



Belmont Citizens Forum

Trapelo Road Redesign Will Transform Street

A new plan for the Trapelo Road/Belmont Street corridor includes trees, bike lanes

By Sue Bass

"Trees!" said Rolf Goetze more than six years ago, brainstorming what Trapelo Road needed. "Lots of trees!" Brainstorming was the first step. Six people met around a dining room table on May 16, 2002, to "begin thinking about how to start a community-wide process to reach eventual consensus on a good new plan for Trapelo Road," as the notes put it. That was the first meeting of the Belmont Citizens Forum's Planning/Zoning Committee.

Now, a new plan for the Trapelo Road/Belmont Street corridor, including more trees, is much closer to reality. Belmont's main street, the spine that connects two of its three major business centers and several smaller ones, may begin to reflect its importance. After years of hoping and planning by volunteers, students, and the town, work on that corridor has moved into a new phase. The Massachusetts Highway Department is reviewing the near-final outline for reconstruction of the 2½-mile roadway west from the Cambridge line to Waverley Oaks Road, mostly in Belmont but including about 500 feet in Waltham.

The buildings along the corridor will change, too. Developers have proposed important new projects at Waverley and Cushing Squares. When residents complained that the initial proposals were too large, the developers went back to the drawing board and will soon submit plans that they hope the neighbors will like better. This dream of a beautiful new street might really come true.

As the road reconstruction design was presented to the town on July 28, 2008, at a public hearing held by Mass Highway at Belmont

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Winter view of Trapelo Road near Beech Street.



View along the same stretch of Trapelo road as it would look with awnings, benches and trees.

Courtesy of Belmont Citizens Forum

Town Hall, the road's 75-foot-wide right-of-way would be split among pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists to make the roadway safer for all three groups. Sidewalks will mostly be wider; four to five feet of bicycle accommodation will be provided on each side of the roadway; and cars will have clearly defined lanes with many added turning lanes.

Lanes Will Be Marked

Legally, the entire roadway is now one lane in each direction, though few would guess that. Cars wander across the pavement creating extra lanes, weaving from right to center as the spirit moves them, and passing on the right or left when they get impatient.

The road design will slow traffic to make it safer. Those slower vehicles can travel closer together, so the traffic-carrying capacity of the roadway will not be reduced.

Little regulates their route, except in the three places where the town built "neckdowns," on the Traffic Advisory Committee's recommendation. The neckdowns extend sidewalks into the street so pedestrians have a shorter distance to cross. Some residents wonder why those neckdowns interfere with their freedom to drive; they have not watched children try to cross the road on the way to school.

The new road will be mostly two clearly marked lanes, one in each direction, with four-lane sections in two places where traffic volumes

are higher: Trapelo Road between Mill Street and Pleasant Street, which carries 30,000 vehicles a day, and Belmont Street between School Street and Arlington Street, which carries 23,600 vehicles a day. Traffic in the rest of the corridor is lighter—15,000 to 20,000 vehicles a day.

The new road will handle more cars with fewer traffic jams, according to Peter Briere of the BSC Group, the town's consultants on the corridor. The road design will slow traffic to make it safer. Those slower vehicles can travel closer together, so the traffic-carrying capacity of the roadway will not be reduced.

The traffic signals will also help keep more cars moving without long waits. "The average delay at the 10 presently signalized intersections along the corridor is projected to drop from 49 seconds to 32 seconds during the morning rush hour and from 54 seconds to 30 seconds during the evening peak period under the projected 2025 traffic volumes," Briere said.

Parking spaces will be cut by about 10 percent, from about 515 to about 465, but, Briere said, "We do not expect to lose any directly in front of businesses and may have added a few." The reason for the net loss is that the MBTA requires longer spaces than the road now provides for trolley stops. The extra lanes for traffic on Belmont Street between School Street and Arlington Street also cost a row of parking, Briere explained. Even that loss might be reduced. Albert J. Miller, project manager for Mass Highway, who conducted the July 28 hearing, said he was unhappy at the loss of parking.

The number of street trees will nearly triple. "There are about 280 [trees] not including the wooded areas at Beaver Brook and McLean Hospital," Briere said. "We are proposing to add about 490 and removing about 25, for a net proposed change of plus 465."

The corridor is expected to be added to the state's three-year Transportation Improvement Program next year. The \$13.8 million construction cost will be shared by the federal government and the state. The town's contribution is paying for the design and for all required land-takings. Construction would begin in 2011 at the earliest, predicted Charles Kalaskas of the BSC Group. "We have three years ahead of us of design and permitting."

Few New Buildings in Two Decades

The buildings along the corridor are so varied that they seem to reflect the do-it-your-way attitude of the road.

Because few have wanted to invest much money in new buildings along the corridor, it remains a museum of old uses and old zoning.

Actually they demonstrate the virtual absence of new construction along the corridor for many decades. The Kendall family's new CVS and the condominiums in the old Waverley fire station are the first major private buildings since the former Star Market, now Shaw's, was built nearly 20 years ago. Because few have wanted to invest much money in new buildings along the corridor, it remains a museum of old uses and old zoning.

Between Waverley and Palfrey squares are numerous one-story buildings from the days when Trapelo Road was the region's Auto

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Belmont Citizens Forum

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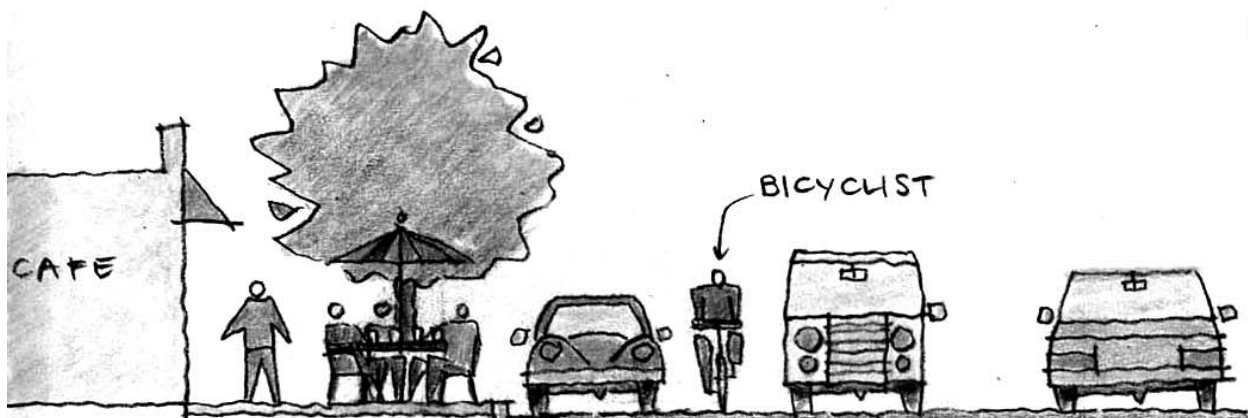
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Belmont Citizens Forum Inc. is a not-for-profit organization that strives to maintain the small-town atmosphere of Belmont, Massachusetts, by preserving its natural and historical resources, limiting traffic growth, and enhancing pedestrian safety. We do this by keeping residents informed about planning and zoning issues, by participating actively in public hearings, and by organizing forums. Our newsletter is published six times a year in January, March, May, July, September, and November. Published material represents the views of the authors and not necessarily those of the Belmont Citizens Forum. Letters to the editor may be sent to P. O. Box 609, Belmont, MA 02478 or to info@belmontcitizensforum.org.



Artist's rendition of a design for Trapelo Road. Illustration by Carol Darbyshire.

Mile, a place to buy cars or get them fixed. In Waverley Square some three-story commercial buildings have apartments above, like the one that Corbett's Drugs used to occupy. It would be illegal to build those now: Belmont's zoning changed in the 1980s to prohibit apartments in business districts and to prohibit auto uses except on South Pleasant Street. The old buildings and uses are "grandfathered" —allowed to stay because they were there before the law changed.

Cushing, Waverley Projects Planned

Suddenly, however, new owners are buying on the corridor, property owners are fixing up their buildings, and proposals for two big projects are being reviewed.

Closest to reality is Chris Starr's Cushing Village, on a two-acre site he has acquired along Trapelo Road from Williston Street to Common Street and on Common south to Belmont Street. In 2006, with this proposal already under discussion, Town Meeting approved overlay zoning to allow greater density in Cushing Square, including housing above stores, if developers would accept greater design oversight from the Planning Board.

To accommodate Cushing Village, originally proposed as a \$50 million project, Town Meeting authorized the Selectmen last May to do two things: to discontinue a section of Horne Road at Common Street so a building can be built across it; and to sell the Cushing Square municipal parking lot as long as public parking is preserved. The Cushing Square Neighborhood Association supported those decisions while insisting that Starr

must change his plans. (The original version was described in the March 2008 Newsletter, available on the Citizens Forum's web site, www.belmontcitizensforum.org.)

Specifically, the neighbors insist that the new construction be primarily a mix of two- and three-story structures, with any fourth-story segment located at the corner of Trapelo and Common and "with step-backs near adjoining properties to allow transitions from commercial structures and sunlight in adjacent yards." On the former CVS site at the corner of Common and Belmont streets, the neighborhood association wants a smaller structure with no fourth story, just a mix of two and three stories. They also want "safe, continuous ground-level pedestrian access through the head of Horne Road [the portion to be discontinued as a street.] We don't want a multi-story wall obstructing light and access at the head of our street. An archway may be OK if it allows light to pass through and it is tastefully designed."



Trapelo Road Corridor Study Began with BCF Committee

The Belmont Citizens Forum was an early advocate for improving the Trapelo Road/Belmont Street corridor. In 2002, our Traffic and Transportation Committee learned that about 40 percent of the pedestrian accidents in Belmont in the previous 14 years had occurred in the Waverley-Cushing Square triangle (including the western end of Belmont Street as well as Trapelo Road).

That year, our Planning/Zoning Committee began a study of the corridor —both the roadway and the buildings lining it. The effort started with six volunteers brainstorming about the problems of the corridor and continued with the development of a 17-minute film outlining its challenges and promise. The film illustrated how much could be done with traffic-calming techniques and trees. In 2003, the Citizens Forum showed the film to 200 people at the Studio Cinema on Trapelo Road, who also participated in a panel discussion.

The Belmont Citizens Forum Planning/Zoning Committee also recruited two groups of graduate students to study the corridor's problems—the Boston Architectural Center in the spring of 2003 and MIT's Department of Urban Studies and Planning in the fall of 2004 —and presented the findings of both groups in public. As the town of Belmont took over as prime mover of this project, we have continued to follow and comment on its progress. Our comments on the new road design request improvements in the bike accommodations and signage.

—Sue Bass

Starr said he hopes to be able to satisfy most of their concerns. His new designs are likely to be shown to the neighbors soon. The town has already issued a formal request for proposals to buy or lease the municipal parking lot. Proposals, due September 5, must, among other things, "provide to the Town a public parking easement for a minimum of 50 parking spaces within the proposed redevelopment project."

Meanwhile, in Waverley Square, Feldco Development Corp. of New Canaan, Connecticut, showed a proposal to about 80 residents at a neighborhood meeting called by the town's Office of Community Development for general input on the future of Waverley Square. Feldco wanted to build a five-story building on the triangle that now includes the Waverley Square municipal parking lot, the air rights over the commuter rail, and a small park. It would include about 10,000 square feet of retail space on the ground floor, 52,000 square feet of professional office space on two floors,

two levels of above-ground parking and two levels below ground. Amenities would include elevator access from the street to the commuter rail station and outdoor space including a café.

Too big was the general verdict. Charles Styron of Waverley Street said it would be "way out of scale with neighboring buildings." He also noted that parking levels add no life to the neighborhood and that the office space is dead after dark. "A parking garage in a residential neighborhood is not an amenity," he said. Barry Feldman, president of Feldco, declined to provide copies of the drawings shown at the July 29 meeting because they'll soon change. "We're taking a good hard look at those comments," he said. "We'll see how we might refine the project to meet the goals of the citizenry."

After the hearing, David Johnson, an architect and Town Meeting member, expressed concern for the loss of the small park. "We as planners

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have a responsibility to understand what is important to a business center, and green space is one of those.”

Sue Bass is a Director of the Belmont Citizens Forum.



What is the 25 Percent Design Phase?

I remember reading about hearings at the 25 percent and 75 percent design stages for the reconstruction of Pleasant Street, so I was surprised to learn that the July 28, 2008 hearing on the 25 percent design stage of the Trapelo Road/Belmont Street reconstruction was the only public hearing planned. What gives? Albert J. Miller of Mass Highway, who conducted the hearing at Belmont Town Hall, said informational meetings could be held at later stages. What’s the difference?

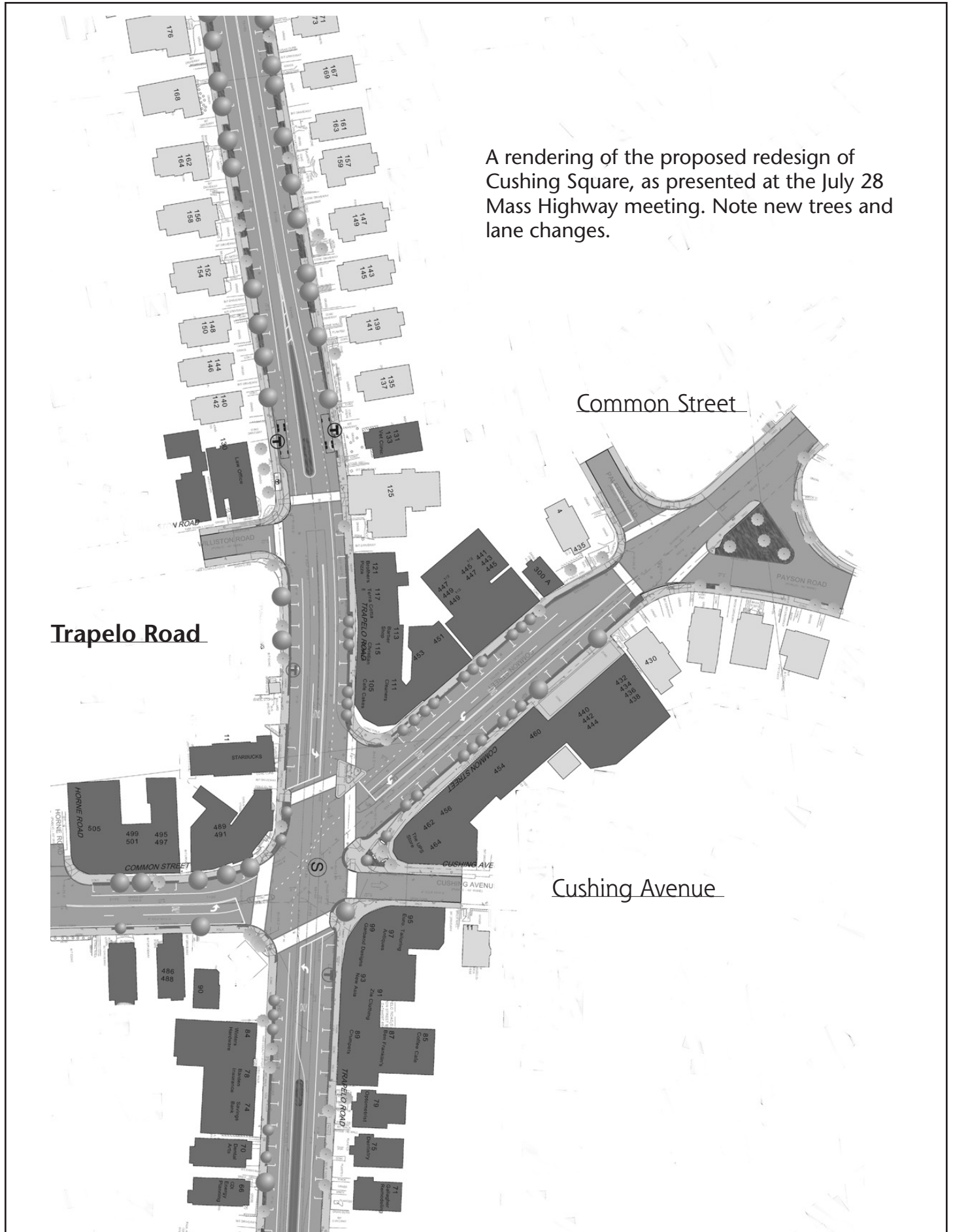
It turns out that the 25 percent design stage is the first of three formal steps mandated by the Massachusetts Highway Department. During the 25 percent stage, the Preliminary Design, or the basic design is established and approved. During Final Design, the 75 percent stage, earlier comments are addressed and the plans are further developed. In the third stage, Plans, Specifications, & Estimates, the last details are tweaked. At the 25 percent stage, a public hearing is a legal requirement, with testimony transcribed; it leads to a formal period when people can submit written comments. Later informational meetings can take input less formally but are not mandatory.

The 25 percent stage is the last chance for substantial changes and in fact is a little late for most of those, which should have been discussed with the town’s Traffic Advisory Committee as it studied the corridor block by block over the past three years.

By the 75 percent design stage, explained Charlie Kalauskas of the BSC Group, the town’s consultant on the project, engineers are finishing up details like the exact location and design of utility pipes, storm drains, signage, trees, and wheelchair ramps. The current map shows in general where trees and ramps will go, but at the 75 percent stage those will be specified within inches, along with tree species and size. The BSC Group and the town will consult property owners on tree location, Kalauskas said. At the July 28 hearing, several businessmen said they wanted to make sure no tree would block their signs and front doors.

—Sue Bass

A rendering of the proposed redesign of Cushing Square, as presented at the July 28 Mass Highway meeting. Note new trees and lane changes.



Trapelo Road

Common Street

Cushing Avenue

Barn Bylaw To Preserve Local History

A new plan for the Trapelo Road/Belmont Street corridor includes trees, bike lanes

By *Sumner Brown*

Once I was running in Belmont with a friend who lived in a 17th-century house in Essex. He asked me, “Where are Belmont’s old buildings?” Considering that Belmont was an important agricultural community from early colonial times, you might hope, as my friend did, that Belmont would show signs of its past. Belmont, however, overwhelmingly gives the impression of 20th-century development. Although Belmont’s agricultural past has nearly vanished, if you look, you can still find more than 20 barns and carriage houses built prior to 1921. But if you want to see them, don’t delay. Several have been demolished recently.

Two years ago, Town Meeting rejected a bylaw that would have given owners of barns and carriage houses in Belmont financial incentives to save their historic buildings. The bylaw would have encouraged preservation of historic barns and carriage houses by allowing the owners to convert them to other uses, such as housing. If the bill had passed, owners of barns or carriage houses would suddenly have had property that was much more valuable—but only if the historic character of the barn or carriage house were preserved. This increase in property value, contingent on satisfying Belmont’s Historic District Commission and

Planning Board, is what would have made the barn bill work.

Maintaining a barn or a carriage house is expensive, and many of Belmont’s barns show wear. If a barn suddenly, with the stroke of a pen, becomes eligible for use as a residence, it would be more valuable. If an owner wished to continue using his barn as a garage, his barn would still be worth more because when the property sold, the new owner could use the barn as a house. If an owner did not preserve his barn, his property-value increase would disappear along with the historic building.

Supporters urged passage of the “barn bylaw” because it would encourage historic preservation, while opponents said it would increase neighborhood population density. The bylaw



was voted down by Town Meeting in May 2006. Since then, at least two barns or carriage houses have been torn down.

Expect a new barn bylaw to appear before Town Meeting next spring. This bylaw will probably have two parts. The first part would allow barns to be used for home occupations.

The average number of people per housing unit in Belmont is 2.45 people per residence. My estimate is that in 30 years, there would be 30 additional people living in Belmont if all the possible barns and carriage houses were converted to residences.

If you now have a home office in your carriage house, the first part of the new barn bylaw would allow you to put a toilet in your carriage house. This first part would not increase population, because the barns would not be legal residences.

The second part of the bylaw would allow barns to be used for housing, with conditions. One of the most interesting and strongest provisions of the second proposed barn bill is that it would require the owners of the property to live on site. This means that a developer cannot jam rental units into an inappropriate space and collect rents from a distance. Other conditions are that the building must be certified as historic by Belmont's Historic District Commission; the Planning Board must give preliminary approval of the interior-renovation

plans; and then the renovation plan must be given a public hearing by the Planning Board, which will then review the project after community input.

Looking at individual Belmont barns and how a barn bylaw would affect them and their neighbors puts a face on the general arguments.

I have two lists of historic accessory buildings in Belmont. The first list, assembled in 2005, has 68 buildings. The information came from the town assessors' office and local historian Richard Betts. This was a first-pass sweep to find as many candidate barns as possible. Almost all structures on this list were found to be large garages, greenhouses, barns that had already been converted to residential use, or barns built after 1921, the construction-date cutoff for the proposed barn bill.

I got my second list from the Office of Community Development. While not official, this list of 24 buildings is, I believe, the best catalog available. After looking at the buildings, and using common sense to eliminate garages, a greenhouse, and demolished buildings, there are only 16 barns and carriage houses that I believe would meet the Historic District Commission's criteria of an eligible barn or carriage house.

Barn Bill to Bring Few New Residents

A discussion of the effect of a barn bill for Belmont must estimate the changes it will bring. In particular, if the second part of the barn bill passes, how many more people will live in Belmont, and what will this mean? By my judgment, there are 16 barns and carriage houses on the best list available. Of the 16 buildings listed, 2 structures will, I think, never be used for housing because they now provide parking for which the lots on which they sit. One other is out of consideration for housing for other reasons; it is part of the Sergi Farm, which is under a conservation restriction. Thirteen might eventually be used for housing. Considering the small size of even the largest barns and the criteria of the Planning Board, I believe there will be no more than one residential unit per barn.

The average number of people per housing unit in Belmont is 2.45. My estimate is that in 30

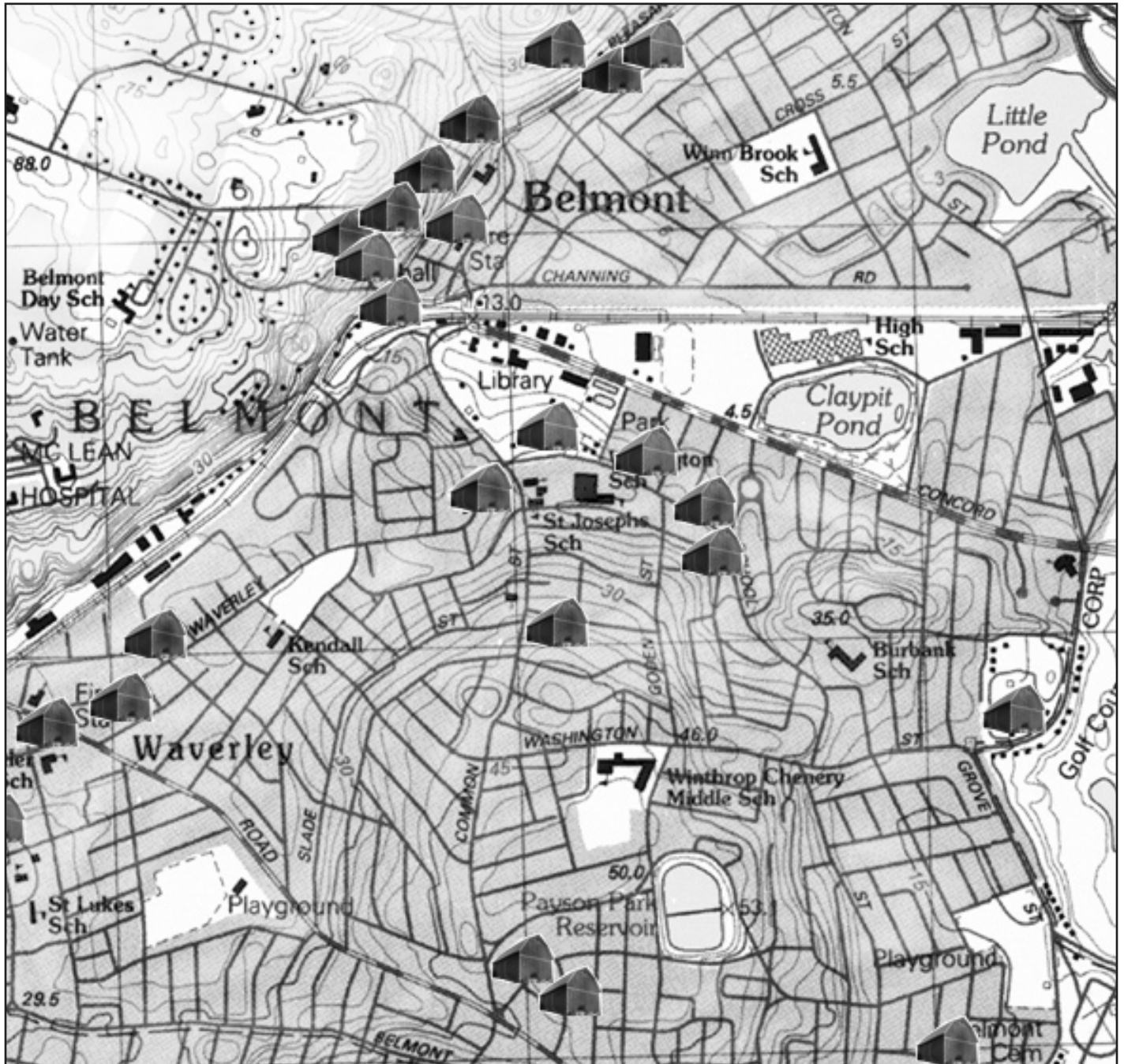
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years, there would be 30 additional people living in Belmont if all the possible barns and carriage houses were converted to residences. In 5 years, Belmont's population may well decline by more than 32 people.

If you think that 32 additional people in Belmont is alarming, consider that in 1970, 28,300 people lived in Belmont; in 2000, 24,200 people lived here, 4,100 less. If you

think population density is the key to quality of life, ask yourself: is Belmont 15 percent better now than in 1970? Belmont can encourage the preservation of 13 barns and carriage houses for the cost of several large families moving into town.

If you want another explanation of what makes life in Belmont short of bucolic, consider this: in 1970, there were 2.6 million motor vehicles registered in Massachusetts. In 2000, there were 5.4 million —more than double. If



Map: Maptech® USGS Topographic Series™, ©Maptech®, Inc. 978-933-3000, www.maptech.com/topo.

A map of locations of Belmont's 24 historic barns and accessory buildings. Locations supplied by Sumner Brown.

the barn bylaw passes, we will be saving relics from when people had horses instead of cars. Our barns will not attract as many tourists as the Old North Bridge, but considering how quickly cars have altered the landscape of both Belmont and our country, we need reminders that we were not always addicted to automobiles and gasoline. Town Meeting will decide if the historic preservation is worth the extra population.

Sumner Brown is a Director of the Belmont Citizens Forum.

Bicycle Barn Tour September 28

See Belmont's barns for yourself. Sumner Brown will lead a bicycle tour of Belmont's barns on Sunday, September 28 in the afternoon. It will be a leisurely ride of about eight miles. See all the barns listed above as well as some barns that have been converted to residential use. Contact Sumner (sumner344@verizon.net) for details.

The Planning Board will hold a public hearing on the new barn bylaw on September 24 at 7 p.m. in the Selectmen's Meeting Room.

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• Enjoy locally grown vegetables this winter!

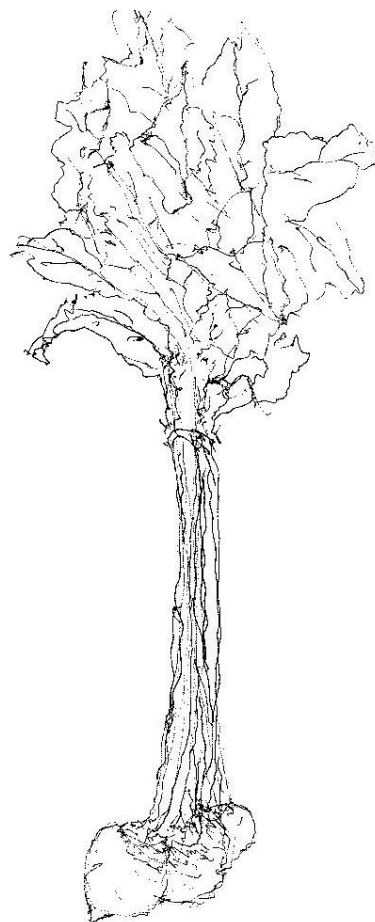
• Buy a Multi-Farm Winter Community Supported Agriculture Share!

• Three farms have come together to share their fall and winter harvests with you through this three-month Winter CSA. Produce for the Winter Share will be grown on the one-acre Belmont CSA, in Belmont, MA; Vanguarden CSA in Dover, MA; and Picadilly Farm in Winchester, NH.

• These shares will contain many storage vegetables, as well as leafy greens and storage apples. Plans for the winter share include beets, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, celery, celeriac, collard greens, escarole, hakurei turnips and greens, kale, lettuce, leeks, sweet potatoes, purple top turnips, onions, parsnips, popcorn, potatoes, radishes, radicchio, shallots, and winter squash. Storage apples from Cider Hill Farm will also be part of the share.

• Winter shares cost \$225. They will be distributed from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the farm in Belmont (34 Glenn Road) on Saturdays, October 18, November 8 and December 6.

• The Belmont CSA is located on one acre of farmland behind Sergi Farm. This small market garden is in its third year of operation. For more information about the Belmont CSA and the multi-farm Winter CSA, go to www.BelmontCSA.blogspot.com or contact BelmontCSA@gmail.com.



Lot 1 Saved by Grassroots Groups

The 47.5-acre parcel will be permanently preserved as open space.

By John Dieckmann

Lot 1, a 47.5-acre parcel of undeveloped land on the Waltham/Lexington border, will be permanently preserved as open space. In a bill signed by Governor Deval Patrick on July 24, the property on the former Middlesex County Hospital site was transferred from the Massachusetts Division of Capital Asset Management (DCAM), which sells the state's surplus lands, to the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). The DCR will add Lot 1 to the Beaver Brook North Reservation. An additional 6.5 acres were signed over to Waltham last spring.

Lot 1 lies within the grounds of the former Middlesex County Hospital, straddling the Waltham/Lexington border between Trapelo Road and Concord Avenue east of Lexington

Street. It is a tract of rolling, forested land with many large trees, open meadows, and several vernal pools. Lot 1 is also a key link in the Western Greenway, adding close to a half mile to the western extent of the Greenway. It links directly to the Chester Brook corridor of the Greenway, which runs parallel to Lexington Street toward Waltham's Lyman Estate. Lot 1 also connects to open spaces in Lexington that in turn connect with conservation lands in Lincoln, ultimately reaching the Bay Circuit trail near Walden Pond.

Lot 1 Was on "Fast Track" to Sale

The preservation of Lot 1 is a good example of how grassroots groups can have a significant impact on important government decisions. Lot 1 was once part of the Middlesex County Hospital Grounds. When the Middlesex County government defaulted on debt related to the hospital and went into receivership in 1995, the state took control of the property and placed it with DCAM, the state's real-estate manager. The name "Lot 1" derives from the 1996 division of the county hospital property into six separate parcels. The seven-acre Lot 6 was auctioned by DCAM for \$5.9 million in August 2004; the other parcels have been transferred to local governments and private owners.

One of DCAM's missions is to sell surplus state properties for money to support the state government. In 2002, the Romney administration, working with the legislature, passed a law that allowed DCAM to "fast track" the sale of surplus state properties without legislative oversight. This new procedure was a radical change from the prior rules governing state-property sales.

In late 2004, DCAM announced its intention to dispose of Lot 1 by auction. The effort to save Lot 1 began in earnest then and was spearheaded by several community groups, including the Belmont Citizens Forum. Local politicians—state representatives and senators, town selectmen, and the Waltham city councillors and mayor—were urged to oppose the sale of



Lot 1. Fortunately, many officials recognized the merits of preserving Lot 1 and objected to the sale, resulting in DCAM withdrawing the property from its June 2005 auction. This was significant because the fast-track law was scheduled to end on June 30, 2005, unless extended by the legislature. Attempts by the Romney administration to persuade the House and Senate leadership to extend the law failed in part because of the negative publicity raised by the attempted auction of Lot 1.

The next few years saw repeated attempts to revive fast-track disposal of “surplus” state

lands. The Massachusetts Coalition for Healthy Communities, led by Jill Stein, consistently opposed these attempts, disseminating alerts that resulted in an outpouring of objections from the public. To this date, the DCAM fast track has not been revived.

Greenway Group Envisioned Trails

In 2004, the Friends of the Western Greenway (FOWG) formed as an umbrella association of the Belmont Citizens Forum, the Waltham Land

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Aerial view of Lot 1.

Source: John Dieckmann

Greenway continued from page 13

Trust, Citizens for Lexington Conservation, and Mass Audubon's Habitat Wildlife Sanctuary to preserve, protect, and enhance the Western Greenway. FOWG began working to have the legislature transfer Lot 1 to either DCR or Waltham and Lexington. Buttressed by the support of local leaders, state Representative Tom Stanley and state Senator Susan Fargo began developing legislative support for the transfer. Prior to this year, all proposed bills had died in legislative sessions, but persistence paid off in 2008, with the successful passage of HB 4202.

The FOWG began as an effort to enhance the Western Greenway, including Lot 1. In 2006, the group presented plans to the McLean Land Management Group, the Belmont Conservation Commission, and DCR for a Western Greenway trail that would travel through the McLean Land, Rock Meadow, and Beaver Brook North. After the plans were approved by all these stakeholders, the Western Greenway trails were marked with blazes.

The FOWG also applied for two DCR grants. The first grant, applied for in collaboration with the town of Belmont, will provide for materials to build a permanent bridge between Rock Meadow and Beaver Brook and to replace boardwalks that have fallen into disrepair in some of the wetter areas of Rock Meadow. Both

of these projects will be constructed this fall by volunteers.

The second grant, if funded, would provide materials to construct a 1,000-foot-long boardwalk providing all-weather, all-seasons passage over a wetlands section of Beaver Brook North near Lot 1. The Greenway improvements will help protect the land and should allow many more people to hike in the Greenway and experience it firsthand.

John Dieckmann is a Director of the Belmont Citizens Forum.



Walking in Belmont Forum

Thursday, October 23, 7:30-9pm, Belmont Memorial Library Auditorium

Moderator: Anne Paulsen, former State Representative

Walking is good for your health, your pocketbook, and the environment -- if there's a safe place to walk. People of all ages can learn how to walk more safely, and there are plenty of ways towns can improve walking conditions

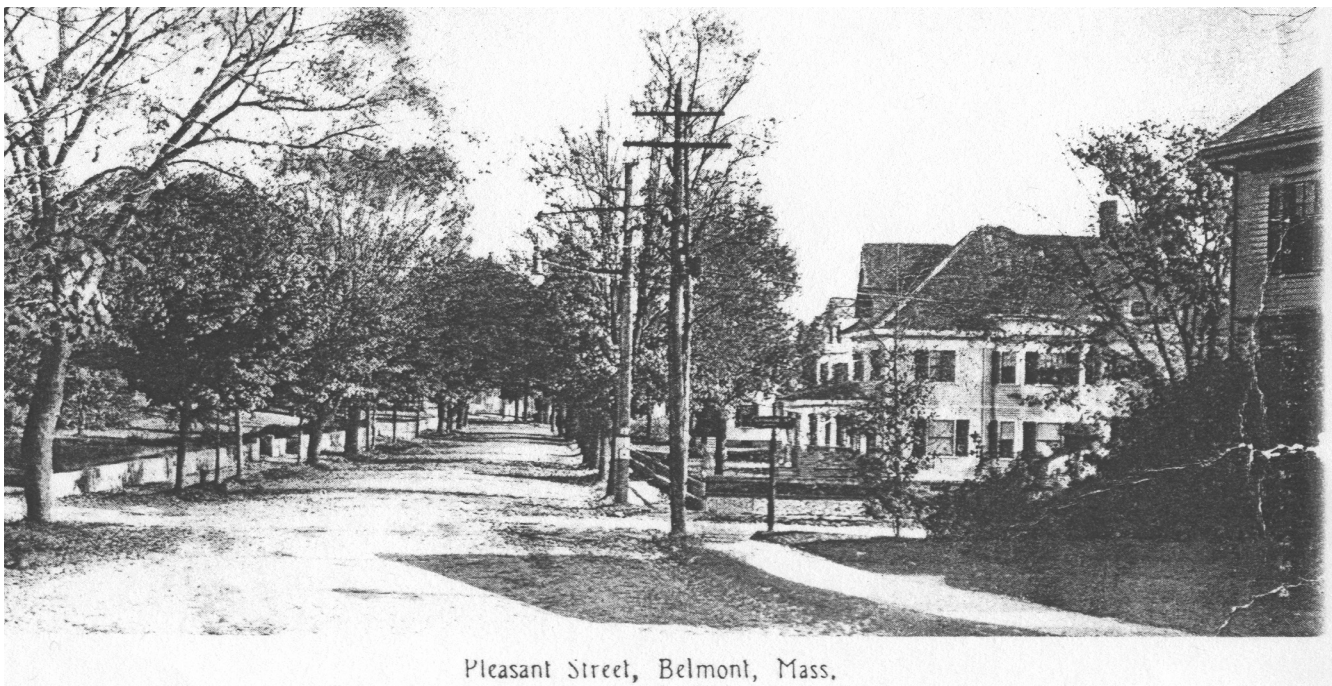
Speakers:

Walk Boston

Liveable Streets

Safe Routes to School

Arlington Walks



Pleasant Street, Belmont, Mass.

What will it take to get more people walking?

Cosponsored by the Belmont Citizens Forum, the Belmont Council on Aging, and Sustainable Belmont.

Visit BelmontCitizensForum.org for speaker updates and further details.

Correction: Belmont Not Eligible for Renewable Energy Rebates... Yet

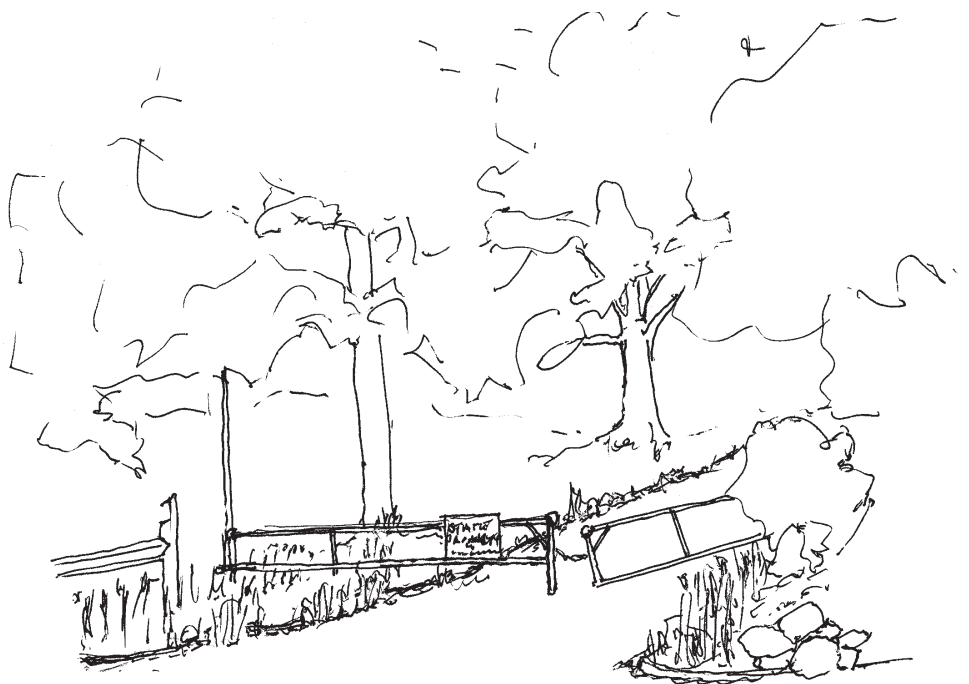
The article “Homeowners Can Opt for Solar, Wind Power,” (Belmont Citizens Forum Newsletter, May 2008) described state rebates for homeowners’ renewable energy installations. That article did not include a key detail; these tax credits are not currently available to Belmont residents, although this unfortunate situation may change soon.

Rebates for residential solar and wind-power systems are distributed by the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative, which is funded by the Massachusetts Renewable Energy Trust. The money from that trust comes from surcharges on electric bills totaling about 25 cents a month for homeowners. Belmont’s Municipal Light Department is not a member of the Trust—so Belmont residents cannot get rebates from the Collaborative.

Still, there is hope. On July 2, Governor Patrick signed the Green Communities Act, which will, among other things, authorize municipal light plants to establish a “renewable energy charge” and enter into the Massachusetts Renewable Energy Trust Fund. According to the legislation, though, “such an election by a municipal lighting plant shall be irrevocable” —meaning that once the Light Department starts levying the charge, it cannot change its mind and quit the Trust Fund.

The town itself may be eligible to join the Green Communities program established by the act, which will “disperse grants and loans and provide technical assistance to municipalities,” according to the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (DOER) web site, www.mass.gov/doer/grncomm/gca_green_div.htm. As of this writing, the DOER is still working on criteria for towns to be included in Green Communities, as well as composing applications for grants; the drafts should be available in mid November.

Meg Muckenhoupt



Environmental Events

Chemical Free Garden Tour

Sunday, September 14.

Come see how your Watertown neighbors are creating beautiful gardens without using environmentally destructive chemicals. This free tour is sponsored by Watertown Citizens for Environmental Safety.

For information on meeting time and place, contact WCES: 617-926-8560, mail@watertowncitizens.org, www.watertowncitizens.org.

Ultimate Green Home & Lawn Tips

Wednesday, September 17, 7 p.m.

During the first half of the talk, Bart Berkowitz will offer simple concrete steps to green your home and save dramatically on your home heating, cooling and energy bills, including solar hot water and electricity options. The second segment of the workshop, given by Jackson Madnick, includes tips on how to make your home healthier, conserve water, and have a greener lawn that saves time, money and water—including techniques used by the Red Sox at Fenway Park.

This free talk is sponsored by the Lexington DPW and Water Department. Cary Memorial Hall, 1605 Mass. Ave, Lexington. Information: <http://ci.lexington.ma.us/dpw/Documents/Greentalk.pdf>

You Too Can Clean Green

Thursday, October 2, 6 p.m.-8 p.m.

Have you thought about what you can do to create a cleaner environment and decrease your carbon footprint right in your own home? Discover the cleaning magic of common household items like baking soda, white vinegar, salt, and Borax and reduce your reliance on commercial cleaners. Make a natural air freshener, experiment with some "homemade" green cleaning products, and take home a bar of chemical-free coffee soap that dispels odors.

Meet at Habitat Education Center and Wildlife Sanctuary, 10 Juniper Road. \$12 Mass Audubon members, \$15 nonmembers. To register, contact

Habitat: 617-489-5050, habitat@massaudubon.org, www.massaudubon.org.

Rescue the Danehy Park Wetland

Thursday, September 18, 2 p.m.-5p.m.

Come to Danehy Park in North Cambridge to help eradicate the invasive grass known as Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) that is proliferating there. Volunteers with garden pruners will cut the tops off of the plants, then professional pesticide applicators will drip a small amount of a wetland-approved herbicide (glyphosate) into each hollow stem. Volunteers will have no contact with the herbicide. This work will be done with the support of the Danehy Park management and under a permit issued by the Cambridge Conservation Commission. Pruners, gloves, water, and refreshments will be provided.

Information: 617-959-7157, phragfree.danehy@yahoo.com.

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Country Walk in Lexington

Saturday, October 4, 1 p.m.

Explore five conservation areas during this 3-4 hour ramble from Lexington Center to the Burlington line and back. Discover forestland, meadows, ponds and streams that form one of the town's more extensive greenbelts.

Meet behind the Sherwin Williams paint store on the Minuteman Bikeway, 10 Camellia Place, Lexington.

Sponsored by Citizens for Lexington Conservation.

Information: 781-862-6216.

Explore the Western Greenway

Saturday, October 25, 8 a.m.-11a.m.

Did you know there are more than 1,000 acres of undeveloped, interconnected land in Belmont, Lexington, and Waltham? Fall is a wonderful season to experience the local nature of New England, so join Habitat for a 2.5-mile hike though part of the Western Greenway starting at Habitat and ending at the Beaver Brook North Reservation in Waltham.

Meet at Habitat Education Center and Wildlife Sanctuary, 10 Juniper Road. \$15 Mass Audubon members, \$19 nonmembers. To register, contact Habitat: 617-489-5050, habitat@massaudubon.org, www.massaudubon.org.

Energy Savings Fair

Saturday, October 25, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Get the information and contacts to make your home or business more energy-efficient. Experienced vendors and organizations will provide practical solutions for heating, insulation, solar systems, lighting, tax rebates, and more.

Lexington High School, 251 Waltham St., Lexington.

Sponsored by the Lexington Global Warming Action Coalition and the Lexington Climate Action Committee.

Information: info@lexgwac.org, www.lexgwac.org.

Rogers's River Exploration.

Saturday, November 1, 8 a.m.-11 a.m.

One of Belmont's major streams, Winn's Brook, is largely hidden from view. Come trace the journey of a droplet of water from the vernal pool at Habitat to Little Pond on the Belmont-Cambridge border.

Meet at Habitat Education Center and Wildlife Sanctuary, 10 Juniper Road. \$15 Mass Audubon members, \$19 nonmembers. To register, contact Habitat: 617-489-5050, habitat@massaudubon.org, www.massaudubon.org.

11th Annual HIP Fall Trails Day

Sunday, November 2, noon-3 p.m.

Join other volunteers at the Habitat Education Center and Wildlife Sanctuary, 10 Juniper Road, for an afternoon of fun and environmental stewardship. Chip trails, remove invasive plants, and help plant wildflower seeds in the meadows. Bring friends and family; there will be special activities for younger children, and high school students will receive community service hours for their work.

Sponsored by Habitat. Information: 617-489-5050, habitat@massaudubon.org, www.massaudubon.org.



BCF Newsletter Gets New Look

Notice anything different about this Newsletter issue? After nine years of continuous publication, thanks to you, our readers, the Belmont Citizens Forum board thought it was time to make the Newsletter even better. We wanted to stay true to our roots as a grass-roots organization dedicated to preserving Belmont's small-town atmosphere. But we also wanted to create a cleaner, crisper look in a more user-friendly format. Designer Amy Rothstein of Pond Productions thoughtfully guided us through this process, and what you have in your hands is the result.

Let us know what you think about our new look.

E-mail info@belmontcitizensforum.org.

We need you.

If you can volunteer even a few hours a month, you can make a difference. You do not need to be an expert—just a person who cares about our town.

I can devote time to:

- Archeology & Historic Preservation
- Environmental Protection
- Planning & Zoning
- Traffic & Transportation
- Mailings
- Newsletter
- Web site

I can help pay for this newsletter:

It costs about \$4000 to publish each issue of our newsletter. Please donate for this purpose:

\$25 \$50 \$100 \$250

Name _____

Address _____

Phone/E-mail _____

If you have any questions, please call 617-484-1844. The Belmont Citizens Forum is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. Your donation is deductible from federal taxes to the full extent provided by law.

Make checks payable to the **Belmont Citizens Forum** and mail to Belmont Citizens Forum, P.O. Box 609, Belmont, MA 02478.

Thank you.

Belmont Citizens Forum

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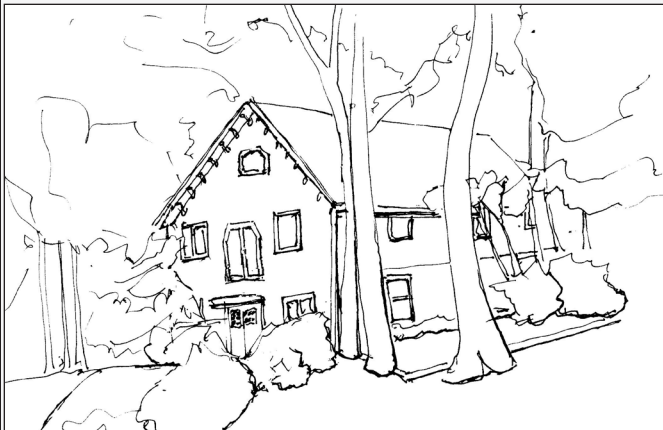
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Tell us what you think!

