated \$33 million of new funding over the next six years that will help us to address some of these open space needs, as well as other important Town needs in the areas of affordable housing and historic preservation.

CPA provides us with a fiscally responsible way to leverage millions of dollars of state funds to invest in important open space resources. Brookline GreenSpace Alliance supports this important initiative and urges a 'Yes' vote on Question 4 on November 7th. By supporting the CPA, you will be saying yes to the importance of open space to our community and helping to assure Brookline's historic open space legacy.

Jay Gonzalez served on the Selectmen's CPA Study Committee and is a member of the BGSA Board.

Beacon Street: the Approved Plan, its Rationale and Controversies

(continued from page 3)

attractive and suitable for the historic street, recently settling on a smaller landscaping gravel that will develop a dark patina with age and reduce the industrial feeling of the track median.

The sidewalk curbside is also undergoing enhancements which will make it more attractive. Areas where the curb will be extended to facilitate on-street parking, such as the area near Washington Square in front of 1595 Beacon, will feature new plantings. Planting beds near commercial areas will be expanded from 3 x 5 feet to 5 x 12 feet to allow a greater variety of plantings. The commercial area planting beds will also be protected by a dark granite curb raised four inches above the standard curb to serve both a delineating and protective purpose. These beds will be further distinguished by a 12 inch decorative cast iron fence with matching benches and furniture flanking the bed to enhance and somewhat protect plantings.

The curb extensions will lay the groundwork for the planting of approximately 300 more shade trees up and down Beacon Street. The species of trees that will be planted have been settled on by the Tree Planting Committee, Tree Warden and landscape architect and primarily focus on

diversity to ensure long term survivability. (Olmsted had planted many American elms; beautiful, but most did not survive the outbreak of "Dutch elm disease.") The newly planted trees will be a major highlight for the Beacon Street project. As they grow to maturity, the verdant canopy should recall the Beacon Street of old.

These trees and associated plantings will not be installed until the spring of 2007, so when considering the rubble and debris from construction along with the sparse tree lawns, Beacon Street does currently look ravaged. In a few places, namely the section between Cleveland Circle and Washington Square, the existing gravel has been placed in the tree lawn as a place holder until the spring landscaping. The current marred appearance has led some members of the community to push for changes in the approved plan. Due to pressure by community advocates, DPW has agreed to increase the footage within the median tree lawn that will be filled with loam and then seeded, including some of the narrow areas deemed better suited for gravel. Between Westbourne Terrace and Marion Street on the inbound side of Beacon and between Williston/Downing Road and Corey Road on the outbound side, the tree lawn will be filled with loam and seeded with grass

this fall. This section will be considered a test run to see if the grass can survive in such a narrow zone with no irrigation. If sections of the grass fail to take hold or die off due to lack of care, come spring, the Town will overseed the area and then evaluate the result. If the grass works out, other portions of Beacon will be revisited using this technique.

Although this method will produce more green overall, it may in the long run actually be a detriment to a well-groomed appearance, a possibility originally recognized by DPW and those involved in the design review process. The loam is nearly as good as gravel in percolating water to the tree roots, but the loam lacks the other benefits provided by gravel. Gravel inhibits invasive species while loam beckons alluringly to all invasive species and weeds. Further, unlike zero maintenance gravel, the loam and grass will likely need watering to survive and may require seasonal overseeding. If all of Beacon were planted using this method, the Park and Open Space Division would pick up maintenance of about 2.5 miles of additional tree lawn that would be difficult to maintain, at a time when the Park and Open Space Division is already facing budget cuts.



Beacon Street construction blocking the parking lanes along the median. Photo by Judy Wong

Conversation Between Lee Albright Of Allandale Farm, and Frances Shedd-Fisher for Brookline GreenSpace Alliance

FSF: Lee, tell me about Allandale Farm and your family's connection to that land.

LA: The farm was originally part of a Crown grant of 2000 acres that was given to Joseph Weld in 1640. The acreage included what is now the Arnold Arboretum, this land that Allandale is on, Larz Anderson Park and down to Jamaica Pond. It didn't include the land that is now The Country Club, but it did include the woods where the Allandale condos are, and probably over the hill where Dexter is. And then around the time of the War of 1812, these farmers had some reverses and they sold off some pieces of the land. When William Weld died he left what was his part of the remaining farm, now Larz Anderson Park and Allandale, to his two granddaughters, Isabel Anderson and my grandmother, Mary Brandegee.

FSF: Were they sisters?

LA: No, they were first cousins. Isabel Anderson had no children and, as you know, she left her land to the Town of Brookline.

FSF: Did you actually grow up on the farm?

LA: Yes. My mother and father -- my father was an architect -- built a house here. One of my brothers lives in the house now. I was here until I graduated from college and then away for several years. When my husband and I moved back here, he was very interested in farming, as was my brother, Eddie Lawrence, who also moved back here. We started with a patch of beans and tomatoes and some stuff in the greenhouse. Then taxes were all of a sudden abruptly escalating, and we knew that the farm would have to be sold -- there was no way we could keep it. But then, at about that time -- I

think it was 1972 or '73, the agricultural law passed so farms were taxed as agricultural land, a significant benefit to farmers and keeping family farms intact. We were able to show that we were really farming, so we were ok.

We started out with just corn and tomatoes. I remember just before my oldest daughter was born -- she's going to be 38, so that many years ago -- 1968 -- I was selling produce on Newton Street. We had a little plank farm stand on Newton Street, and we were selling corn and beans. We cut hay at night. We planted Christmas trees too. At one time we had 11 steer, and they would break out constantly. On the land we couldn't grow on, we had cattle. And they used to roam around Brookline. I used to call my brother and my husband at work practically in tears, saying the cattle are out again! I remember I was pregnant, but I would try to chase them. And I was definitely, far and away, the best cattle chaser around. I'd have my children out, and they'd hold up a stick and the steer would charge, and then they'd stop -- the kids knew this. We spent a lot of time chasing animals around the farm. It was very hands on.

FSF: It sounds like such fun!

LA: My brother Eddie, his family, and my husband Nile and I, we really worked to get this going in the first years. My two other brothers were involved whenever they were in Boston. And we all had to put money into the farm. There was nothing profitable about it. I suppose it was because we were so young. My mother had died at 51. My uncle had died at 54. All of a sudden the responsibility for this land was on us. I think if we'd been 60 and our

parents had died we might have said 'this is nice, but it's just too much work.' So, even though we were novices and very inexperienced, there was a plus to being young and extremely committed to the land and making it work. Now, the four of us meet three or four times a year to discuss the Farm.

And then later John Lee came on as a farmer, and did a lot of great

organization and outreach and has done a lot to make the farm what it is today.

FSF: So with John the farm expanded in terms of the number of crops and so forth?

LA: Yes. Early on we did corn, tomatoes, beans and peppers, but now there's a tremendous number of crops...

FSF: But no corn.

LA: No, because we found corn requires a lot of sprays. We try to do as much organic farming as possible. And I think we deal with 10 restaurants now. If I had been told 38 years ago when we were selling beans that we'd eventually be dealing with restaurants, you probably could have toppled me over in the corn field; I just would never have believed it.

FSF: Well, back in those days, at Durgin Park and Loch Ober -- fresh vegetables were not on their agenda.

LA: Boston has really changed! And when John came on he brought his cider operation with him from Concord. It was wonderful! We pressed cider every fall until they passed legislation because of fears about e-coli and we had to stop making cider. It was too bad because pressing cider was just fantastic. And at the school, the Apple Orchard kids, we had our own little cider press. It was such a great thing for kids. At about the same time the farm started, I started the Apple Orchard School. I started it with 14 children, but I didn't think it would ever go on for more than two or three years. I did a Master's program at the Shady Hills School in Cambridge because I wanted to write books for children. And so I thought, I have this training, I might as well use it. And I had a three year old and a four year old. I hired a teacher who was just fantastic. She ended up being George Schultz' daughter. [Secretary of State 1982-89.]

Then we got licensed and moved the school into the barn, which we upgraded. We have about 85 children now.

FSF: How many acres are remaining in Allandale, in Boston and Brookline?

LA: There's about 70 acres in Brookline and 30 in Boston. And there's a lot of contiguous land,



Farmstand and greenhouses at Allandale Farm.
Photo by Marian Lazar

the cemetery across the street and Dexter with about 45 acres.

FSF: So there's a real sense of space and vistas from certain vantage points, with the contiguous land.

LA: Yes. One of the best views of the farm is from Dexter School.

FSF: What will eventually happen to Allandale?

LA: The terms of the will make it difficult. The Boston part of the land was left to us by our uncle, so we have been able to give away the development rights and the Trustees of Reservations holds that restriction, so that is protected. But the whole Brookline area is under a trust; we're not owners. I have three brothers, Eddie, who is here, and one in Baltimore and one in California. And all of a sudden, you have a family with a lot of heirs, and some of them live in California and other places. People say to me, 'oh, we'd never let anything happen to Allandale.' But I'm not so sure. It won't be easy.

FSF: What about a compromise where you develop part of the land and retain part for a farm?

LA: Basically, to have a viable farm you've got to keep all your fields open, so developing part of it in a compromise wouldn't work. Remember, it's got to break even in order to encourage anyone to want to do it. That's the other thing. This is not an easy thing to run. Running a farm in Brookline is tough. We're very hard working and creative, but we all have jobs that have nothing to do with the farm because we need that to pay our bills.

FSF: I can't even imagine how hard it must be, though you've certainly had a wonderful life. I grew up on a farm in Georgia so I understand your feeling for the land. And I'm still hopeful that those of us who really do care about open space and tradition and history, and organizations that care, can somehow work with you and your family to save Allandale as a farm for future generations. A working farm in an urban area – Allandale is a national treasure. Thank you, Lee, for sharing such an important Brookline story.

Brookline GreenSpace Alliance Annual Meeting

On Monday, April 3rd, Brookline GreenSpace Alliance held its Annual Meeting in Hunneman Hall at the Brookline Public Library. Following a brief business meeting, BGSA presented its Environmental Leadership Award to Corliss Engle, 10-year Tree Planting Committee Member, BGSA Board member, and Brookline open space activist, for her numerous individual contributions to Brookline, and well beyond. Linda Olson Pehlke and the Friends of the Minot Rose Garden received BGSA's Green Umbrella Award for their group's dedicated and collaborative effort to successfully restore the historic Minot Rose Garden in North Brookline.

Linda accepted the award for her group,

stating "the first thing I did when Friends of the Minot Rose Garden had two members was to join Brookline GreenSpace Alliance. I couldn't have done it without you." Thanks for your kind words, Linda!

The night was topped off by a presentation by Alan Banks, Park Ranger at the Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site, on the history and importance of the Muddy River in Olmsted's design of the Emerald Necklace, followed by a presentation by Tom Brady, Brookline Conservation Administrator and Tree Warden, on the current status and future outlook for the Muddy River environmental restoration project.

Muddy River Film Series

In June, Brookline GreenSpace Alliance, with the leadership of Kate Bowditch, BGSA Vice President and Programming Chair, and the Coolidge Corner Theatre Foundation hosted their annual Muddy River Film Series, the only environmental film series of its kind in the Boston-metro area. Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* served as the anchor film of the series and showed throughout the week. To kick off the series, a panel featuring Pulitzer Prize winning journalist and author of *Boiling Point*, Ross Gelbspan; Alexander Agassiz Professor of Biological Oceanography at Harvard and co-chair of the second working group of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), James McCarthy; and environmental reporter at *The Boston Globe*, Beth Daley, followed the opening night showing of the film. Due to a fire alarm, the panel discussion was cut short, but the panelists, along with

Deirdre Buckley, Chair of Climate Change Action Brookline, graciously reassembled the following Friday to complete the discussion. A video of the panel discussion is being shown on Brookline Access Television. Call B.A.T. for the schedule.

In addition to several other award winning films, other events broadened the series. Brookline GreenSpace Alliance screened a DVD lecture by Ross Gelbspan on a journalist's view on climate change to spark a debate led by Seth Kaplan, BGSA Board Member and Senior Attorney at the Conservation Law Foundation. Alan Balsam, Director of the Brookline Public Health Department, led a discussion on the green renovation of the Train Memorial Health Center. Climate Change Action Brookline is continuing its efforts at the local level. To join CCAB contact deirdrebuckley@comcast.net.

Watch for these articles in the Spring 2007 issue :

A conversation about environmental politics with former governor Michael Dukakis

Beyond Our Borders: Analysis of Longwood Medical Area

Town Renovates Babbling Brook: Part of Olmsted Legacy



The Babbling Brook in Olmsted Park, the final element of the design to be restored, summer 2006. Photo by Frances Shedd-Fisher



Arlene and Hugh Mattison and Frances Shedd Fisher in Olmsted Park. The recently completed rehabilitation of Brookline's portion of Olmsted Park has been a work in progress for over 15 years, beginning with the completion of the Emerald Necklace Master Plan in 1990. The Mattison's and Betsy Shure Gross (not in photograph), later joined by Shedd Fisher, have worked with the state and the Town on every aspect of the project for about 30 years. The beautiful restoration has revitalized the park and is a testament to the rewards of committed advocacy. Photo by Erin Chute Gallentine



Arlene Mattison chatting with Erin Chute Gallentine, Director of the Parks and Open Space Division, about ongoing maintenance issues in the recently restored Olmsted Park. Chute Gallentine has directed the implementation of the elements of the Master Plan during the later phases of the restoration project, including the restoration of the Babbling Brook, a unique element in Frederick Law Olmsted's design for the park. Advocates have worked collaboratively with the Parks and Open Space Division personnel, including Tom Brady and Annie Blair, to achieve a successful restoration. Photo by Frances Shedd-Fisher



Seen above, the divided circulation paths in Olmsted Park, separating strollers and runners from the faster moving cyclists. The elimination of the redundant, poorly maintained Riverdale Road permitted the installation of paths for people using the parks. Photo by Frances Shedd-Fisher

The bridges in the Emerald Necklace parks have been restored. The seamed-faced granite footbridge seen here at the head of Leverett Pond in Olmsted Park was designed by John Charles Olmsted with the assistance of Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge—the successor architectural firm to H.H. Richardson. The particular bridge design is common to portions of the Emerald Necklace.

Photo by Frances Shedd-Fisher



Environmental Civility: A BGSA opinion piece

By and large Brookline citizens are courteous and fair in their dealings with each other, even when they disagree on issues. We would like to suggest extending local civility to include “civic behavior,” or behavior that considers the common good, including a respect for nature. We have observed three areas where we believe we can set a better example for our children.

First, we have observed on numerous occasions young trees planted in playgrounds or along streets broken and disfigured by careless children and young adults swinging on immature branches. Sometimes the trees are so badly damaged they must be replaced, not a good use of our tax dollars, and sometimes they remain as misshapen reminders that we didn’t do a good enough job teaching our kids to respect the beauty and joy of nature.



Governor Michael Dukakis stopping on his walk to work last August to pick up a piece of trash he spotted in Riverway Park, said, “If every person picked up a piece of trash every time he or she walked in a park or on a street, Brookline would be immaculate, totally trash-free.”
Photo by Jean Stringham



Governor Michael Dukakis enjoying his walk through Riverway Park on a summer morning – destination, Northeastern University, where he is a professor. (Walking is a great way of getting from one place to another, particularly if one’s route includes an Olmsted Park.) Photo by Frances Shedd-Fisher

Next, while we applaud those who ride bikes in our parks for exercise and as an efficient and environmentally friendly way of getting from one place to another, we have sometimes observed a lack of patience with parks workers who slow the bicyclists’ progress. Parks workers are doing the necessary work to maintain our parks for our pleasure and enjoyment. We don’t believe they set out to get in the way, or make cyclists late for work. But sometimes tempers flare, making Town employees wonder if their efforts are appreciated. (How about a wave and a ‘thank you’ when you ride by?)

Currently workers are allowed to park on grass instead of on paths to avoid the verbal abuse they receive from some cyclists. A bicyclist who needs to ride around a Town truck parked on a path will do much less damage to the landscape than a truck that can destroy loam and turf. Maybe if cyclists took the time to slow down just enough to enjoy the beauty around them, they’d arrive at their destinations both ‘mellow’ and energized to meet the day’s challenges. And soon our parks would show less wear and tear, a benefit to all.

Finally, no amount of effort by our Sanitation workers will keep our streets and parks

clean if we, our children, and visitors to our community drop napkins, paper cups, candy wrappers, soda cans, cigarette butts, and tissues rather than placing them in barrels or even, if necessary, temporarily in pockets. In addition to being an issue of respect for our fellow citizens, this is an economic issue. The more effort our Town workers have to put into cleaning up after us, the more it costs Brookline taxpayers. We want the way our Town looks to reflect our values. Some citizens take an extra step toward keeping Brookline clean and beautiful. See photo of former Governor Michael Dukakis at left, setting an example for us all.

“Good public spaces facilitate the social development of children. Children grow up assuming that they are the kind of person that their physical environment tells them they are. They see their environment as a portrait of themselves; an ugly, brutal environment has a deadening effect, seeming to justify brutal and violent reactions. We must make cities that are worthy of a child’s affection... They are, after all, the ones who will inherit the city, and become responsible for its future.”

Quoted from livablecities.org

The Alliance Spring Event: Growing GreenSpace



Nan St. Goar worked with Frances Shedd-Fisher, Edward Hsieh, Arlene Mattison and Tony Andreadis of the BGSA Development Committee to ensure the success of the Growing GreenSpace event. Photo by Judy Wong



(above) Azaleas believed to have been planted by Charles Sprague Sargent, in full bloom at the edge of Sargent Pond. Photo by Judy Wong



Arlene Mattison, Nan St. Goar and Edward Hsieh present door prizes as Sue Reamer and other participants look on. Photo by Judy Wong



(left) Dogwood tree in full bloom in Nan St. Goar's garden. Photo by Judy Wong

(below) Nan St. Goar and Steve Voegelin, landscape gardener for Mrs. St. Goar and Sargent Pond, converse during the fundraising event. Photo by Judy Wong



Nan St. Goar shows Werner Lohe one of her beautiful planting beds as other attendees prepare for the tour of Sargent Pond. Photo by Judy Wong



Brookline GreenSpace Alliance thanks Whole Foods for their generous donation of party platters for the Spring Event.

Beacon Street project raises questions about Parks budget for equipment and maintenance: **A BGSA opinion piece**

By Edward Hsieh

Currently, the Parks and Open Space division has three watering trucks; two are small and designated for the beautification potted planters throughout Town and one is large enough to water trees and large plantings. The truck designated for trees will be hard pressed to be sent out as regularly as needed to deal with the 300 additional trees to be planted next year along Beacon Street, let alone the new grass now being contemplated.

In our opinion, the ailing plants in the parks do not point to a lack of good intent by Parks and Open Space personnel as much as budget constraints: the Division needs more equipment and staff. Andy Bressi of the Parks and Open Space Division points out that as much as he would like to, he just cannot send out the Division's one watering truck to every park as often as needed. He indicated that his crews will, however, do their best to take on the additional planting beds along Beacon Street. Mr. Bressi indicated that he plans to hold the contractors to maintaining the planting beds during the initial seeding as this is most critical to the success of the grass. When asked, Mr. Bressi agreed that the gravel called for in the approved plan would have been better in terms of efficiency. And BGSA adds, possibly also in terms of appearance if the grass does not survive.

Mr. Bressi's comments about needs within the Division, and also the reports of ailing plants throughout Town, point to the fact that open space planning should include heavy consideration of the ability to maintain the open space. In the case of Beacon Street, it is very possible that without ongoing maintenance the planting beds may become a scraggly mess of weeds, not what any citizen or the Parks and Open Space Division intended.

Brookline GreenSpace Alliance strongly supports the preservation of existing open space and the creation of additional public open space throughout Town. Our mission also includes advocating for proper maintenance of public open space. We see this as a corollary to preservation and enhancement of

open space, whether the open space is parks, playgrounds, recreational fields, street trees, nature sanctuaries or cemeteries. Sometimes this means advocating for a more pragmatic development of open space that recognizes our urban setting and the limits the Town faces due to a variety of constraints. In the case of Beacon Street, the original plan provided enhancements while accounting for the increasing cost of maintenance. The revised experimental plan will no doubt be more attractive if successful and properly maintained; but given the Town's inability to fully maintain existing spaces and plantings with current equipment and staff, we are not optimistic. It is not a desirable outcome if the Town ends up having to spend precious Parks Division dollars to maintain grass along Beacon Street instead of tending to major plantings and tree installations.

Many of the more recent designs of award winning parks around the United States and in other countries involve a merging of modern landscaping with green amenities. These plans consider economics as well as aesthetics. The gravel and tree plan initiated by the Town, with the concurrence of the citizen volunteers on the Design Review Committee, drew upon such innovative, low maintenance thinking. Over the years we have heard many citizens' complaints about the unkempt condition of the land adjacent

to the T tracks, so Brookline GreenSpace Alliance applauds DPW, working with citizen volunteers, for thinking outside the box in its original plan to enhance Beacon Street while addressing future maintenance concerns.

To avoid a reduction in maintenance in other parks as demand along Beacon Street increases, the Parks and Open Space Division may need a bigger share of the DPW equipment budget. Citizens and budget makers need to face two realities: first, the "boring" issue of maintaining our green infrastructure is just as important as the issue of creating new parks and fields and other green spaces; second, if we want well-maintained parks, fields, and street trees, we cannot avoid the budget requirements to accomplish these goals. We must be willing to give the Parks Division the tools and personnel they need to satisfy our community's standards.

We are making an example of Beacon Street because it provides a framework for thinking about how we make decisions in Brookline and how we set priorities. We need a second large watering vehicle in Brookline just to keep up with maintaining existing major plantings. In that context, the discussion of additional tree lawns presents an opportunity for a full and fair discussion of the Parks and Open Space Division budget. We will elaborate further on this issue in the future, with emphasis on creative solutions.



Rundown stair pathway near Washington Square will be restored as part of Beacon Street project. Photo by Judy Wong

Tai Chi At Griggs Park



Dan Kleiman of Brookline Tai chi teaches BGSA members and local residents some moves. Photo by Judy Wong



Meanwhile, families enjoy the convenience and beauty of Griggs Park. Photo by Judy Wong

Yes! I want to protect Brookline's GreenSpace heritage

As a member of the Alliance you'll receive our publication **PLACE**, periodic e-mail alerts to keep you informed of meetings and issues affecting local open space, notice of walks, talks, tours and educational forums as well as an invitation to our spring garden event.

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

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Visit our website at www.brooklinegreenspace.org and find updated information on programs, events and information about open space issues in Brookline. You'll also find an open space map and contact information for all the Park Friends Groups in Brookline.

Join our email list serve and you'll receive important updates and time-sensitive information pertinent to open space in Brookline. Just send us an email at info@brooklinegreenspace.org to let us know you want to join.



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