



Could the Waverley Church Have Been Saved?

By Vincent Stanton Jr.

The beautiful Gothic Revival First Congregational Church of Waverley was torn down on January 28, 2013. The church was once a vital institution in the Waverley neighborhood, but the congregation had been shrinking since the 1980s; only 28 households were listed in the 2002 church directory, down from more than 200 in 1984. By the end, the decision to sell was not surprising.

Was the teardown also inevitable? Or could an economically viable development have saved the building? If so, what types of re-use would have served the town's interests?

Zoning Encouraged More Houses

The church building's fate was ultimately determined almost entirely by zoning. The church is in a general residence district, where

one- and two-family housing is a by-right use of the land. Commercial development that might have allowed the building to be preserved would have required two changes in zoning: allowing small hotels in certain business districts, and rezoning the church property for commercial use. Both would have required Planning Board review and a two-thirds majority of Town Meeting.

Developers are naturally attracted to projects that are profitable, low risk, and under their control. Based on those criteria, the most attractive development option was demolishing the church and constructing residences. When space is limited, two-family residences usually generate the most value.

Commercial Projects Were Considered

However, in the winter and spring of 2012, when the property was first listed and put under agreement, some Belmont political leaders doubted that the church would be torn down. Their skepticism was based on political considerations, not legal restrictions. How strong would neighborhood opposition be? Would the Belmont Historic District Commission—which had recently rallied the town to save the Thomas Clark house from demolition—mobilize support to save the church?

According to Bill Dillon, a Belmont-based commercial real estate broker who represented the development team that successfully bid for the church in early 2012, the fear of political opposition to a teardown influenced the development team to consider commercial uses, despite the complications of special permits and rezoning.

Among the commercial development possibilities explored in early 2012 were an apartment building on the site of the one-story church hall, with the church sanctuary preserved as a daycare



GOOGLE MAPS

The First Congregational Church of Waverley prior to demolition.

center and common area, or a hotel on the site of the church hall, with the sanctuary converted to a reception area at one end and a brew pub or other informal dining operation at the other end.

A Waltham developer with experience in luxury long-stay hotel development and operations advised Dillon that the church was an attractive location in view of its proximity to Cambridge and Boston via car, bus, or train. It had adequate parking for a 30-room hotel. A

long-stay, suite-based hotel would have been marketed to guests visiting Harvard or other local schools, visiting Belmont relatives, or interested in staying in an unusual inn instead of a cookie-cutter hotel.

However, when Dillon sought community support for the hotel plan, he encountered negative reaction from some influential residents concerned about possible less desirable uses of a hotel—for example as a halfway house. Zoning cannot prevent such uses; however, the type of units built would strongly influence economic uses.

Eventually the developers, lacking enough political support to overcome their fear that rezoning would fail, abandoned the commercial plans. Believing a teardown politically impossible, especially for a local development team, Dillon's group withdrew their offer. An opportunity to save the building had slipped away.

It is only fair to note that the hotel idea was one of several possibilities offered by the development team. No formal proposal was submitted. Saving the church was far from guaranteed. If political opposition to tearing it down had turned out to be weaker than expected, Dillon's group might have demolished it.

The church was re-listed for sale in July 2012 and eventually bought by E&A Properties. E.H. Construction Co., owned by Edward Hovsepian, tore down the church in January under authority of a demolition permit that had been filed by Rev. Daniel Chung-Soon Lee, the minister of the church, on December 10, 2012, before the sale closed. Hovsepian is expected to build three duplex townhouses.

Could a Small Hotel Have Worked?

Would a hotel have been acceptable to the Waverley neighborhood? In 2004 the Waverley Square Fire Station Re-Use Committee conducted four public forums on how the fire station should be redeveloped. According to their report: "One popular alternative was an inn/bed and breakfast. The use would help contribute to the economic vitality of Waverley Square while at the same time being quasi-residential in nature (and thus generating neighborhood impacts akin to a residential development)." The

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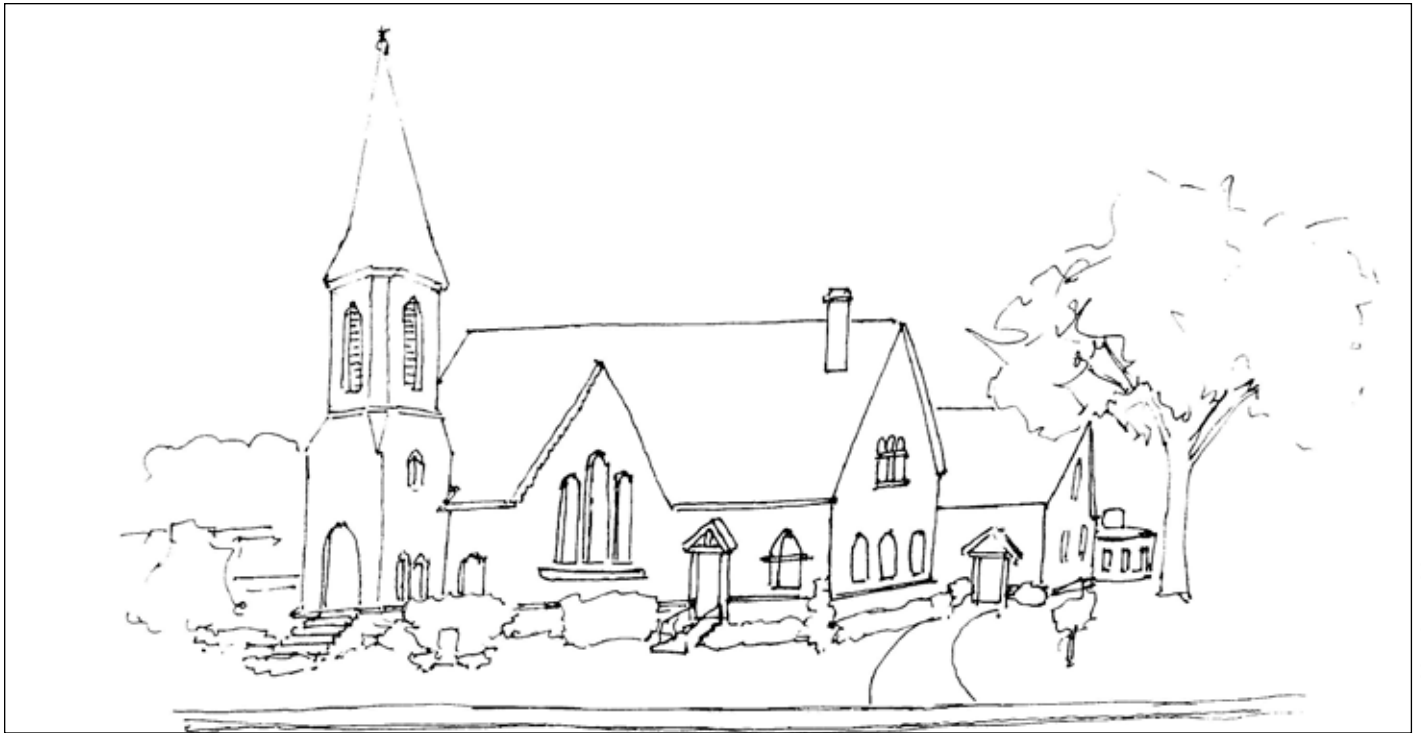
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Belmont Citizens Forum Inc. is a not-for-profit organization that strives to maintain the small-town atmosphere of Belmont, Massachusetts, by preserving its natural and historical resources, limiting traffic growth, and enhancing pedestrian safety. 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.



ANN COIT SIFNEOS

First Congregational Church of Waverley, about 2004.

Re-Use Committee found, however, that a small inn “would not generate sufficient cash flow to make up for the significant development costs.” Dillon’s plan called for a 30- to 35-room hotel, compared with perhaps 10 to 12 rooms in the fire station.

Another study, conducted by the Belmont Business and Economic Development Planning Group in January 2004, polled residents about the desirability of different types of businesses. “Bed and breakfast/small hotel” was the ninth most popular out of 14 business types polled, with 34 percent support. The three most popular business types, and the only ones with approval rates higher than 37 percent, related to food.

A hotel would certainly have been the most attractive development for Belmont from a financial perspective. (See box.) Tax data from the Massachusetts Department of Revenue show that local hotel-room tax revenue jumped in communities with hotels after 2009, when the state allowed an increase in hotel-room taxes. For example, without any new construction, annual room tax revenue in Lexington increased by 52 percent, 37 percent, and 8 percent in the last three years, totaling \$755,902 in the last 12 months.

Arlington has one hotel, a 100-room Homewood Suites on Massachusetts Avenue near the Cambridge border. The hotel is assessed at \$16.75 million, generates \$228,000 per year in property taxes, and will generate over \$270,000 in room taxes for fiscal year 2013. If a 100-room suite-style hotel in Arlington can generate annual revenue of \$500,000, it seems likely that a 30-room Belmont inn could generate gross revenue of \$150,000 a year.

One disadvantage of hotels is the traffic they generate. Traffic can be mitigated by limiting development to smaller hotels or inns, by requiring that they be near public transportation, and by encouraging long-stay hotels.

Another development option that could have preserved the church was conversion to condominiums. However, the church building wasn’t well suited to that use. The small sanctuary, the irregular placement of windows, the interior vaulting of the steeply pitched roof, the steeple, and other architectural elements didn’t fit with residential use. Also, the number of units would have been small in relation to the high cost of converting such a building, according to Dillon.

Hotel Economics

In 2009, at the height of the financial crisis, with state revenue down sharply, Massachusetts passed a law that permits cities and towns to increase room tax rates for hotels and B&Bs from 4 percent to 6 percent, and to tax restaurant receipts up to 0.75 percent. (Formerly all restaurant taxes went to the state.) These new taxes have been adopted by every community bordering Belmont, every one of which has at least one hotel.

This expanded local taxing authority makes the economics of hotels different from other businesses. The 6 percent tax on rooms comes in addition to property taxes. Imagine a 30-room hotel that charges, on average, \$180 per night, is 80 percent full, and is valued at \$4 million. Room taxes would amount to 0.06 times \$180 times 30 times 0.8 times 365 days, or \$94,608, and property taxes for a \$4 million property, at Belmont's fiscal 2013 rate of \$13.33 per \$1000 of assessed valuation would be \$53,320, for a total of \$147,928, not including meal taxes and alcohol licensing fees from a pub. Town expenses associated with a hotel would be quite modest, so the vast majority of that would be net revenue.

To put those figures in context, Planning Board member Liz Allison recently presented an economic analysis of the proposed Cushing Village development—a vastly larger project than a 30-room hotel. Her estimate of recurring net revenue to Belmont is \$11,000 to \$80,000 per year. The developer's estimate is \$300,000 per year. The difference is almost entirely attributable to disagreement about how many Cushing Village families would send children to the Belmont Schools. Thus a 30-room hotel might net the town, on a continuing basis, more than a large mixed development.

Missed Opportunities

Looking back, several opportunities to protect the building were missed: First, Minister Lee and a few other members of the congregation chose to sell the church building without conditions or restrictions. Did they need to secure the maximum possible sales price? There is no evidence that the church was carrying any debt, and the tiny congregation seems to have dissolved. Perhaps by accepting a little less for the church, the congregation could have insured the survival of an historic and beautiful building. Church leaders have not returned phone calls.

Second, on January 18, 2012, Town Meeting was to debate and vote on a demolition delay bylaw that would have applied to the church. The article was withdrawn on the floor of Town Meeting when passage seemed in doubt. The First Congregational Church of Waverley was listed for sale eight days later.

Finally, when Waverley Square was rezoned in 2005 to allow the fire station to be redeveloped as a condominium building, the town could have engaged the church in a conversation about whether both buildings, which had stood on opposite sides of Waverley Street since 1873, should be incorporated in a new historic district.

What Will Happen Next Time?

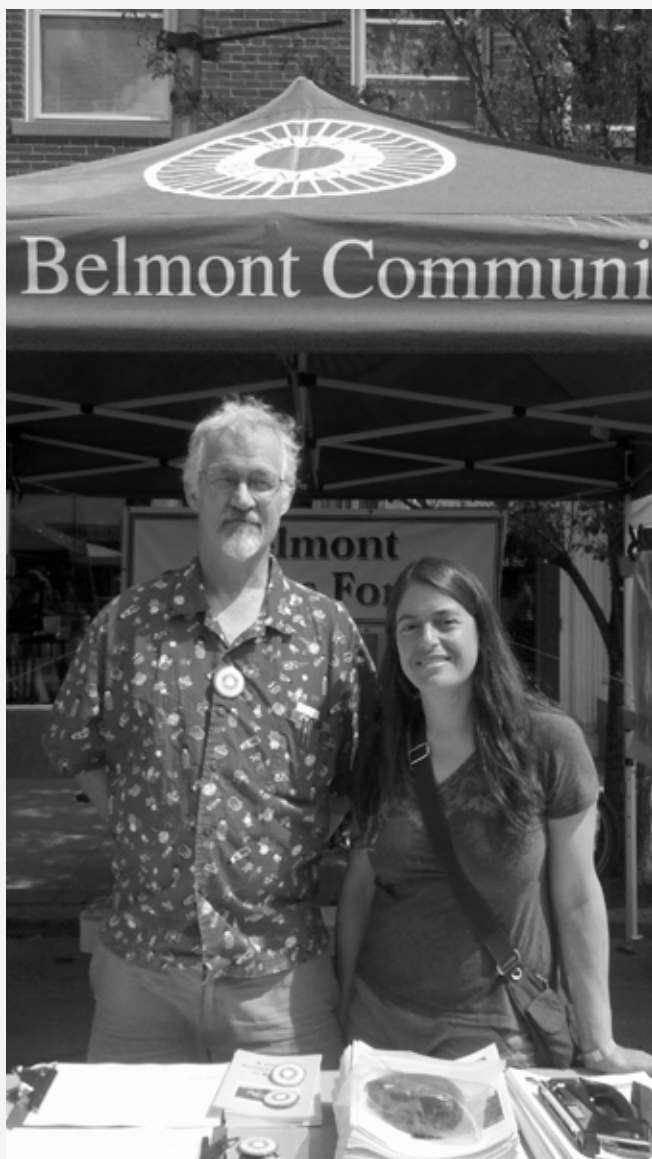
Why rehash the sad tale of the First Congregational Church of Waverley? This story is relevant to present and future efforts to preserve historic buildings in Belmont. In May 2013, Town Meeting passed a new Religious and Municipal Building Preservation bylaw sponsored by the Planning Board in response to the destruction of the Waverley church. The new bylaw offers incentives to developers to preserve historic religious buildings via a special-permit process, including the opportunity to "Increase, within the existing buildings, the number of stories and dwelling units allowed by the underlying zoning district." While this bylaw is clearly a move in the right direction, recent history suggests that developers may not be interested in applying for a special permit when an economically attractive use like housing can be built by right.

In introducing the new Religious and Municipal Preservation bylaw this spring, the Planning Board cited the example of two Watertown churches that were redeveloped for residential use. However, the incentives provided by the new Belmont bylaw would probably not have been sufficient to protect them. One Watertown project entailed expanding the original building envelope (Bell Tower Place) and the other permitted adding new townhouses next to a redeveloped church (Mount Auburn Village). Neither expansion would be allowed by the new Belmont bylaw, which only applies to changes “within the existing buildings.”

Zoning alone cannot protect historic buildings. Additional tools, including preservation restrictions and historic districts (which can include as little as one building), need to be used more expansively in Belmont. But that can only happen if there are frank conversations before religious buildings are put up for sale, and only if Belmont residents are willing to accept the compromises that may be necessary to provide adequate incentives for developers to save these buildings.

Vincent Stanton Jr. is a Director of the Belmont Citizens Forum.

Belmont Citizens Forum Celebrates Town Day



The Belmont Citizens Forum came to Belmont Town Day on May 18. Visitors learned about the Lone Tree Hill clean up and plans for future clean ups, and saw maps of potential routes for the future Community Path.

The Forum would like thank the volunteers who staffed the booth—Mark D’Andrea, John Dieckmann, Grant Monahon, Anne-Marie Lambert, Vince Stanton, David Chase, and Sumner Brown, and Program Director Karen Parmett—and everyone who stopped by!



Moratorium Gives Town Time to Find Solutions

By Raffi Manjikian

In May, Belmont Town Meeting passed a moratorium on single-family homes being replaced with two-family structures in general residence (GR) zoning districts. Residents in these districts—the only ones in Belmont that allow two-family houses—had noted a marked increase recently in the number of single-family homes being replaced with large attached townhouses. When one lot is filled to the maximum, the folks next door see less sky and less green space.

This demolition moratorium, which expires June 30, 2014, will give Belmont time to consider and, if desired, adopt new controls of development. The Belmont Planning Board has promised to use the moratorium year to study possible zoning changes.

After the loss of the historic First Congregational Church in Waverley square (see story on page 1), Waverley-area Town Meeting Members, including me, began meeting to discuss town planning. The number of demoli-

tions in the neighborhood had added up. Just since 2007, 20 single-family houses in Belmont's GR districts were torn down and replaced by 40 attached townhouses. And 85 percent of these lost single-family homes were in Precincts 3 and 4, with the majority in the Waverley area.

Our discussions coalesced around four themes:

- The impact on the character of our neighborhood

The number of projects and their scale, mass, and placement on small lots (averaging just 5,700 square feet) are changing Waverley's character. Instead of front yards with trees, the replacement homes meet the street with asphalt and parking. Mechanical equipment, such as venting ducts and utility meters, is visible. Often the front doors face the sides of neighboring homes, changing the streetscape of our neighborhood.

- The contrast of these demolitions with Belmont's embrace of historic preservation and environmental stewardship



Detail of Belmont's Zoning Map. The largest light-gray area is the Waverley neighborhood GR (General Residence) District; the light gray area to the right is also a GR district. For the full map, go to www.town.belmont.ma.us/Public_Documents/F00010E1A/zoningmap.



LUCIA SULLIVAN

A teardown on B Street dwarfed a neighborhood home, May 2013.

Belmont has passed the Community Preservation Act and adopted several energy management initiatives, including the stretch energy building code. Yet demolitions and redevelopment are destroying neighborhood green space and increasing density through multifamily housing that does not fit in with surrounding dwellings.

- The cost of services to additional residents

Denser neighborhoods increase costs for police and fire, roads, water, sewer and stormwater systems, and the public school system. Those costs affect all taxpayers.

- The lack of a public process to give neighborhood residents a voice

Current zoning allows the replacement by right of a small single-family house with a two-family house that's three or four times the size. No hearings of the Planning Board or Zoning Board of Appeals are held for these changes. Often residents receive no notice of the demolition. Yet added up, the changes approach the scale of some projects that do receive public hearings and careful consideration by town committees.

New regulations could address the height limits of new construction, linking height with the lot size. The setback requirements could

be modified in keeping with the lot size. The aesthetic of the streetscape could be included in permitting and could promote discussion of the importance of preserving mature trees. Protections for public shade trees exist; protections for private trees could be added. It will also be important to ensure that town departments have adequate resources to enforce any new as well as existing regulations.

Gaining consensus and Town Meeting approval for these changes would require better defining the terms "two-family residence," "multi-unit residence," and "attached townhouse." Zoning could be changed to regulate when a single-family home may be replaced by right, with a site-plan review or with a special permit.

The Belmont Planning Board, Board of Selectmen, and the Warrant Committee all unanimously endorsed the year-long demolition moratorium. Together, Belmont residents and elected and appointed officials can look for solutions.

Raffi Manjikian is a Precinct 3 Belmont Town Meeting member and a co-sponsor of the moratorium adopted this spring.

Greenway Now Links 6.9 Miles of Trails

By John Dieckmann

Over the last weekend of May and the first two weekends of June, the Friends of the Western Greenway volunteers constructed and blazed the final segment of the Western Greenway Trail between Habitat in Belmont and the Paine Estate in Waltham. With this segment closing the final gap, the total length of the Western Greenway trail from Habitat to Waltham's Paine Estate is now 6.9 miles.

These 6.9 miles are entirely off-road, with only a half dozen road crossings over this distance: Concord Avenue, Mill Street, Metropolitan Parkway, Walnut Street, Trapelo Road, and the entrance roads to Bishops Forest, the YMCA, and Waltham High school.

The new segment traverses the private property of the Bishops Forest condominium development. Residents were concerned about pedestrian safety and potential liability associated with the trail crossing of the Bishop's Forest entrance road, which is surprisingly busy. A curve uphill of the trail crossing means that trail users would have a short sight line. To address this issue, it was agreed that the trail crossing would include a fully engineered crosswalk, with signage providing advance warning to motorists of the crossing. The crosswalk is an international-style crosswalk, as has been adopted in Belmont.



JOHN DIECKMANN

Greenway Crosswalk at Bishop's Forest Road.



SUSAN JONES

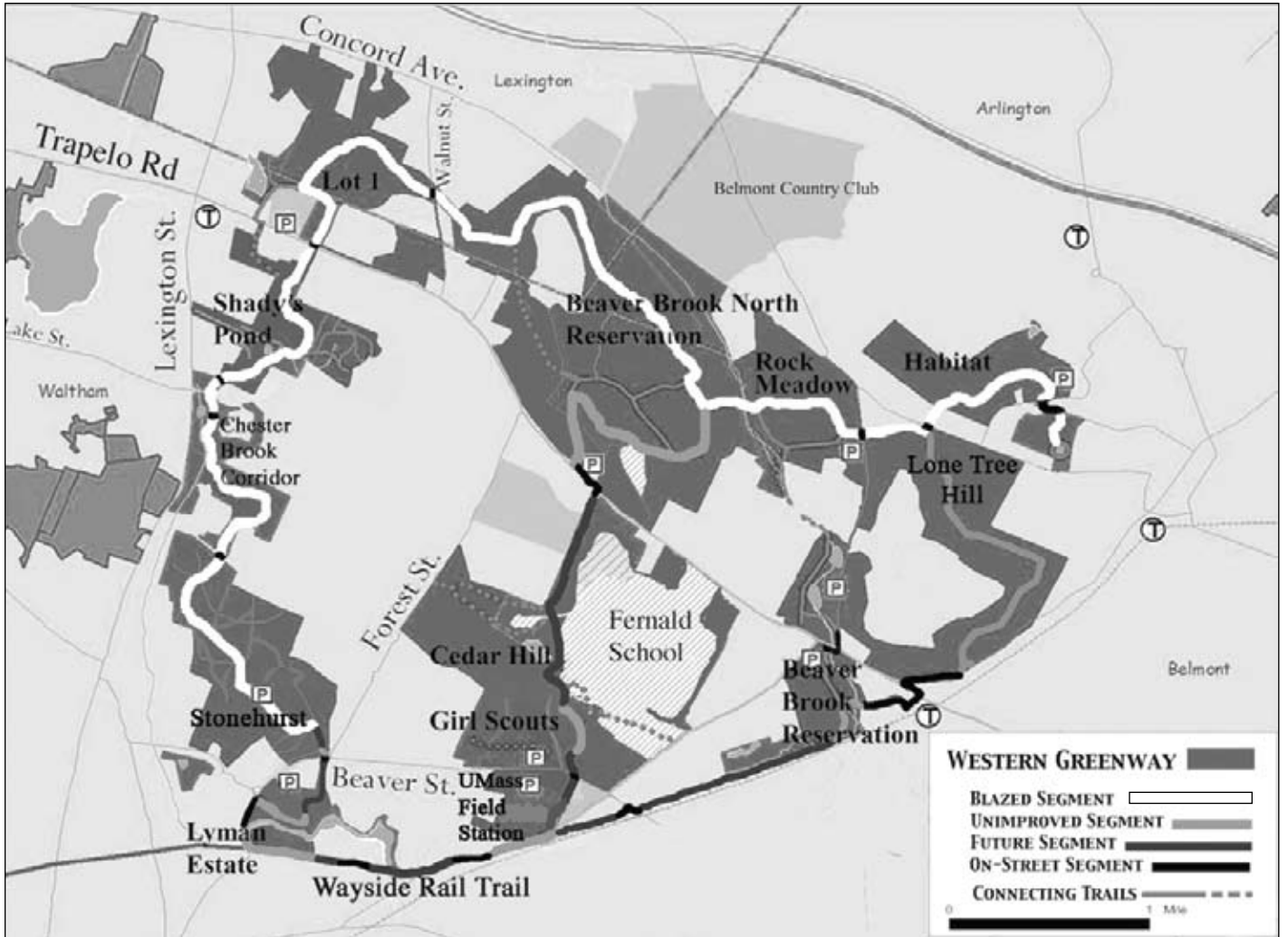
A Western Greenway Trail Blaze.

The agreement with the Bishops Forest condominium board to allow the trail to pass through their property was many years in the making. Marc Rudnick worked on behalf of the Friends of the Western Greenway and the Waltham Land Trust, conducting numerous discussions with Bishops's Forest residents and the condominium board, and eventually reaching an agreement that addressed the major concerns.

The trail work to complete this segment included installation of the cross walk, cutting a new section of trail to link with the trail behind the Waltham Housing Authority, and relocating a short section of trail heading south from the Bishops Forest driveway so that it is not as steep, making it less prone to erosion. Pavers were added where the trail crosses the lawn along the south side of the driveway. Western Greenway Trail blazes were added.

An up-to-date trail map is available on the Waltham Land Trust web site: walthamlandtrust.org/open-space/the-western-greenway.

John Dieckmann is a Director of the Belmont Citizens Forum.



The Western Greenway.



SUSAN JONES

Greg Shenstone helps clear the way.

Open Space Preservation Pamphlet

The League of Women Voters of Belmont's pamphlet, *A Guide to Preserving Land in Belmont*, is now available on the Belmont Citizens Forum's web site, www.belmontcitizensforum.org. Click on the Links tab.

This pamphlet is an outgrowth of a study by the Open Space Study Committee of the League. The pamphlet provides a history of land conservation in Belmont, pros and cons of land preservation, steps to conserve land, and local and state-wide land preservation organizations.

Waltham May Save Historic Arrigo Farm

By Marie Daly

One of the oldest family farms in the country may soon be preserved in Waltham. The city is considering purchasing the 4.2-acre Arrigo farm, owned by just two families since 1650, and perhaps since 1635.

Waltham's farming history, first as part of Watertown and later as a separate town, dates to the 17th century when European settlers first set foot in America. The orchards and produce and dairy farms of Waltham supplied Boston residents in the 19th century. Irish and Italian immigrants, who had initially worked as farm laborers, continued the agricultural legacy of the early settlers.

Since the early 20th century, many Italian immigrants operated family farms and farm stands on Waltham's north side. However, nearly all of these farms have now been sold for residential and commercial development. The Arrigo farm is the last undeveloped family farm in Waltham.

Arrigo Farm Has Long History

Located at 342-344 Warren Street in Waltham near the Watertown and Belmont borders, the land was purchased in 1635 by early Watertown

settler John Warren, according to his descendants. He purchased the Warren Street land for his son, Daniel, who built a house there in 1650. Daniel Warren fought in King Philip's War in 1675, and two of his great grandsons were wounded at the Battle of Bunker Hill.

The 1650 house was demolished by Daniel Warren's descendant Thomas Barnes, who erected a new farmhouse in 1837. Two wings were added later in the 19th century. Mary Barnes, the last of the Warren heirs on this land, died in 1922, and the farm was purchased by Placido Arrigo in 1923. He had immigrated to America from Villafranca, Sicily, in 1913, and by 1918, was working on the Barnes farm. Placido raised tomatoes, squash, and other produce until his death in 1991. His son, John Arrigo, continued farming there until his death in 2011.

Farm Could Become 19 Houses

The Massachusetts Historic Commission has deemed the house eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. There is also a barn on the property. The soil is Merrimac fine sandy loam, which is considered the best soil for farming in Massachusetts. The 4.2 acres are zoned as Residence A4, which by right would



MARIE DALY

The Arrigo Farm in spring.

allow for nine house lots on the site. A subdivision plan could yield up to 19 house lots.

The Waltham Land Trust and Waltham Fields Community Farm are advocating for the use of Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds to preserve the Arrigo farm. Organized in 1999, Waltham Land Trust's mission is to create a legacy of land conservation in Waltham by promoting, protecting, restoring, and acquiring open space. The Land Trust envisions growth in public appreciation of natural resources, preservation, and restoration of native habitat, and increased biodiversity to foster a healthier environment.

Begun in 1995, Waltham Fields Community Farm (WFCF) promotes local agriculture and food access through their farming operations and educational programs, using practices that are socially, ecologically, and economically sustainable. The nonprofit organization encourages healthy relationships between people, their food supply, and the land from which it grows. WFCF envisions communities in which sustainable agriculture plays a central role in creating universal access to the food and beauty of local farms.

The Waltham City Council passed unanimously (with one recusal) a resolution to sponsor a CPA application to acquire the Arrigo farm under open space and historical purposes, with the ultimate goal of leasing the land for local farming. The resolution, passed on June 24, was introduced by Councillor George Darcy, cosponsored by eight other councillors and endorsed by numerous Waltham civic organizations.

The benefits of preserving the Arrigo farm are:

- the land could be leased as a farm yielding up to \$30,000 an acre of produce for food pantries and community-supported agriculture;
- the farm would deliver locally grown food to Waltham residents;
- agricultural use would provide needed open space for the Warren Street area, thereby minimizing development and traffic in an already densely populated neighborhood; and
- future generations visiting the farm would gain an appreciation for the history of family farming in Waltham.

The Community Preservation Committee (CPC) voted to accept the application, and immediately requested an appraisal and 21E evaluation for possible pollutants. The nine heirs of Placido Arrigo support the proposal, which honors their forebears by preserving this historic farm. The next step involves the city's obtaining the appraisal and evaluation. The CPC will then schedule a public input hearing later this summer. For more information, contact the Waltham Land Trust at walthamlandtrust.org.

Marie Daly is on the board of the Waltham Land Trust and the Waltham Historical Society.

BCF Volunteer: Ken Stalberg



Ken Stalberg has been the mailing coordinator for the BCF since 2002, when he heard himself volunteer for the job during a mailing party. When he's not labeling newsletters and stuffing envelopes, Ken is a professional violinist and violist, playing with the Boston Pops Esplanade Orchestra, Boston Ballet, Boston Lyric Opera, and other orchestras. He also teaches about 20 students privately at his home, and is currently treasurer and co-chair of the Belmont Cultural Council.

During the summer and fall, Ken can often be found in his red kayak, exploring rivers and lakes around Boston, New Hampshire, and Maine with his wife, Catherine.

Belmont's New Power Line is More Sustainable

By Sumner Brown

The story of Belmont's new electric power transmission line and substation has already taken unexpected twists even before construction starts. Several options for the transmission line route and substation location were considered before the town settled on the railroad right-of-way and Flanders Road. NStar dropped the cost by a factor of two. The project meets the Belmont Citizens Forum interest in efficiency and long-term sustainability. Because of the physical size and shape of new transmission line, its efficiency will be fantastically high, as it has to be. Finally, Belmont benefits from being a small town that works well together.

The Belmont transmission line will come from the electric substation in Cambridge just west of Route 2 and south of the railroad tracks near Alewife station. Look west from Route 2, if you are not driving, and you can see the substation. Hint: it has many very tall lightning rods. From there the transmission line will go to the new substation on Flanders Road, on the former site of Crate Escape, which has relocated across Brighton Street.

The transmission line will be about 4,000 feet long. It will be underground. It will have six

copper conductors, each capable of carrying 174 amps, and insulated with pressurized oil that allows operation at 115,000 volts. These cables are enclosed in metal conduits so they can be pulled into place from several access points. The six conduits are in a solid concrete body that is over three feet by three feet square in cross section. This whole concrete structure is buried to protect it from concrete-cracking temperature variations.

Each conductor is 1.5 inches in diameter, large enough that the average current density is much lower than ordinary house wiring carries, resulting in very high efficiency or, in other words, very low losses. This high efficiency is not solely for the purpose of environmental virtue. It is necessary in order to keep the transmission line from overheating. Things that overheat burn up. Even a slow burn may cause premature insulation failure, so trust an engineer: overheating is bad.

Any power lost due to inefficiency will produce heat. The line can handle 60 million watts of power transmission. This is enough power to heat a ton of water from room temperature to boiling in five seconds. A typical car cruises at 65 mph using 20 thousand watts.

Our transmission line will be able to carry as much power as is needed by 3,000 cruising cars. If more than a tiny amount of 60 million watts is lost due to inefficiency, the transmission line will get hot. Also, the line will be buried underground, to protect it from heating by the sun and cooling by snow that would stress the concrete surrounding structure. In other words, the ground insulates the line from outside thermal stresses, yet equally fails to dissipate internally generated heat. This makes extremely high efficiency all the more important.

There is another sustainability issue here, the trade-off between electric potential and wire size. By using 115,000 volts instead of 13,800 volts, a ratio of over eight, the amount of conductor metal is reduced by a factor of 69, the



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Workers install 115,000 volt conduit near Shelburne, VT.

square of that ratio. That is, a 115,000-volt transmission line will need only 1.4 percent as much conductor metal as a 13,800-volt line with the same power delivery capacity, a substantial capital cost saving.

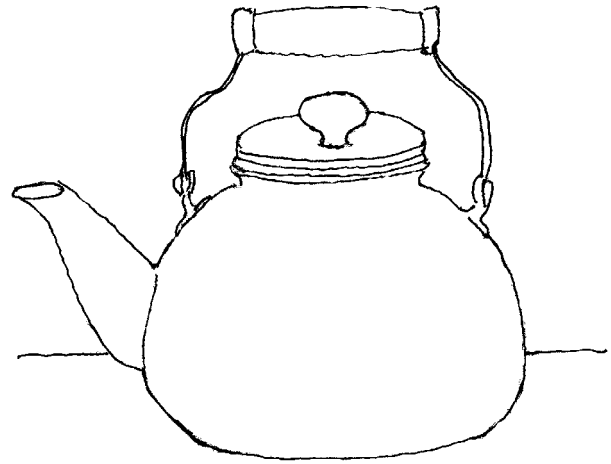
Our transmission line is a small part of the total transmission cost. Our power comes from farther away than Alewife. Other underground transmission lines come into and leave the Alewife substation. Many power plants connect to the grid of transmission lines. The amount of power each plant produces at any moment gets continually adjusted to try to keep the cost of electric power as low as possible.

A bit away from Belmont and Boston, high voltage power transmission lines are visible in the air, carried by towers. Other above ground transmission lines that come into Waltham and Woburn can be seen while driving on Route 128. From there, the transmission lines go underground, hidden from sight in deference to property values. Most people consider high voltage power transmission lines on towers an eyesore.

In a different world Belmont might have avoided the need for more electricity through conservation.

Belmont Municipal Light Department, aided by energy standards from the federal government, promotes energy efficiency. Despite these efforts, our appetite for electric power continues to grow. It was growing when I was an engineering student in the 1960s. It has not stopped growing. When the BMLD was formed in 1898, the bulk of the electricity purchased went for lights, principally municipal street lighting. Then windmills were replaced with electric pumps. Electricity came into kitchens, and washing machines into laundries. Americans entertained themselves with radios, TVs, high fidelity stereos. Air conditioners arrived. And electric heating. Computers. Soon, plug-in electric cars. Electricity is far too useful to stop demand from growing.

The only conservation effort that has not been tried is to raise the price drastically. Higher cost has reduced water consumption in the MWRA community, after water rates were forced up by the cost of the Deer Island sewage treatment



ANN COIT SIFNEOS

plant. But none of my friends advocate reducing demand by raising rates.

However, capacity is not the only reason for the new line. The existing line is old, and old things fall apart eventually. The present power system has problems with voltage irregularities from operations in Cambridge. The quality of our voltage regulation will be better with the 115,000-volt transmission line because our coupling to Cambridge will not be as tight.

Moreover, having our own Municipal Light Department helps Belmont feel like a small town. People who write their checks to NStar notice that when storms damage power lines, NStar linemen seem to go to other communities first. Not in Belmont. Occasionally someone in Belmont thinks we could do better by outsourcing our retail electric power delivery, until they compare our relatively low electric rates with the NStar communities' rates. Not in Belmont. The recent deal we struck with NStar for our transmission line is another dividend of having a Municipal Light Department. We have world-class electric power consultants on our Electric Light Board who volunteer their time to the town, which helped a lot when we negotiated with NStar. That is small-town in the best sense.

My thanks to Sam Osmancevic of Belmont Light, who was very helpful with this article. He expects demolition at the substation site to begin this fall, and transmission line construction to begin in the fall of 2014.

Sumner Brown is a Director of the Belmont Citizens Forum.

Practical Routes Make Bicycling Easier

By David Chase

Bicycling has many benefits—but only if you have somewhere to go. The way to get exercise and transportation at the same time, to avoid parking and traffic jams, is to use your bike to get to work, and for shopping and errands.

Here are my suggestions for bike routes from Belmont to T stations, shopping, and restaurants. These are the easiest, most bike-friendly places to ride, with signalized crossings and either bike lanes or plenty of shoulder space to separate bike riders from cars. The most dangerous spots are the Fresh Pond parking lots: Beware! That said, an alert child could accompany you on most of these routes safely; the map shows a spur to Arlington's Thorndike field for soccer matches.

Belmont to Alewife MBTA Station

If you wish to travel into Cambridge or Boston and don't want to hassle with traffic or parking, ride a bike to Alewife, leave it locked there, and take the Red Line. This ride is short and will be much more pleasant when the city of Cambridge's work around the Little River is finished.

The route is easy. From the start of the Fitchburg Cutoff bike path at Brighton Street, ride to the detour onto CambridgePark Drive,

then to Alewife. Then make your way (walking or riding, whatever is most comfortable for you) to the Pedal & Park cages: one's on the Belmont side and one's on the Cambridge side.

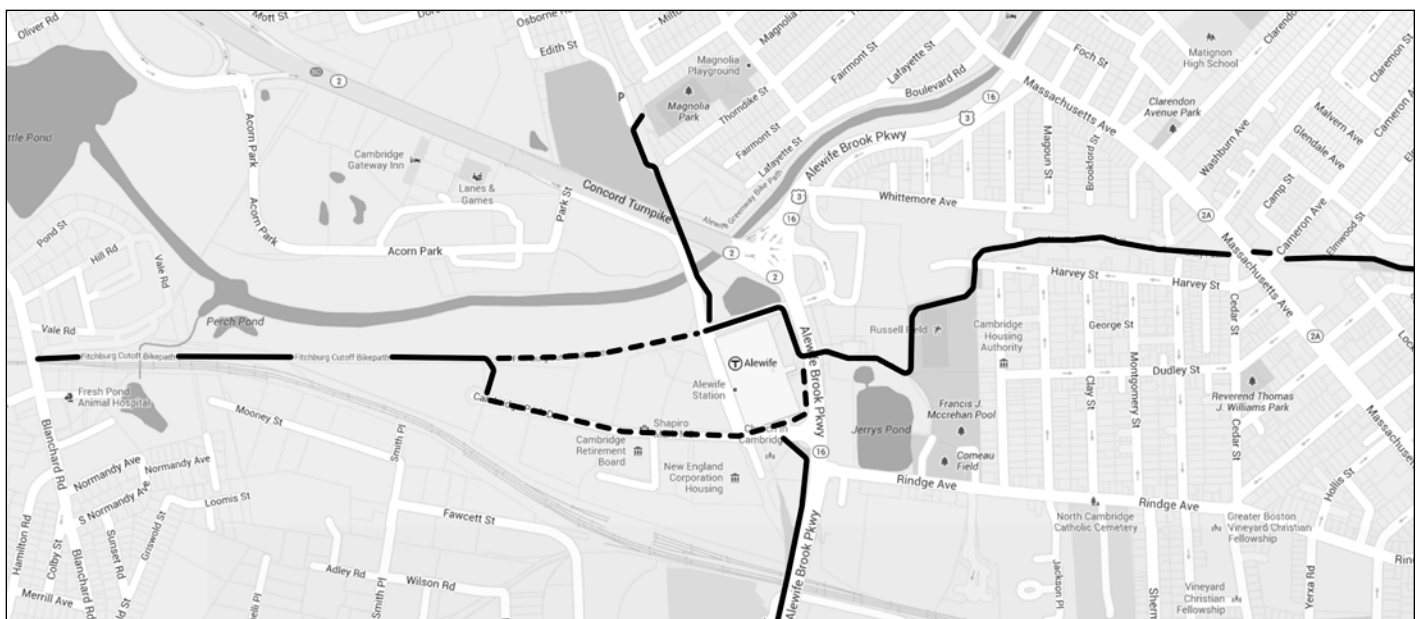
Register ahead of time for a Bike Charlie Card (www.mbta.com/riding_the_t/bikes/), to use the Pedal & Park bike parking facilities at Alewife. The bike cages provide relatively safe locked and video-monitored bicycle storage.

Belmont to Davis Square

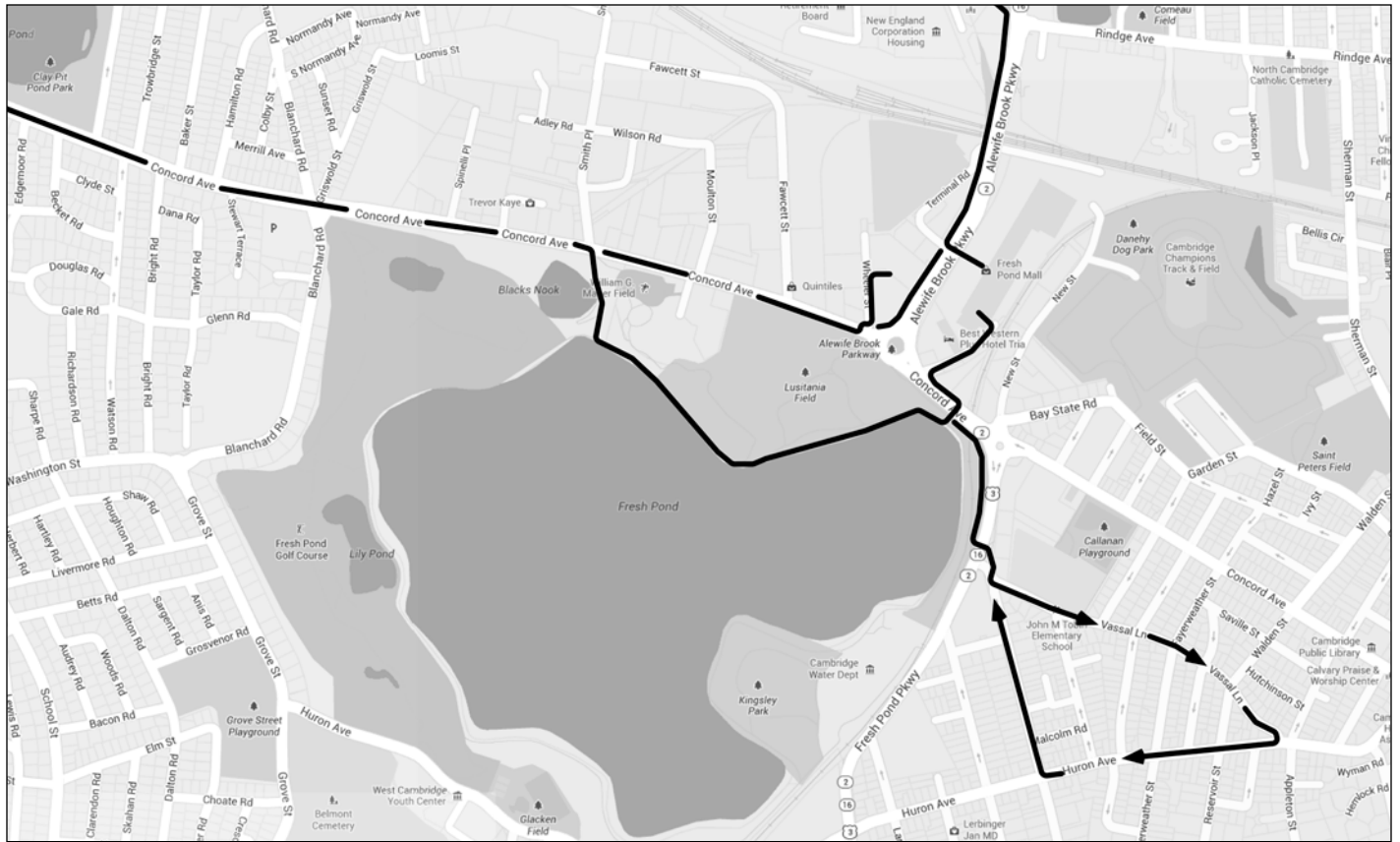
Except for the detour mentioned above and the Massachusetts Avenue crossing, this path is entirely off-road.

First, ride to the Alewife T station. From there, follow the path around the MBTA station and continue under Route 16 (Fresh Pond Parkway). Take a left at Russell Field. The path continues through Cambridge to the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue, Cedar Street, and Cameron Avenue. Cross at the walk signals.

Davis Square is not much farther. The path crosses Buena Vista Road, passes through Seven Hills Park, and effectively ends at the Davis Square T station. Auto traffic in Davis Square can be intimidating. If you are on the sidewalk, you should be walking your bike.



Routes to Alewife and Davis Square.



DAVID CHASE

Routes to Fresh Pond and Harvard Square.

Fresh Pond and the Concord Cycle Track

Cambridge recently built a new cycle track, a special lane for bicycles between the road and the sidewalk, on both sides of Concord Avenue from Blanchard Road to the Fresh Pond traffic circle. It provides access to Fresh Pond Reservoir and the malls on either side of Fresh Pond Parkway. The eastbound track crosses no driveways or streets and is wide and unobstructed. The westbound track crosses many driveways and streets: riders must watch for careless cross traffic. Many people either ride wrong-way on the reservoir side or use the paths around the reservoir to avoid the less-comfortable route. In either case, wrong-way or around the reservoir, riders need to be extra careful of other traffic (which includes off-leash dogs).

Belmont to Fresh Pond Shopping

You can reach the Fresh Pond Shopping areas via two routes from Belmont.

One route is riding to Alewife, then taking sidewalks along Fresh Pond Parkway over

the railroad to the malls on either side of the highway. On the sidewalks, take your time and be polite to pedestrians. Signalized walk crossings get you across Fresh Pond Parkway.

The other way uses the cycle track. One signalized crossing is at Wheeler Street before the first rotary. Another is halfway between the two rotaries, near the path around Fresh Pond Reservoir; from there you can backtrack to the mall.

Either way, the trickiest part of the trip is within the parking lots. Traffic there is much less orderly.

Belmont to Huron Avenue

The cycle track continues along Fresh Pond Parkway. At a third signalized crossing, you reach Vassal Lane and a signed route to Harvard Square. The last stretch of the route to Harvard shares the road with traffic and may not be suitable for everyone. However, Vassal Lane reaches Huron and is low-traffic.

The return trip uses Huron, which is wide and relatively orderly, to reach Lakeview, which takes

you back to the signalized crossing at Vassal and Fresh Pond Parkway.

It's unfortunate that there aren't more easy routes—these are all directed towards Cambridge and Somerville—but right now those are the only very easy routes. Routes into Watertown are planned in the near future (see sidebar), and in time the Mass Central Rail Trail will connect Belmont to points west. Even Cambridge and Somerville have room for improvement: getting to Harvard Square requires more riding with traffic than a novice cyclist might be comfortable with, and riding a bike through Davis Square is challenging too.

David Chase is a Director of the Belmont Citizens Forum.



SUSAN JONES

Bike Path Network Grows

Two long-anticipated bike paths are now on their way to construction.

On June 4, the city of Cambridge and the state Department of Conservation and Recreation announced the acquisition of the final link in the Watertown-Cambridge Greenway.

This corridor consists of 4.2 acres running between Grove Street in Watertown and Huron Avenue in Cambridge. Cambridge also separately purchased another section of former railroad corridor to the north, between Huron Avenue and Concord Avenue, with Community Preservation Act funds. Together, these two purchases will extend and connect the Watertown-Cambridge Greenway from the Charles River trails to Grove Street, Watertown, and all the way to Fresh Pond, Fresh Pond Reservation, Fresh Pond Shopping Center, Alewife Greenway and T station, the Minuteman Bikeway, and the Mystic River Reservation.

On June 10, the Green Line Extension's Senior Project Executive, Karen Arpino-Shaffer, announced that the Green Line Extension team would design the entire Community Path Extension from Lowell Street in Somerville to NorthPoint in Cambridge, instead of stopping at Washington Street in Somerville.

The two-mile Community Path Extension will link the Minuteman and Charles River path networks along the Green Line Extension. Friends of the Community Path, a group based in Somerville, said the result would connect about 48 miles of continuous path network, linking 11 Boston Metro cities and towns.

—Meg Muckenhaupt

Citizens Support Silver Maple Forest

By Quinton Zondervan

On Friday, June 14, more than 40 citizens of Arlington, Belmont, and Cambridge gathered at the Alewife T Station to show their support for preserving the Silver Maple Forest at the Belmont Uplands adjacent to the Alewife Reservation. The forest is slated for destruction to make way for a 299-unit Chapter 40B housing development by O'Neill Properties Group. The 16-acre site is located on the west side of Acorn Park Drive, Belmont.

Many community and political leaders were in attendance to voice their support for preserving the forest forever, including state Senator Will Brownsberger, City Councilor Minka vanBeuzekom, and City Council candidates Sam Seidel and Kristen von Hoffman.

In the age of climate change, we cannot afford to destroy important natural areas like the Silver Maple Forest that provide essential ecosystem services. The forest is a home for wildlife, and provides our cities with clean air, clean water and essential flood storage that cannot be artificially recreated. We must learn to value these natural areas that are so important to our health, safety and happiness.

Although the proposed development is situated in Belmont, all three communities must come together to prevent the tragedy of further habitat destruction and ecological degradation.

In that spirit, this event was organized by several community groups working together, including Green Cambridge, Friends of Alewife

Reservation, TROMP, Sustainable Arlington, the Belmont Coalition to Preserve the Silver Maple Forest, and others. The groups plan to organize similar actions in Arlington, Belmont, and Cambridge to continue raising awareness and bringing attention to the issue.

The organizers thank all attendees for a peaceful and successful event.

Quinton Zondervan is president of Green Cambridge.

Summer Interns Wanted

The Belmont Citizens Forum (BCF) is accepting proposals and resumes for 2013 summer internships from college and high school students. Project proposals should align with the BCF mission statement on our web site. BCF internships are unpaid. Last summer, the BCF's last summer three interns were able to complete enough work to publish articles about their research in the Belmont Citizens Forum *Newsletter*.

For 2013, we are particularly interested in students to assist with bike path research such as collecting and organizing data concerning the effects of bike paths on privacy, crime, litter, and property values. We are also seeking team leaders for our next clean up event at an open space location in Belmont.

BCF internships offer a great chance to gain experience with the legwork and research behind local community organizing. If interested, please contact bcfprogramdirector@gmail.com with your resume and any project proposal by **July 30, 2013**.

Thank you Jenny Kim!

The Belmont Citizens Forum would like to thank Jenny Yoon Jae Kim for her work on the *Newsletter* this year. Jenny edited the Environmental Calendar and wrote the front-page article "Clay Pit Pond's Setting Belies Toxic Waste" (January 2013).

Jenny will be attending Cornell University this fall. Good luck, Jenny!

Environmental Events

Remove Invasive Water Chestnuts **Saturday, July 20, and Sunday, August 4, 8 a.m.-noon.**

Volunteer with Charles River Watershed Association to help eradicate the invasive water chestnuts. These plants cover around 50 acres of the Charles River and wreak havoc on recreational activities and the environment. Equipment and training will be provided. Spend a day canoeing out on the water while helping keep our river healthy and free of the invasive water chestnut plants! Information and sign-up: www.crwa.org/events/waterchestnut_public.html. *Charles River Canoe and Kayak, 2401 Commonwealth Avenue, Newton.*

Hike at Historic Prospect Hill Park **Saturday, July 20, 1-3 pm.**

Celebrate Waltham Historic Days with a hike in Waltham's first official park, established in 1893. David Kehs, Waltham Land Trust Director and head of the volunteer effort that resulted in the Trust's new Prospect Hill Park map, will lead this approximately 2-mile trek along the Polaroid development and Berry Farm to the park's peaks (Little and Big Prospects). Information: walthamlandtrust.org. *Prospect Hill Park South Gate, end of Prospect Hill Road off Main Street, Waltham.*

Water Chestnut Community Hand-Pulling **Saturday, August 3, 9 a.m.-1 p.m.**

Help the Mystic River Watershed Association remove the invasive water chestnut from the Mystic River. All supplies are provided. Canoes are available on a first come, first serve basis. Information: mysticriver.org/water-chestnut-removal-project. *Blessing of the Bay Boathouse, 32 Shore Drive, Somerville.*

Fifth Annual Boston Enviro-Film Festival **Saturday, Aug 3**

One day, 40 films, five venues, \$5 bosenviroff. brownpapertickets.com. See first-run documentaries by independent filmmakers and shorts from the Wild and Scenic Film Festival. Information: e-action.us/index.php/film-festival. *Showings at five venues around Boston; check web site for locations.*

Boston GreenFest

Thursday-Saturday, August 15-17

The region's largest multicultural environmental festival will feature a Boston EcoPageant International and host the Mayoral EcoForum: Building Boston's Future. Information: Bostongreenfest.org. *City Hall Plaza, Boston.*

BCF Volunteer: Anne Katzeff



The Belmont Citizens Forum would like to thank Anne S. Katzeff for her work on our web site, www.belmontcitizensforum.org. Anne completely redesigned and reprogrammed the site, making it far more attractive, useful, and accessible than it had ever been before. Thank you, Anne!

Anne is the Creative Director of ASK Design, specializing in web design, print design, typography, teaching and consultation, technology, and details. She is committed to environmental sustainability and provides guidance on how to produce visual materials with minimal environmental impact. Active in our community, she can be seen facilitating Art at the Market (Belmont Farmers' Market), painting with neighbors in the Community Mural Project, and biking our local pathways.

SomerStreets Going Green on Route 16

Sunday, August 18, noon-4 p.m.

For the first time ever, Somerville will close down part of Route 16 to cars and open it to you to bike, run, skate, walk and move any way you like. The event features a family bike ride, craft fair, health and wellness fair, music, entertainment and family-friendly activities. Information: www.somerville-ma.gov/alerts/2013-somerstreets-series. Route 16 from Dilboy Field to Broadway, Somerville.

Fresh Pond Walkabout

Monday, August 19, 6-7:30 p.m.

Take a walking tour of recently restored, ongoing, and future restoration areas at Fresh Pond Reservation. Get your questions answered about the past, present, and future of landscape management at Fresh Pond. Information: friendsoffreshpond.org, (617) 349-6489, fpr@cambridgema.gov. Water Purification Facility front door, 250 Fresh Pond Parkway, Cambridge.

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:

- Archaeology & Historic Preservation
- Environmental Protection
- Planning & Zoning
- Community Path
- Walking in Belmont
- Mailings
- Newsletter

I can help pay for this newsletter:

It costs about \$4,000 to publish each issue of our newsletter. Please donate for this purpose:

\$50 \$100 \$150 \$250

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.

Thank you!

Name _____

Address _____

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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. 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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Could this Church Have Been Saved? . . 1
Demo Moratorium Gives Town Time 6
Greenway Links 6.9 Miles of Trails . . . 8

Waltham May Save Historic Farm . . . 10
Belmont's New Power Line 12
Practical Bicycling Routes 14
Citizens Support Silver Maple Forest . .17
Environmental Events 18

