



# Belmont Citizens Forum

## Forum Links Storms, Floods, and Pollution

“Water Trouble” event draws 100+ local residents, officials

*By David Chase and Evanthia Malliris*

Should the Mystic River be clean enough and safe enough to boat on every day of the year? How about the Alewife Brook? At the September “Water Trouble: A Public Forum on Storms, Floods, and Pollution,” presented by the Belmont Citizens Forum, these questions were posed by Patrick Herron, a forum panelist and Mystic Monitoring Network Director for the Mystic River Watershed Association (MyRWA).

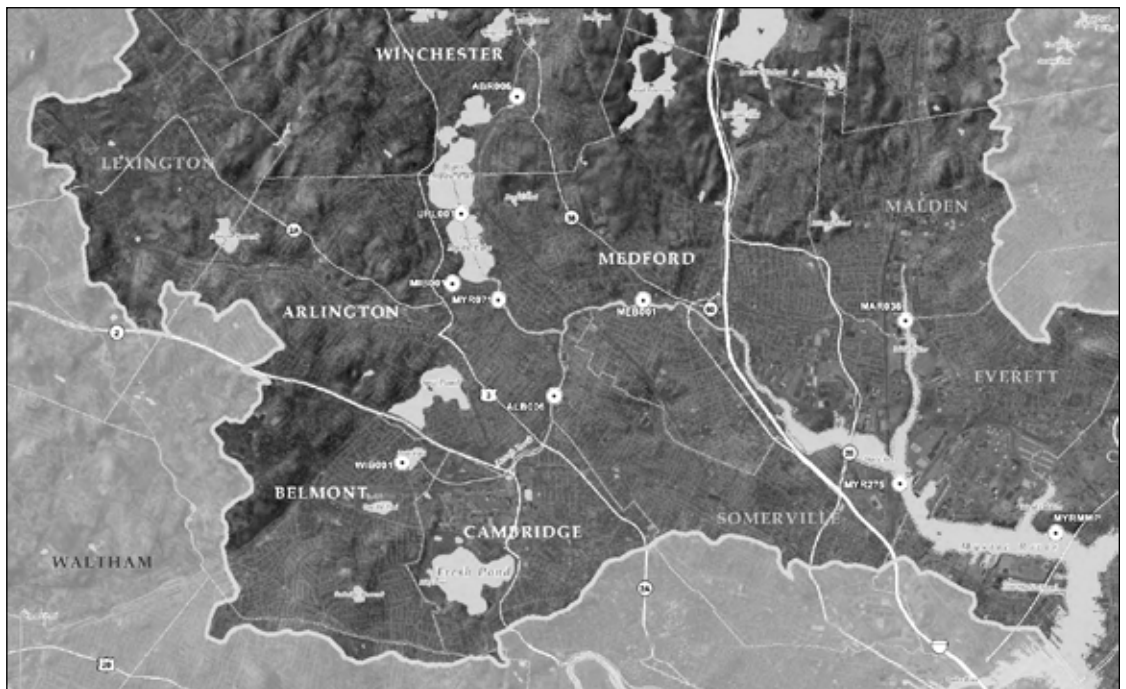
The purpose of the forum was to educate homeowners about improving water quality and reducing flooding in Belmont, Arlington, and Cambridge, according to Anne-Marie Lambert, forum chair and BCF director. These topics aren't just important to homeowners; candidates for state representative Jim Gammill, Tomi Olson, and Dave Rogers attended, as did state Senators Pat Jehlen of Somerville and Will Brownsberger of Belmont, Belmont selectman chair Mark Paolillo, and Peg Velie and David Webster, both members of the Belmont Conservation Commission.

Herron was joined on the forum panel by four experts in the area of water management: Kathleen Baskin of Belmont, director

of Water Policy, Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs; Glenn Clancy, director, Belmont Office for Community Development; Ralph Jones, Belmont selectman and managing director of the Cadmus Group; and Richard Vogel, professor of civil and environmental engineering, Tufts University. Belmont's Fred Paulsen, senior counsel at Burns & Levinson LLP, Boston, was panel moderator.

### Mystic River serves many purposes

In his presentation, Herron commented that despite the development and industrialization in the Mystic River watershed, there is an incredible underlying resource: for water, for recreation, and for “a break for the mind” from the Boston metropolis. MyRWA works with the US Environmental Protection Agency and the



Detail of the southern portion of the Mystic River watershed.

U.S. EPA

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, taking water samples, testing them, and sharing the results with municipalities and posting them online.

In Belmont, MyRWA has been sampling water for 12 years at the points where Winn Brook flows into Little Pond and Little River flows into Alewife Brook. Seventy-two percent of Belmont's land and at least 80 percent of its population are in the Mystic River watershed. With geology primarily composed of slow-draining clay and

homes sitting next to swamps, Belmont faces water-quality challenges.

Belmont may be the community that contributes the most sewage to the Mystic River without actually dumping sewage into waterways. Belmont's storm and sanitary sewer systems run in separate pipes, but the pipes are old and leak, and there is too much cross-contamination. Not surprisingly, MyRWA testing has found that Winn Brook and Wellington Brook are contaminated. These brooks are the biggest source of sewage contamination for Alewife Brook.

Another pollutant is stormwater runoff which picks up pollutants from pavements and streets and fertilizer residue from lawns.

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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](mailto:info@belmontcitizensforum.org).

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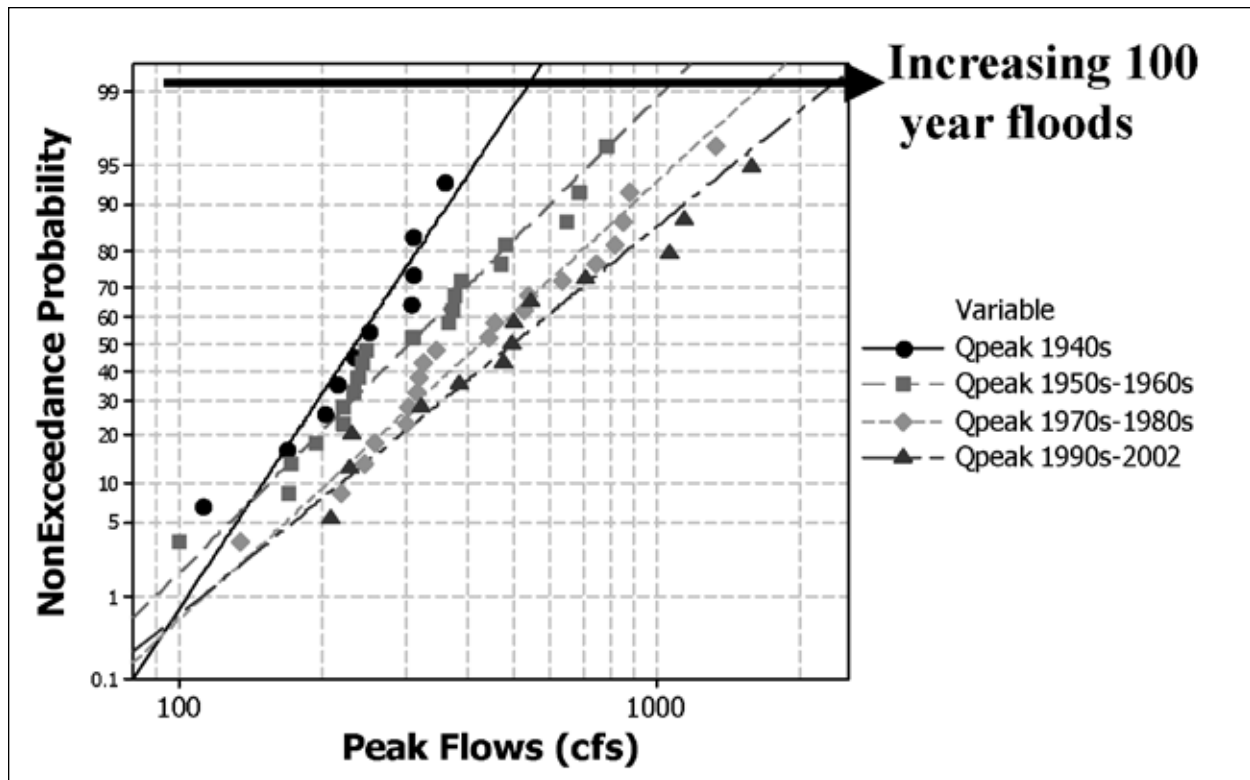
What was considered a  
100-year flood in the 1950s  
now occurs every six years  
on average.

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On a brighter note, Herron reported positive changes in the Mystic River. A new dam and fish ladder built by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation were erected this past summer, and 200,000 foot-long river herring were counted—"that's 40 miles of fish lined up," Herron said. Fifty percent of the fish were females, which can lay 100,000 eggs per fish. The same kind of activity is happening in the Alewife Brook on a good day. If Alewife Brook can be cleaned up—increasing oxygen, decrease sewerage—they'll spawn there, too.

### **More Pavement, More Flooding**

Tufts professor Richard Vogel studies how river flow has changed over the past six decades. He discussed the Aberjona watershed and the Aberjona River, which flows into the Mystic River via the Mystic Lakes. In the 1940s, the river flow rate was typically below 1 cubic foot



RICHARD VOGEL

Graph of the Aberjona River's increasing flow over time. According to this graph, the peak flow that has a one percent probability of occurring in any given year has increased from about 300 to 1100 cubic feet per second from 1940 to 2002.

per second; now, flows of 1000, or even 2000, cubic feet per second are not uncommon. What was considered a 100-year flood in the 1950s now occurs every six years on average.

This increase in flow and flooding is due to urbanization, not climate change, Vogel said. Urbanization means more streets, driveways, and rooftops. All these impervious surfaces have reduced the amount of water absorbed into the ground and retained on site, accelerating river flow. This increase in river flow is a nationwide and worldwide trend; all heavily urbanized areas have experienced increased river flows, while surrounding areas have not. Communities need to decrease stormwater volume peaks, increase groundwater recharge, and restore the original hydrological balance.

Implementing stormwater Best Management Practices (i.e. BMPs) can help. The goal of these practices is to allow runoff to collect where it can percolate into the groundwater, slowing its flow rate into storm sewers and streams, and reducing the amount of pollution that it might be carrying.

These best practices can be either structural or nonstructural. Nonstructural practices include education for residents, zoning changes to encourage smart development, and water-use audits (similar to energy audits). Structural practices include eliminating curbs, adding hydrologically functional landscaping, and installing rain barrels. Vogel cited a Seattle community with no curbing where water flows from the street to a permeable lot such as a filter strip. Vogel commented that although runoff eventually ends up in storm drain system after going through this infiltration process, it's cleaner.

### Laws Can Make Water Cleaner

Kathy Baskin spoke about the regulatory authority and financial tools that her office can wield to address water quality issues.

The EOEEA is planning for climate change adaptations, looking at a 100 to 150-year time scale. What will happen when the expected average temperature is two degrees higher in 150 years and the sea level is at least a foot

higher than it was a century ago? The EOEEA is beginning to work on adaptations and solutions.

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## What will happen when the expected average temperature is two degrees higher in 150 years and the sea level is at least a foot higher than it was a century ago?

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At the state level, the Massachusetts Clean Water Act's Stormwater Management Standard sets goals for reducing peak runoff, increasing aquifer recharge, and removing pollutants from runoff. The standard is "anti-degradation," that is, designated uses of waters cannot be changed, and levels of pollution cannot be increased.

Locally, municipalities can pass bylaws that specify low-impact development or disconnecting illegal stormwater hook-ups from homes. Sustainable Belmont is currently working on bylaws to help Belmont with stormwater and water quality management. Baskin called this "a great effort," a way that "the community can help town hall get the job done."

### The "Rain Tax" Stormwater Utility

One potential source of local funding for stormwater management is a stormwater utility, or so-called "rain tax." Managing runoff can be considered a utility service, similar to water and electric service or waste removal, because it requires infrastructure. Creating a stormwater utility asks households and businesses to take responsibility for the impervious surfaces on their property. Portland, Oregon, passed such a bylaw in 1997, charging about \$60 per household per year.

Three Massachusetts communities have passed stormwater utility bylaws, Reading, Newton, and Chicopee. Newton's utility fee is \$25 per household per year, or \$150 per year for a commercial property. There is an abatement clause: redirecting roof runoff to a drywell, for example, earns a lower rate. Baskin pointed out that a stormwater utility funding stream could be used to raise larger amounts of money for stormwater projects.

### Town Water Projects Have High Costs

Glenn Clancy, director, Belmont Office of Community Development, described sources of funding for infrastructure improvements in Belmont. Belmont's Sewer Enterprise Fund, which pays for capital projects at a rate of \$250,000 to \$400,000 per year, has existed for 13 years. Belmont has borrowed significant money recently to fund sewer projects, and the debt service on these loans will be \$1 million in 2013.

Belmont has undertaken several major water infrastructure projects over the last decade. The town has spent \$900,000 installing storm drains over the past few years.

Belmont has also rebuilt headwalls at brooks on Concord Avenue near the Belmont Country Club and the top of Clifton Street and Prospect; replaced two 50-year-old sewer pump stations at Stony Brook Road and Woodbine Road; and completed a \$6 million sewer project in the Winn Brook area to address the long-term problem of sanitary sewer surcharge after heavy rains. Belmont has borrowed funds for this work.

The Massachusetts Water Resource Authority has funded work on Belmont's inflow and infiltration improvements, and has been doing so for 20 years at a total cost of \$3.4 million. "We spend every penny we can get," stated Clancy. Belmont also has received mitigation funds from developers, including McLean's developers.

Clancy said that Belmont is under orders from the EPA and Massachusetts DEP to clean up the storm drain system. (See "DEP Approves 83,000 Gallon Sewer Permit," Belmont Citizens Forum *Newsletter*, May 2008.) Town Meeting authorized borrowing \$2.3 million from the DEP's two percent loan program to repair three outfalls in Belmont: #1 sewer drain at Fairview Avenue at the Cambridge line; #2 at Huron Avenue and

the Cambridge line; and #10, the Winn Brook culvert as it enters Little Pond system. This project is in the design phase.

Clancy's next priority is to finish the inflow/infiltration work in the Winn Brook area mandated by the EPA. The EPA requires removal of 15 percent of inflow. This goal hasn't been met yet, and Clancy's office is developing a construction plan to move ahead on this, focusing on infiltration removal.

Looking ahead, Clancy thought that a storm-water utility bylaw would help Belmont manage its water issues, as well as pay for a system-wide analysis of the sanitary sewer system. Clancy, Ralph Jones, Fred Paulsen, and the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority have met to discuss an analysis. Clancy characterized what the town has been doing as reactive, "chasing problems and hotspots," and would like to take a more proactive approach.

## National Standards Target Reuse

Ralph Jones said that nationally, water reuse is going to be very big. Wastewater issues and drinking water issues are beginning to merge: for example, reuse plants in California are governed by wastewater regulations.

Jones also said that the EPA has been constrained by statutes that are exclusively concerned with water quality, not quantity; the Safe Drinking Act does not address drought or water shortage in any way. Jones averred that quality and quantity are closely related; quantity might be more important in the long run.

Nationally, Jones reported a change in storm-water regulations, making pollution outfalls into point sources, which are thus subject to regulation. There are strict controls over discharges from stormwater systems.

During the question and answer session, EK Khalsa, Executive Director of MyRWA, wrapped up the discussion, calling the issues raised during the evening things that he could think about "all day long."

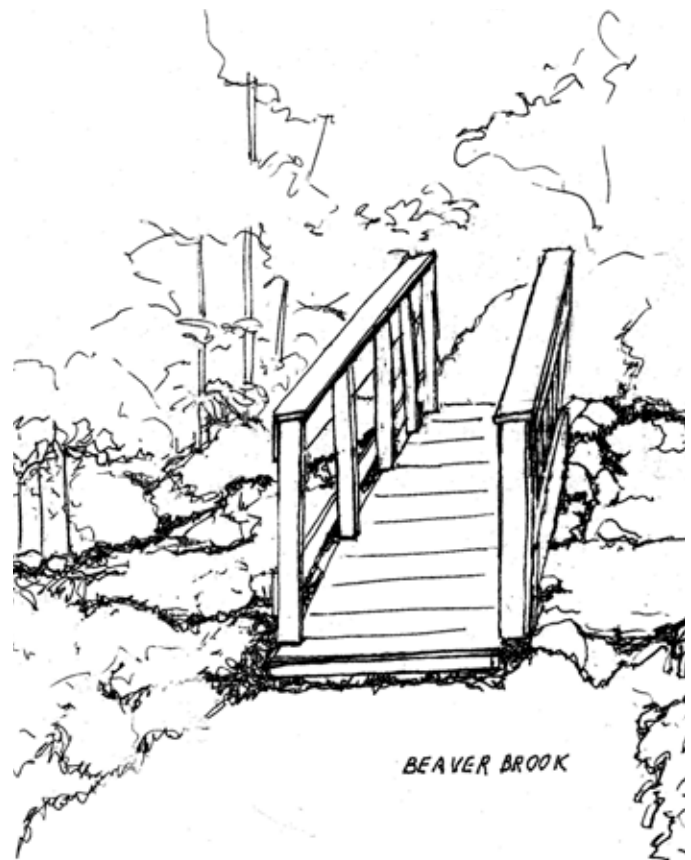
"From my perspective, the value of these waters and whether we want to preserve them or not is the issue," he said. "The Mystic River is not safe. Alewife Brook not safe. We have a choice. We can turn our backs on the values of our natural system, or we can decide that the value

is priceless. If the values of our natural world were to disappear, it would be very difficult to imagine what our life would be like."

The Water Trouble Forum was cosponsored by the Coalition to Preserve the Belmont Uplands, Friends of Alewife Reservation, Mystic River Watershed Association, and Sustainable Belmont.

Corporate sponsors of this event were Watertown Savings Bank at the Gold Level, and Belmont Car Wash, Coldwell Banker, Doctoroff Insurance, The Great American Rain Barrel Company, FB Environmental Associates, and Lawndale Realty at the Silver Level. The Belmont Citizens Forum is grateful for their support of this important educational event.

David Chase, bicycle enthusiast, and Evanthia Malliris, publicity chair for the Water Trouble Forum, are directors of the Belmont Citizens Forum.



# Western Greenway is Now “Half Complete”

Forum explores origins, progress of 12-mile trail

By Meg Muckenhoupt

The Western Greenway, 6.5 miles of continuous walking trails linking green space in Belmont, Lexington, and Waltham, was once just an idea in Roger Wrubel’s head—and may one day stretch as long as 12 miles. “The Western Greenway is the Western Greenway because we called it that and made a map,” said Roger Wrubel, director of Mass Audubon’s Habitat Wildlife Sanctuary.

Wrubel spoke at the September 5 event titled “The Western Greenway: From Concept to Halfway Complete,” co-sponsored by Sustainable Belmont, the Belmont Citizens Forum, the Waltham Land Trust, and Citizens for Lexington Conservation. Wrubel created the first map of the Western Greenway in 1996.

Wrubel said a Greenway is many different things: a continuous strip of land; a collection of public and private properties; a planning tool. “When you get people to think about it that way, you can influence its development,” Wrubel said. The Lexington Planning Board asked a developer to provide access to the Western Greenway through their site—and got it, Wrubel said.

Over time, organizations in Belmont, Waltham, and Lexington joined to create an umbrella group called Friends of the Western Greenway (FWG). The Friends have three goals: to build trails, to protect the parcels that make up the Greenway, and to publicize the Greenway to increase support.

The most challenging of those tasks has been protecting the parcels. Eighteen landowners hold title to different pieces of the Greenway, including commercial landlords, nonprofit groups, and government entities. “A lot of the work that we did was getting licenses from the state to do things and easements from landowners to do things,” Wrubel said.

Audience member Marc Rudnick, Waltham Land Trust treasurer, commented, “I spent five long years of my life negotiating trail easements with the owners and residents of the Bishops Forest Condo Association . . . It was a great experience.”

The Western Greenway’s biggest obstacle so far was the state’s push to sell Lot 1, part of the former Middlesex County hospital site, for development. (See “State Plans to Sell Off Vital Greenway Link,” Belmont Citizens Forum *Newsletter*, January 2005.)

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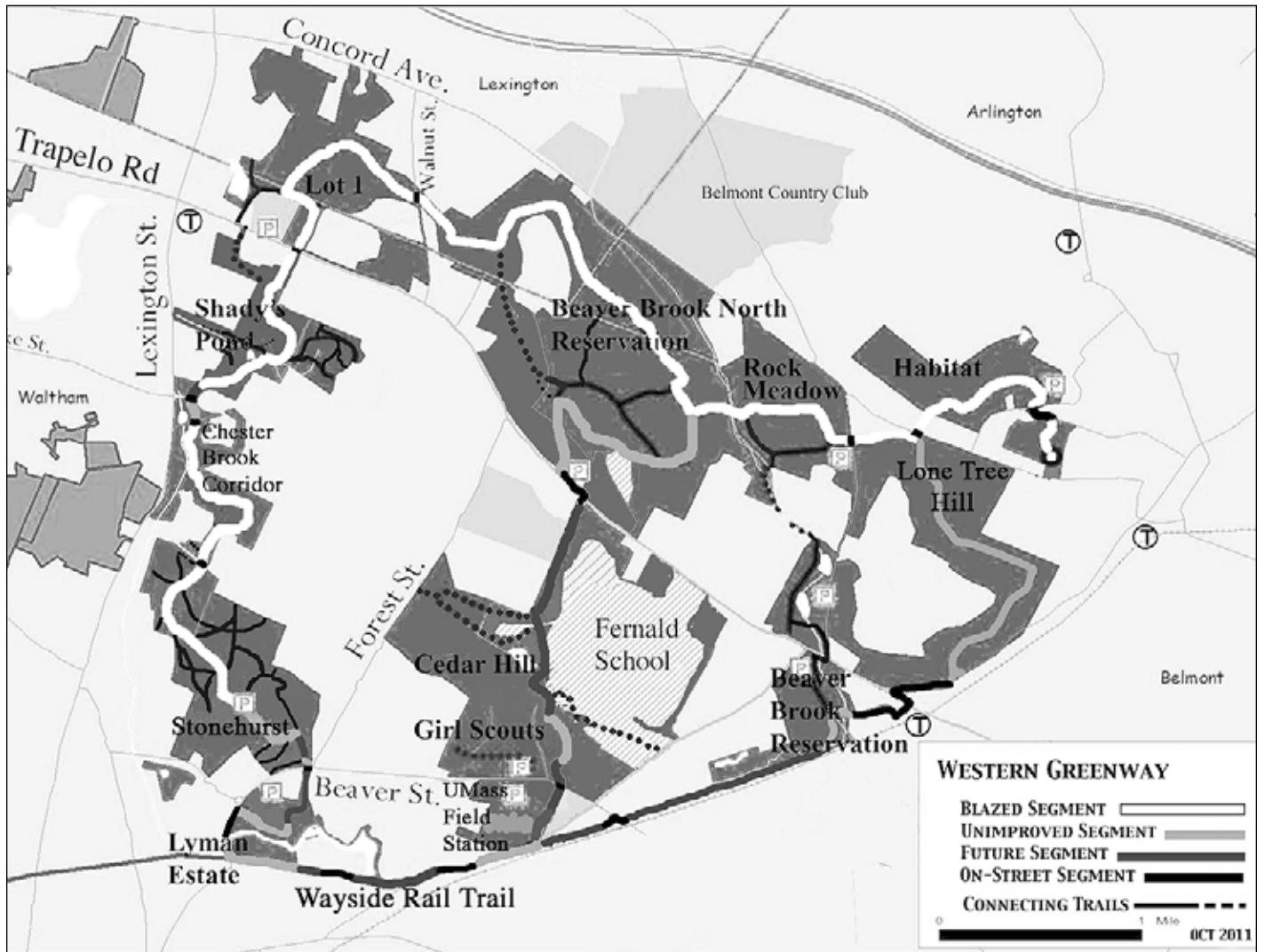
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The FWG organized resistance to the sale, recruiting organizations in Lexington, Waltham, and Belmont to send letters and contact legislators. “We just really put up a stink about it,” Wrubel said. The FWG also certified seven vernal pools in the site, which is laced with wetlands. “This is a very wet area—a very rich area for biology,” Wrubel said. In the end, state legislators had the property transferred to the Department of Conservation and Recreation. Wrubel recommends accessing Lot 1 via Falzone Field, off Trapelo Road in Waltham. (See map on page 7.)



Western Greenway Trail Marker

ROGER WRUBEL



Blazed, unblazed, and future segments of the Western Greenway.

By comparison, trail building has been simple. Rudnick, Keith Ohmart of Citizens for Lexington Conservation, and Mike Tabaczynski of the New England Mountain Bike Association have joined Wrubel in organizing trail and boardwalk-building work days. The FWG has also applied for grants for construction materials; the labor is provided by volunteers, who also maintain the trails. Without regular mowing, the boardwalk would disappear into the meadow grass.

Like the grass, the Western Greenway is still growing. This fall, volunteers have been clearing trails approaching the rail line alongside Waverley Oaks Road and Beaver Street. By spring 2013, there will be 6.5 miles of uninterrupted Western Greenway trails.

In the future, the FWG will have to figure out how to cross Linden Street and work with the state's Fernald Center property when its future

becomes clear; at present, Waltham is awaiting a state assessment of the Fernald property's value. But whatever happens, the state "essentially recognizes that there will be a route for the Western Greenway across the tract," said Wrubel.

Trails that leave the streets are becoming increasingly popular, Wrubel said, citing the Minuteman Bikeway, the Nashua River Rail Trail, the East Bay Bike Path between Providence and Bristol, Rhode Island, and the Cape Cod Rail Trail. "We're competing with cars for space," Wrubel said. "Cars interfere with our enjoyment of being out of the house . . . Pedestrians are shuttled off to the side."

Meg Muckenhoupt is editor of the Belmont Citizens Forum *Newsletter*.

# How Did Belmont Live 70 Years Ago?

By Robert Wolf

In 1939, my family moved from Arlington to Oak Street in Belmont. The houses on Oak Street had been built around 1895 as part of the Belmont Park development of homes along Goden, Orchard, Myrtle, and Oak streets.

The late 1800s was a time of transition from gas lighting to electricity. Our house still had several lighting fixtures fitted to burn gas and to take an electric bulb as well, though the gas had long since been disconnected.

Once, soon after we moved, my parents were having plumbing work done, and the plumber accidentally connected the old gas lines to the water line. My brother and I thought it was great fun to see water shooting out of the light fixtures! Mother did not find it amusing.

Our furnace, which was so big it took up nearly the entire basement, originally burned coal, but had been converted to oil before we moved in. Many homes in the neighborhood still burned coal as late as the 1950's.

## Walkable Belmont

Our house's location made it convenient for me to walk to school at Mary Lee Burbank elementary school. There were no school buses, and everyone lived within walking distance of school. The school had no cafeteria, so we also walked home for lunch every day at noon. The assumption was that the mothers would be waiting at home to provide that lunch. I do not recall any family in my circle of friends for which this was not possible. The only child of a single parent I knew had lost his father in World War II.

Most families I knew had cars but few of them used cars to commute to work. Instead, they took the bus, trolley, or train into Cambridge or Boston. Cars were primarily for shopping, family transportation, or pleasure.

I think my mother never had a driver's license, but, in any case, she never drove a car alone. When my father was away on business, which he often was for weeks at a time, we either walked where we wanted to go—to church or school or

Belmont Center—or we took the bus and subway into Cambridge or Boston.

Belmont Center was where we went to shop. Sage's grocery market was there, as was the Ben Franklin Store and Greer's Seafood. Starting in 1947 there was even a branch of Filene's Department Store. Filene's had a large parking area in the back, which was a novelty then.

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For some things we took the bus to Harvard Square. Saturday mornings, a group of kids from the neighborhood would take the bus together to go to the afternoon children's matinee at the movie theater there. Or we would transfer to the subway at Harvard Square to get to the stores and attractions of Boston.

In those days, many things were delivered directly to homes. There was the "butter-and-egg man," the Cushman Bakery man, and, of course, the milkman. We got our milk from Ross Dairy in Belmont, and some of my early memories are of the horse-drawn milk wagon. The horse knew the route, so the delivery man would load his hand carrier with the milk and other dairy products for two or three houses and walk from house to house. The horse, knowing where he was going, pulled the wagon along to the next place where the man got things out of the wagon again. The wagon had rubber tires like a car, so it was very quiet.

## Multi-Use Streets

Oak Street was a quiet street, and many evenings in warm seasons all the kids would gather in the street for a game of kickball or dodgeball. In the event a car came along, the call of "Car! Car!" would ring out and we would suspend play to let it pass. This didn't seem to interfere much with our play.



In the winter, Myrtle Street, two streets over from Oak Street, was designated for sledding. The town left a layer of snow on the surface of Myrtle Street, which was quickly packed down by passing cars. We all had American Flyer type runner sleds which were very fast on the hard packed snow.

The town also put down a layer of sand at the bottom of the street so we wouldn't shoot out into Concord Avenue, which even then was a heavily traveled road. I had the rule that I had to start my walk home from sledding when the street lights came on in the late afternoon.

Winter travel in general was possible, if somewhat more difficult than it is today. Sidewalks were plowed to provide safe walking for children going to school. Roads were plowed and sanded by the town, but not as quickly or thoroughly as at present. I don't remember that salt was used. Virtually all American cars were rear-wheel drive then, so motorists used chains on the rear wheels to get through deeper snow and to provide traction on snow and ice. Snow tires were, I think, a later innovation.

## Biking on Route 2

In 1946, for my 10th birthday, I received a new Raleigh three-speed bicycle with a lighting system and generator, imported from England! This was a time when most kids in the neighborhood had American bikes with big balloon tires, heavy frames modeled after the autos of the day, no gears, and only battery lights.

The Raleigh bike was my pride and joy for many years. I remember how thrilled I was when it was delivered to our house by truck and how the driver commented that it was nice to see a kid who seemed to appreciate a new bike.

I don't remember any adult who owned a bicycle or rode one regularly—either for transportation or for exercise. There were no bike routes or bike paths then.

My friends and I made great use of our bikes for transportation and adventure. One of our favorite trips was to ride out to Walden Pond on the Route 2 Parkway, which, as far as Lexington, was just two lanes of traffic in each direction with a wide median planted with trees, bushes, and flowers. There was never enough traffic to bother us.

We lived on Oak Street from 1939 until the fall of 1947, when we moved to a brand new house just being built on Oliver Road. Across the street was vacant land that led down to the shore of Little Pond. In hunting season, Mom was often on the phone to the police when she heard shots across the pond too close to our house.

I went to the Winn Brook School for sixth grade. The school was a small brick structure with large fields around it. Across from the school on one side were fields of celery, and down the street were greenhouses that grew flowers for the Boston market.

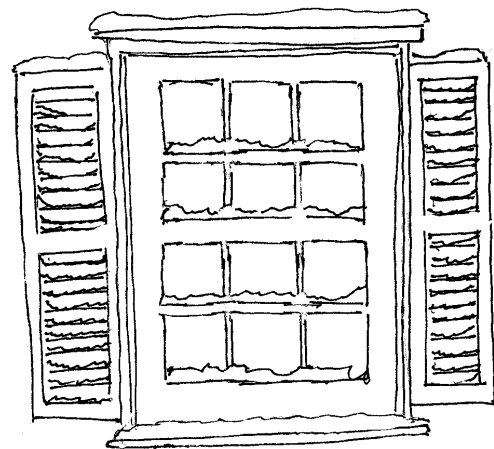
I went to junior high and high school while we lived on Oliver Road. They were on the other side of town, so I either rode my bike or took the school bus. Our church was also a distance away near Belmont Center, and to get there I rode my bike or walked.

My high school years (Class of 1954) were not particularly happy, but there were a few highlights. One teacher I particularly liked was Albert Clish. He was a physics and biology instructor with an interesting sense of humor and unusual teaching methods.

When we were called upon to dissect crawfish, he would go down to Greer's Seafood store in Belmont Center and buy a lobster, bring it to class, boil it in a big beaker, and lead the dissection by "dissecting" and eating the lobster!

We lived in Belmont until 1957, when my parents bought a home in Winchester.

The Reverend Robert Wolf is a retired Unitarian Universalist minister who presently lives with his wife, Mary, in Auburn, Maine.



# Belmont's Homes Feature Modern Architecture

By Meg Muckenhoupt

Belmont, the “Town of Homes,” has houses designed by some of the most prominent 20th-century modern architects. Walter Gropius, Carl Koch, and Eleanor Raymond all left their mark on the town. Some of the earliest modern homes in America were built in Belmont, starting with Eleanor Raymond’s 1931 Rachel Raymond house, widely credited as the first modern home in New England.

These homes share open floor plans with flexible space, clean designs using simple materials, and strong connections between the indoors and the surrounding landscape. The houses were carefully sited and feature large windows and patios to bring nature inside, enlarging the sense of space in houses that are small by today’s standards. “A big part of modern design is attempting to be compact and multi-purpose. We like to multitask,” said Sally Zimmerman, manager of Historic Preservation Services at Historic New England.

The homes reflect the aesthetics of their first owners, generally academics, scientists, and engineers trained at institutions like MIT

and Harvard. “It’s . . . the beginning of the technology revolution out in the suburbs,” said Zimmerman. “They were attuned not only to the cutting edge of what they were working on but living on the cutting edge as well.”

Unfortunately, these historic homes are at risk for demolition. They don’t look like “historic” houses from the Colonial or Victorian eras, and many of them are hidden from the street by trees, so they can’t be easily admired by neighbors. Owners can tear them down at will. Some houses have been enlarged and altered by insensitive additions.

The 1931 Rachel Raymond house was demolished in 2007 by the Belmont Hill School, despite objections by entities including the Architectural Record, the Docomomo International working group for conserving modern architecture, and the Belmont Historic District Commission. The school asserted that additions had made the house unrecognizable. Eleanor Raymond’s biographer, Doris Cole, said those additions were planned by the architect.

“We have not been as open to the aesthetics of modern houses as a lot of the rest of



TOWN OF BELMONT

View of a Carl Koch house, Snake Hill Road.



BELMONT CITIZENS FORUM

Home designed by Walter Gropius, Pinehurst Road.

the country," Zimmerman commented. "We should think twice before we get rid of them. Younger people are coming along who are more interested in these houses than the current generation of homeowners . . .

"Their time is coming. We should not get rid of them before they are valued."

Meg Muckenhoupt is editor of the Belmont Citizens Forum *Newsletter*.

Right: View of the Rachel Raymond house, demolished in 2007 by the Belmont Hill School. Architect Eleanor Raymond said, "We brought back from Germany . . . the International Style . . . When Rachel wanted to build a house, we agreed upon the International Style. What we did was to keep the style, but to do it in local, New England, materials."



HARVARD UNIVERSITY LIBRARY/ ELEANOR RAYMOND COLLECTION

# Uplands Update: What to Watch For

By Anne Marie Lambert

The fate of the Silver Maple Forest on the Belmont Uplands remains uncertain. However, several events last summer and this fall may trigger more dramatic developments this winter. Here is what to watch for in the courts, land use, permitting, nearby sites, and town administration:

## The Courts

On July 31, 10 Belmont neighbors and two environmental organizations filed a brief with the Massachusetts Appeals Court supporting their appeal of earlier decisions by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and Superior Court.

The Belmont Conservation Commission also filed a motion on August 24 to be allowed to submit additional evidence and analysis of the proposed infiltration system—the method used to absorb stormwater into the soil, instead of letting it run off-site into overloaded storm drains and waterways.

The system proposed by the developer assumes the underlying soil has less clay than indicated by onsite soil borings in 2010, suggesting that the soil may not absorb as much water as the developer's proposed infiltration system assumes. However, on October 16, Massachusetts Superior Judge S. Jane Haggerty issued a statement which appears to reject the Conservation Commission's August 24 motion.

**What to watch for:** With this latest decision, opportunities for more appeals and motions are limited. There may be some pressure to resolve all legal appeals before next spring's construction season, and decisions may be issued on inconvenient dates around the holidays.

## Land Use Alternatives

Two other visions for the Uplands are under consideration: a commercial research and development (R&D) facility that the developer previously proposed and open space preservation.

Belmont's CPA Committee reviewed a set of preliminary proposals on the Uplands in late October 2012, its first review of any proposals

since Belmont voters adopted the CPA two years ago. However, the CPA Committee decided not to advance two proposals to acquire the Belmont Uplands for open space, citing the lack of clarity on whether the property will be available for purchase. (Disclosure: the author submitted one of the proposals). The Committee has said it is taking a conservative approach during the first two years of CPA projects.

The committee voted in October not to consider proposals to commit CPA funds for bonding until after June 2016, but it reserved an estimated \$1 million in undesignated funds. The CPA committee could apply these funds to an Uplands purchase should the opportunity arise.

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**What to watch for:** A meeting with the developer might clarify whether a purchase is possible. A significant undesignated CPA fund balance could trigger other funding sources for preserving the Belmont Uplands as open space. Uplands owner Brian O'Neill may still revive his previous proposal to build a commercial R&D office building on the site, although he stated earlier this year that he was not considering either open space or R&D.

## Building Permit Conditions

More than 20 citizens sporting silver maple stickers attended the July 2 meeting of the Belmont Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA). Representatives from O'Neill's company, AP Cambridge Partners II, presented their analysis of compliance with a ZBA tree-cutting condition, concluding that all perimeter trees would be destroyed except for two.

After the presenters departed, the committee had a heated discussion about whether to require identification of all trees eliminated by the proposed development. Identifying all trees would enable the town to determine the total biomass the developer proposes to remove and not focus only on small changes to the building design to save just perimeter trees.

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## AP Cambridge Partners II. . . concluded that all perimeter trees would be destroyed except for two.

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The Belmont Conservation Commission is scheduled to meet with Jim Savard, a member of the AP Cambridge Partners II team, at their November 13 meeting.

**What to watch for:** In addition to the conditions related to the Conservation Restriction and to tree-cutting, Glenn Clancy, Belmont's director of Community Development, will review compliance with other outstanding conditions. These were listed in the Belmont Citizens Forum *Newsletter* article, "Will Belmont's Silver Maple Forest Be Saved?", July/August 2012.

Watch for whether Clancy will consider the fact that DEP's failure to review the engineering implications of the clay layer revealed in 2010 soil borings. The DEP's Superseding Order of Conditions is based on 2007 plans, which were revised in 2010 as part of filing for a building permit application. The Belmont Conservation Commission has petitioned to submit this information in the case before the Massachusetts Appeals Court, since it affects storm flooding at the Uplands.

## The Neighborhood

Numerous changes are taking place near the Uplands:

- Construction on the old Faces nightclub site is now at its full five-story height.
- Proposed residential development at 160 Cambridge Park Drive is marching through Cambridge permitting processes

- The wetlands restoration across the Little River is well established and will be considered ready for receiving separated stormwater from Cambridge.
- The Alewife-to-Brighton Street bike path will open officially next summer.
- Acorn Park Drive traffic patterns have been altered to prevent cut-through traffic to Route 2 during morning rush hour.

Meanwhile, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation's former skating rink site at the northwest end of Acorn Park Drive continues to be used as an impervious packed-gravel staging area by the Massachusetts Highway Department, without formal authorization or permitting.

**What to watch for:** Without a comprehensive review of all these developments, the impact on rush hour cut-through traffic and on flooding in Belmont, Cambridge, and Arlington is unclear. Experience it for yourself during each rush hour and storm surge in the coming months.

## Municipal Officials

The Environment Committee of the Cambridge City Council, led by chair Minka



Path along the Little River near the Uplands site.

vanBeuzekom, discussed open space preservation of the Uplands during its June meeting. Mark Paolillo, chair of the Belmont Board of Selectmen, attended the meeting and expressed strong support for finding a way to preserve open space at the Uplands, which he repeated at BCF's September forum on stormwater (see "Forum Links Storms, Floods, and Pollution," page one).

**What to watch for:** With growing political support for open space preservation among Belmont's Town Meeting Members, Selectmen, and state Representative candidates, and a new town administrator familiar with Cambridge officials, there may be a more concerted effort to fund a purchase of the Uplands.

## The Forest

During a Little River Poetry and Nature Walk September 30, recent rain brought out many interesting mushrooms, as well as vibrant colors in the moss, leaves, and lichen on the cool fall day. Early on we saw a blue heron and then a gull overhead, and crickets were audible, but wildlife were otherwise quite hidden.

On the way to Little Pond, it was a joy to share poetry from Robert Frost, Emily Dickinson, Keats, and Shakespeare, as well as haiku poetry from Japan and poems from Korea and China. The late afternoon light was low and magnificent. Flowers were still blooming and the leaves were changing color.

**What to watch for:** Witness the beauty of late fall and early winter by joining David Brown's nature walks along the North Trail and Little River in this fall. Learn from him and from the nature placards installed along the trail through the efforts of Friends of Alewife Reservation and Lesley University.

David Brown's next two wildlife walks will take place from 1 to 3 p.m. on Saturday, November 10, and Saturday, December 8. The walks are free and sponsored by Friends of Alewife Reservation. For more information ee [www.friendsofalewifereservation.org](http://www.friendsofalewifereservation.org).

Anne Marie Lambert is a director of the Belmont Citizens Forum.



## Welcome Jenny Kim!

The Belmont Citizens Forum welcomes Jenny (Yoon Jae) Kim, our newest intern. A senior at Belmont High School, Jenny has been the editor of the BHS newspaper, *The Highpoint*, for two years. Her current areas of interest are anthropology, psychology, and biology.

Jenny will be writing articles for the *Newsletter* and assembling the Environmental Event calendar. We are looking forward to working with her throughout the year.

## Environmental Events

By Jenny (Yoon Jae) Kim

Woodlands and Water Faucets

**Thursday, November 15, 6 p.m.**

Betsy Colburn, Aquatic Ecologist at the Harvard Forest in Petersham, will discuss how major changes in land use have also changed the sources of water for metropolitan Boston, and future implications for life in Massachusetts. [www.hmn.harvard.edu](http://www.hmn.harvard.edu), [lectures@hmn.harvard.edu](mailto:lectures@hmn.harvard.edu), (617) 495-2773. Geological Lecture Hall, 24 Oxford Street, Cambridge.

Alewife Nature Walks With David Brown  
**Saturday, November 10, and Saturday,**

**December 8, 1-3 p.m.**

Search for signs of wildlife and birds with expert track-naturalist David Brown. Children are welcome with their parents. Wear appropriate clothing for rough terrain and bring a water bottle. Sponsored by Friends of Alewife Reservation. Free. www.friendsofalewifereservation.org, info@friendsofalewifereservation.org. *Alewife Reservation parking lot, Acorn Park Drive, Cambridge.*

**Walk-Ride Days**

**Fridays, November 30 and December 28**

Celebrate green transportation by walking, bicycling, and using public transit to go to work, school, etc. Participants are eligible for raffle prizes

and discounts. Register online at GoGreenStreets.org. *Locations around greater Boston.*

**Sustainable Belmont Talk: E-Waste and Global Takeback Laws**

**Wednesday, December 5, 7-9 p.m.**

State representative Frank Smizik, chair of the Global Warming and Climate Change Committee and sponsor of H-252, "An Act to require producer responsibility for collection, reuse and recycling of discarded electronic products," will share his insights about these laws. www.sustainablebelmont.org, sustainablebelmont@gmail.com. *Assembly Room, Belmont Public Library, 336 Concord Avenue, Belmont*

**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:***

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- Environmental Protection
- Planning & Zoning
- Community Path
- Walking in Belmont
- Mailings
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Make checks payable to **Belmont Citizens Forum** and mail to Belmont Citizens Forum, P.O. Box 609, Belmont MA 02478, or donate at [www.belmontcitizensforum.org](http://www.belmontcitizensforum.org).

***Thank you!***

Name \_\_\_\_\_

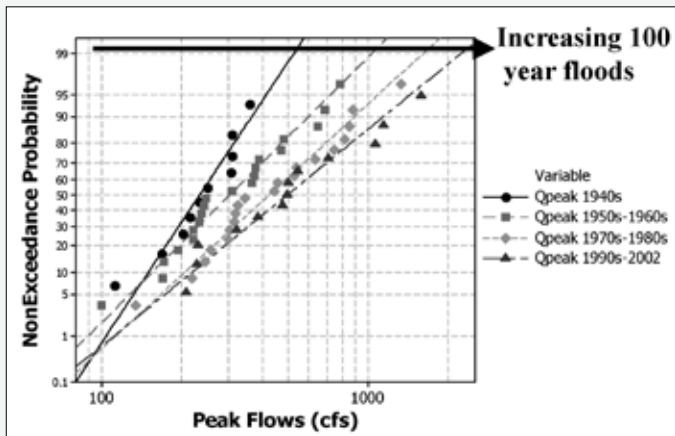
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Many companies support employees in their personal philanthropy and fundraising efforts. When you make a donation to the Belmont Citizens Forum, let us know if your employer has a **corporate matching gift** program. Your donation goes farther with matching funds. Thank you!

If you have questions, please e-mail us at [info@belmontcitizensforum.org](mailto:info@belmontcitizensforum.org). 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.

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