



# Belmont Citizens Forum

Vol. 8, No. 6

A Newsletter for Belmont Residents

November 2007

## *New Flood Maps Could Change Alewife Plans*

*By Sue Bass*

The draft flood plain maps made available last month by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) may reduce dramatically the amount of development at Alewife in Cambridge and influence development on the Mugar land off Route 2 in Arlington. However, the revised map could make it easier for O'Neill Properties to build its project at the Belmont Uplands.

The FEMA map covering the Alewife area shows two small areas at the Uplands apparently open to development – an arrowhead-shaped area and a smaller crab-shaped area just south of it. They are not in even the 500-year floodplain. The two areas are just west of Acorn Park Drive, where O'Neill wants to build a 299-unit housing development under Chapter 40B, a state law which allows dense development in exchange for creating affordable housing. O'Neill is now before the Belmont Conservation Commission (ConCom) seeking approval under the state's Wetlands Protection Act for construction near wetlands.

The effect of the map and accompanying documents on the Uplands development is not clear, and the current lines are not necessarily final. But the ConCom could find it harder to justify severe restrictions on the site.

Jim Ward of Nutter McClennen & Fish, attorney for O'Neill, said that the new map indicates that the flood storage area his client has proposed to add would now constitute a much higher percentage than before – about twice as much flood storage capacity as their construction will destroy, according to O'Neill's calculations. At press time, Belmont

ConCom members were just beginning to examine the map in preparation for their November 5 hearing on the Uplands development.

### **Old Uplands Maps Show High Tide on Site**

Development at the Uplands could be affected by another set of maps, however – historic maps showing land below the historic high tide level before 1908, when the Craddock dam in Medford stopped the tides from flowing up Alewife Brook. Tom Bracken, attorney for the Coalition to Preserve the Belmont Uplands, a group challenging O'Neill's current proposal, has filed a request with the state Waterways Regulation Program to determine how much of the

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# Environmental Events Calendar

**Do the Duck Walk!** Sunday, November 11, 8 a.m.–10 a.m. Fall migration is in full swing, and Fresh Pond Reservation is an attractive resting place for a variety of migrating birds, especially waterfowl. During this walk we will use a telescope to get good looks at birds on the water. We also have binoculars to lend. Beginners are welcome. Meet at the driveway of Neville Place, 650 Concord Avenue Cambridge. Sponsored by Friends of Fresh Pond Reservation. To register, e-mail Elizabeth Wylde at [friendsoffreshpond@yahoo.com](mailto:friendsoffreshpond@yahoo.com) or call (617) 349-4793.

**Sketching and Painting at Alewife.** Saturday, November 17, 10 a.m. Janet Hobbs, Cambridge artist and art teacher, will provide instruction in creating art from nature, drawing inspiration from plants and nearby open fields. Meet at the Alewife Reservation parking lot. Sponsored by Friends of Alewife reservation; for more information, call FAR at (617) 415-1884.

**What Can We Do About Traffic?** Thursday, Nov 15, 7:15 p.m. See page 5 for details.

**Sixth Massachusetts Climate Action Network Global Warming Action Conference.** Sunday, November 18, 9:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Twenty workshops will cover biofuels basics, low-carbon living, climate issues around the country, and more. Meet at the MIT Stata Center, 32 Vassar St, Cambridge. See <http://www.massclimateaction.org/McanConferenceFlier100507.pdf> for more information, or contact Fred Schlicher, MCAN Program Manager, 781-395-7207, [fredschlicher@comcast.net](mailto:fredschlicher@comcast.net).

**Charles River Watershed Association Annual Meeting.** Monday, November 19, 5:30 p.m. Join guest speaker Tim Palmer, a river conservationist, author and photographer at the Newton Marriott Hotel. For more information contact Rebecca Scibek, Telephone (781) 788-0007 [rschibek@crwa.org](mailto:rschibek@crwa.org).

**Tour of the Water Purification Facility.** Monday, November 19, 6 p.m.–7:30 p.m. Learn how water that falls as rain in the western suburbs is brought to Fresh Pond and purified into drinking water. Tim MacDonald, Manager of Water Operations for the Cambridge Water Department, will describe the process, answer your questions, and give a tour of the building. Meet at the front door, Water Purification Facility 250 Fresh Pond Parkway, Cambridge. Please register to receive important information on parking; e-mail Elizabeth Wylde at [friendsoffreshpond@yahoo.com](mailto:friendsoffreshpond@yahoo.com) or call (617) 349-4793 and leave your name and phone number.

**Composting with Worms.** Wednesday, November 21 6 p.m.–8 p.m. Are you an apartment dweller wishing you had backyard space to compost? Don't worry, you can compost indoors and start any time of the year! In this workshop, you will learn from Cambridge's Recycling Director, Randi Mail, how to use worms to turn your garbage into "black gold." We will have a free raffle to give away a plastic container for making your own indoor bin. Sponsored by Friends of Fresh Pond Reservation. Meet at Maynard Ecology Center,

## Belmont Citizens Forum Officers and Directors

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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 on key subjects.

Our newsletter is published six times a year (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 [editor@belmontcitizensforum.org](mailto:editor@belmontcitizensforum.org)

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# Fernald Center Land Could Be Sold in Pieces

By Steven LaFerriere

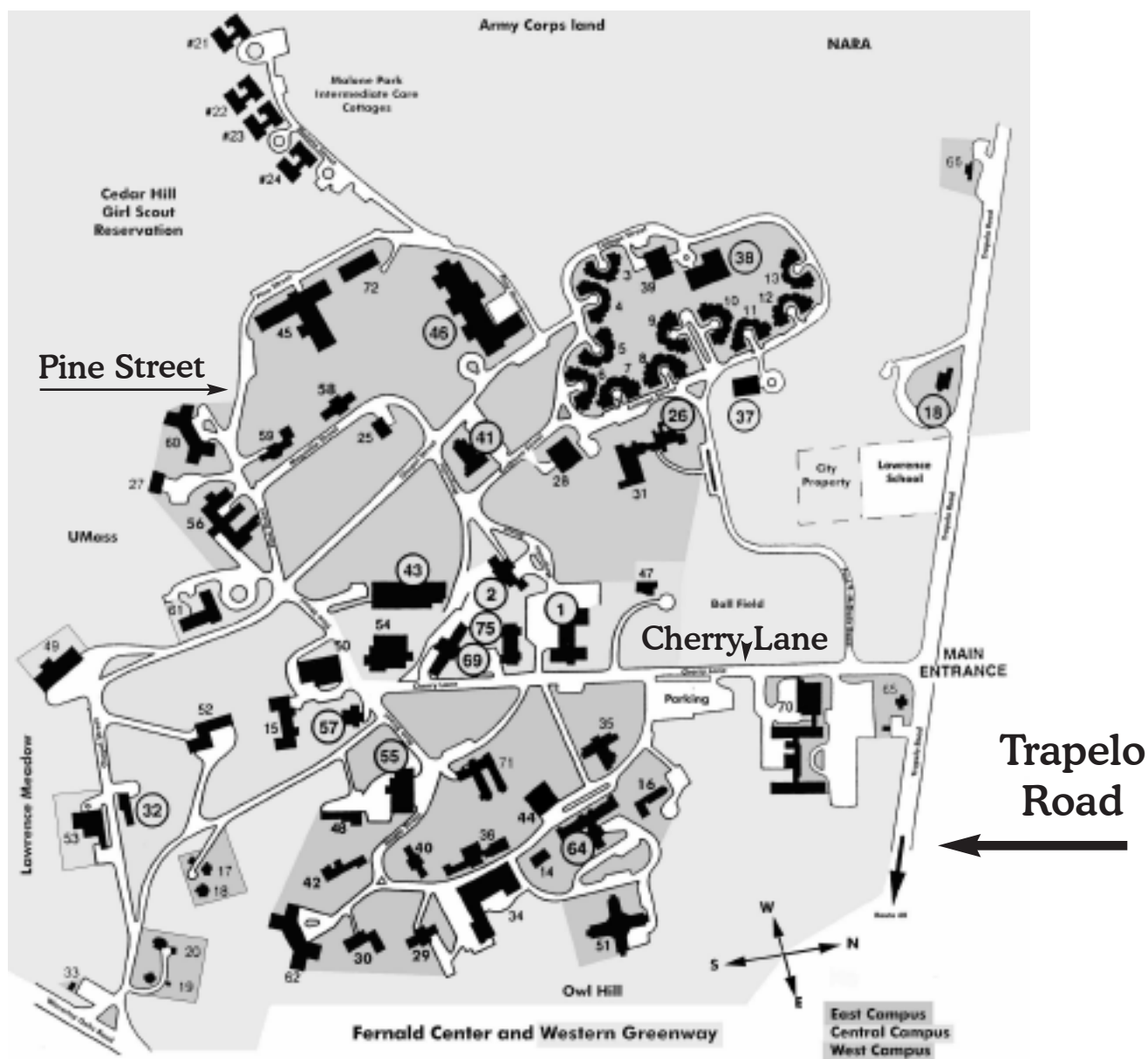
The Fernald Center is a 196-acre property on Trapelo Road in Waltham that is currently used by the Department of Mental Retardation (DMR). The campus has dozens of buildings, many of them built in the 19th century. Some of the structures have not been used in decades, and many areas of the site are contaminated by asbestos and other toxins.

Forty years ago, over 2,000 severely mentally disabled residents called the Center home. Today, there are fewer than 200 residents still left on the campus. The Commonwealth has been trying to close the Fernald facility since Mitt Romney became governor

in 2003. However, lawsuits brought by the families and guardians of the current residents thwarted the plan. Last spring, US District Court Judge Joseph Tauro ruled that Fernald must remain an option for the current residents.

Tauro suggested that the state could consolidate the residents and DMR services in an area of the campus north of Pine Street and west of Cherry Lane. Although this suggestion is not binding, it is likely that if the DMR were forced to keep the facility open, the residents would be moved to this corner of the campus. That regrouping would allow the

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*Map of the Fernald School Campus courtesy of Steve Laferriere.*



## **Fernald** *continued from page 3*

Commonwealth to sell the remaining land.

The property is zoned by the city of Waltham as Conservation/Recreation, precluding further development of the land. The state is likely to attempt to override the local zoning, though, as it probably hopes to get close to fair market value for the property. Although no one is sure of the value of the land at Fernald, land in the area commonly sells for close to \$1 million per acre.

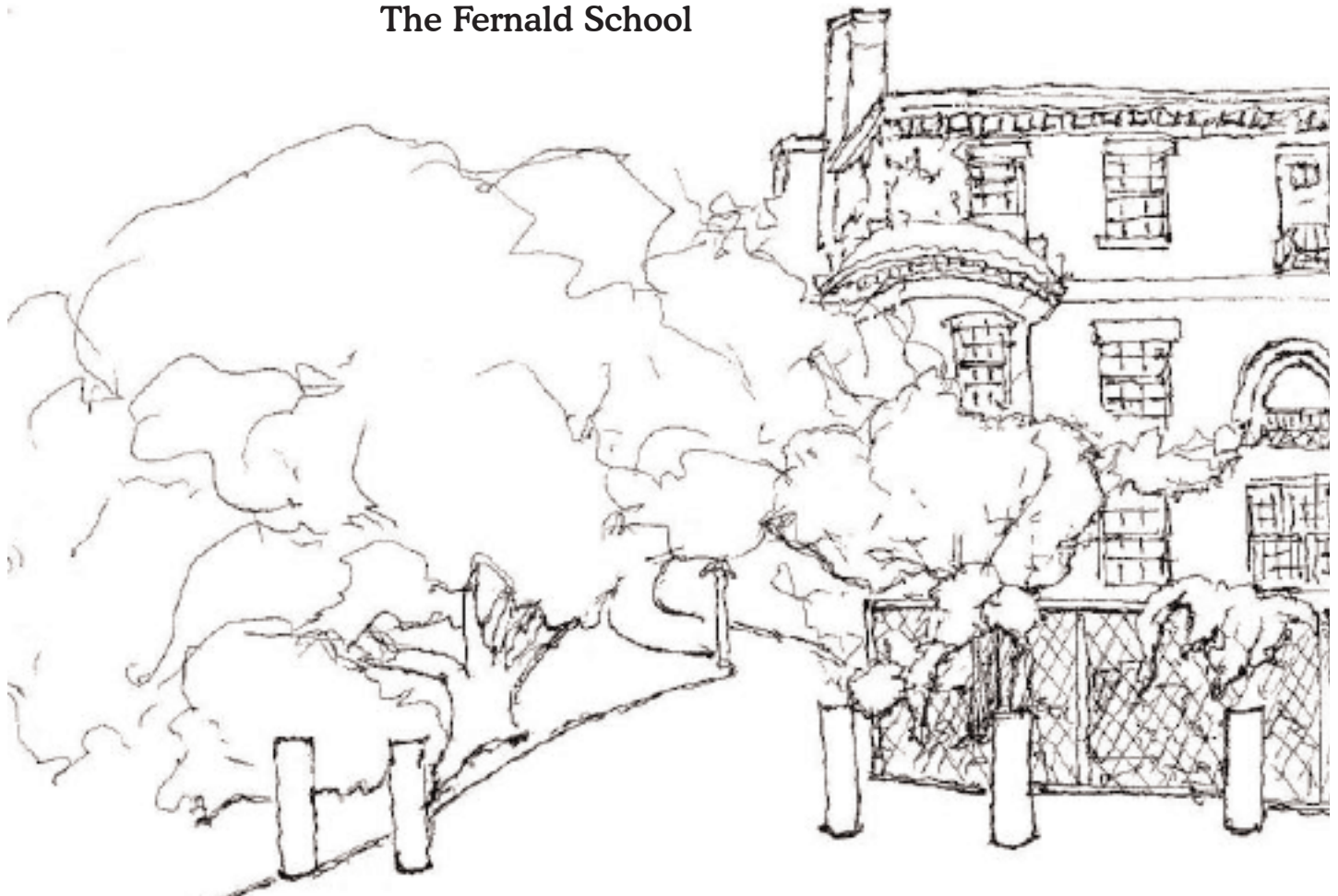
The state has decided to appeal the judge's ruling, in order to retain the right to close or modify the use of the Fernald Center. The state could still consolidate services at Fernald and sell off the surplus land while the appeal is in process, but that seems unlikely. Two things seem inevitable: a large portion of the Fernald Center will be deemed surplus by the state and then sold according to whatever legislation is in effect at the time, and this sale will take place in the not-too-distant future. [See "Towns Seek to Control Local Surplus Land," *Belmont Citizens Forum Newsletter*, September 2007, p. 1.]

The Fernald Working Group has studied many options for the land that would satisfy local needs and limit additional traffic; the group takes no position on the current residents and services on the site. Important local needs include preserving and adding to open space, restoring the environment (for instance, by removing culverts from streams), creating affordable housing, and using innovative environmental building technologies to create a sustainable campus.

Open-space preservation and many other community goals do not yield high property prices, so concerned community members need vigorous, proactive support from local citizens in order to obtain control over the disposition of the Fernald Center—before we suffer the consequences of our neglect. For more information about development at the Fernald Center, contact Steve Laferriere at 781-891-6689 x204 or [steve@watchcdc.org](mailto:steve@watchcdc.org).

—Steve Laferriere is a member of the Fernald Working Group.

## **The Fernald School**





## What Can We Do About Traffic?



Impending development will make it worse. Hear about ways of mitigating it: local shuttle buses, expanded T service, traffic calming, bike trails.



Thursday, Nov 15, 7:15 pm  
First Church Belmont Parish Hall, 404 Concord Ave



Moderator:

**Anne Paulsen, former Belmont State Representative**

Panelists:

**Belmont Office of Community Development:** Glenn Clancy, Director  
**Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates:** Jason Schrieber, AICP, Principal  
**MBTA:** Joe Cosgrove, Director of Planning; Sandra Clarey, Service Planner  
**MassCentral Rail Trail Coalition:** Craig Della Penna, Coordinator  
**128 Business Council:** Caroline Connor, Executive Director  
**Charles River Transportation Management Association:**  
Jim Gascoigne, Executive Director



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# School Food Reflects Local Choices

By Carlha Vickers

In high school, I learned about nutrition both in theory and in practice. The former was a subject known as "domestic science," which girls took in place of real science classes. The latter was on display every day in the school cafeteria. The school meals were pretty decent: I never saw French fries, pizza, or sodas. Instead, there were lots of mashed potatoes, fish pies, sausages, hamburgers, bread, salad, fruit, and milk. In other words, it was the same kind of food that you would eat at home.

Times have certainly changed. Most schools now serve processed, precooked foods. And from my experience over the past decade, I'd say that students have

no idea where their food comes from. They believe that it begins and ends at the supermarket. How did we become so disconnected from our food? And is it a school's role to bridge that gap?

I can think of no better way for children to connect to the land and their food than through a curriculum that places food at center stage. Children who learn environmental and nutritional lessons through gardening, cooking, and eating are also learning valuable life skills.

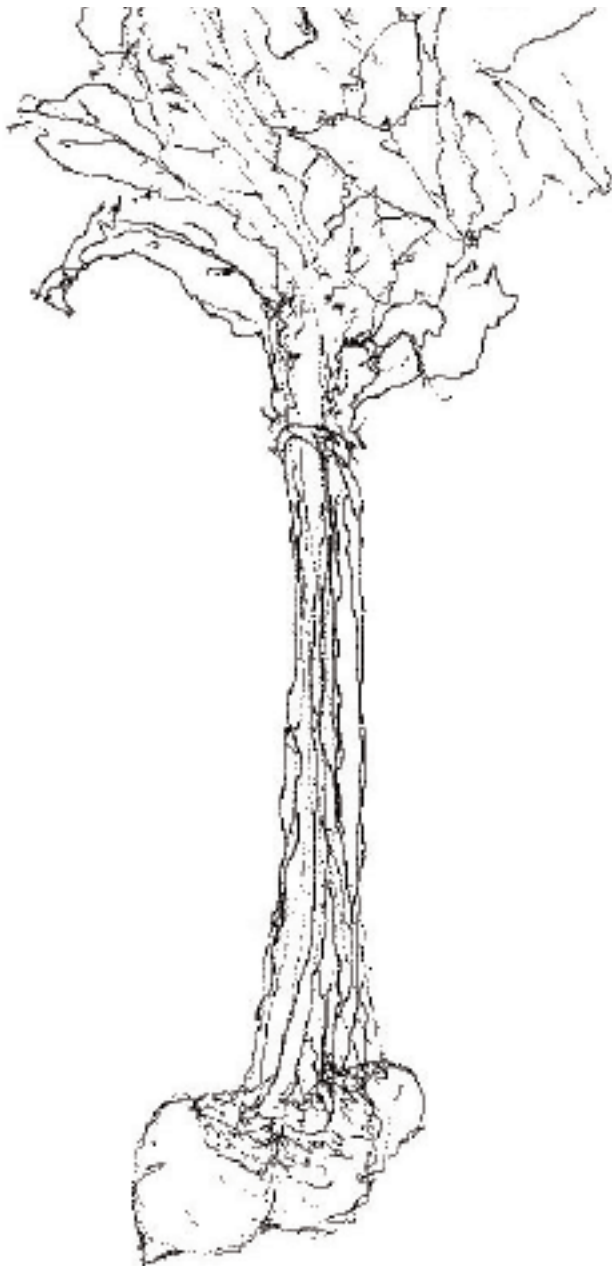
I discovered this myself earlier this year, when I became a student again, learning how to grow vegetables at Codman Farm in Lincoln. Sweating in the hot sun, weeding, checking to see if any animals had eaten my vegetables, and wondering when my crops would be ready to pick taught me patience and self-discipline. As I watched the animals on the farm, I realized, for the first time in my life, that eggs from chickens are a gift, not a right, and I understood that cows were not as dumb as I had thought.

## Cafeterias Work under Constraints

In Belmont, the public schools do not involve students in the growing or cooking of their food. But the majority of the food served in the schools is still cooked onsite from scratch, unlike many schools where companies like Tyson Foods supply meals.

Tyson is one of the major suppliers of school lunches to the National School Lunch Program, providing precooked meals, cold cuts, all the toppings on pizzas, and most of the items for Mexican dishes. Tyson's "Food Service" unit serves a variety of federal programs in addition to schools: elder programs, prisons, and food shelters, to name just a few outlets. Tyson boasts that food-service operators are saving time and money by moving America's favorite appetizer or light entrée from the freezer to the plate in minutes. It's hardly a surprise then that for more than twenty years, school lunchrooms around the country have been turning to such processed and prepared foods in an effort to make shrinking school-lunch budgets go further.

The Belmont public-school cafeterias, like many others across the country, are self-funded. Nonetheless, they receive food commodities through the National School Lunch Program, a federal





## Food Production Terms

**Conventional** food is grown using pesticides, herbicides or soil fumigants.

**Organic** food is grown without synthetic pesticides, herbicides, or soil fumigants, and is free of genetic engineering organisms.

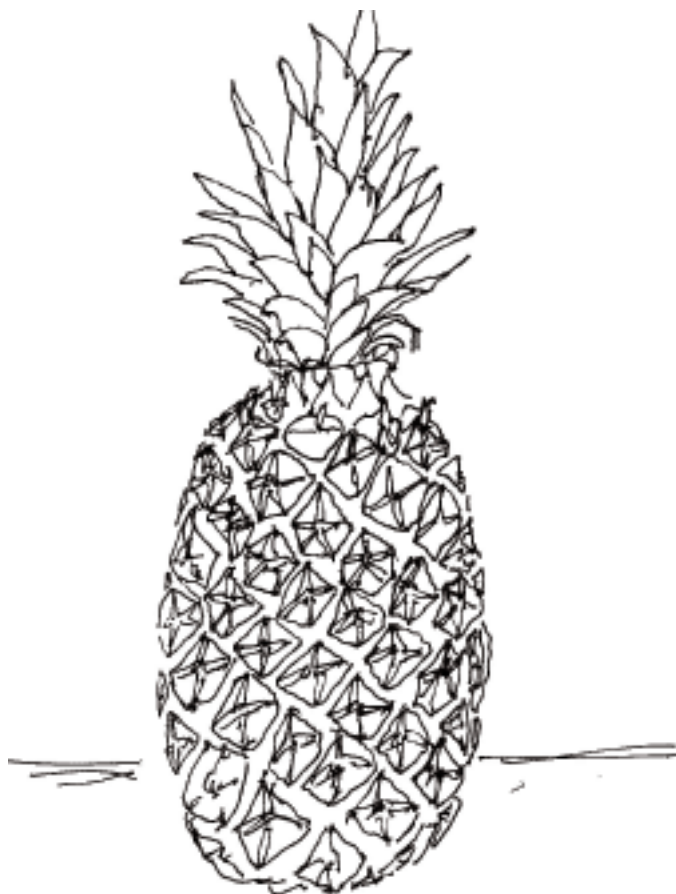
**Integrated Pest Management (IPM)** is a system in which farmers monitor pests and spray only when conditions dictate. IPM uses four different techniques to prevent pest damage: modifying habitats, protecting natural predators of pests, monitoring pest levels, and selectively using pesticides.

**Genetically Modified (GM)** foods are produced from genetically modified organisms (GMO) that have had their genome altered through genetic engineering. GM foods have been available since the 1990s. The most common GM foods are derived from plants: soy bean, corn, canola and cotton seed oil, and wheat.

program that distributes surplus food to all public schools. The program was started in 1946 as a way to support farmers by providing more markets for their surplus products of milk, cheese, beef, lamb, and chicken. While the kind of food schools receive each month varies, they can always count on ground beef, cheese, and canned fruit in light syrup. Food directors then incorporate these free foods into the following month's menu. Belmont's director of school food services is Paul Browne, who joined the school two years ago after spending twenty years as food director at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center.

At lunchtime, Belmont students buy a meal ticket that allows them to select one item from each of five food groups: dairy, protein, fruit, starch, and vegetable. Browne says that the salad bar is hugely popular at the high school and that the teens are very savvy when it comes to food; they know quality. However, it is very hard to control what kids actually eat in the high school. Browne said that he has seen kids use their cell phones to order in Chinese food.

Because of the nationwide concern with obesity, Belmont schools no longer serve fried foods and use only 1 percent milk. They will also soon be printing the nutritional value of food items on menus.



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## **School Food** *continued from page 7*

However, if kids have not learned about nutrition, those values will have little meaning.

Browne knows of no plans for the schools to grow some of their own vegetables, nor are there any programs in which kids learn to cook. Browne does not think it is the role of the schools to teach kids about food to the extent that I would wish. He said



that since the lunch period is only 20 minutes, there would not be enough time for the school to work on this issue. Personally, I think this could all be incorporated into the science curriculum. A science class could usefully cover what foods help fight off problems such as allergies.

### **Schools Serve Some Local Produce**

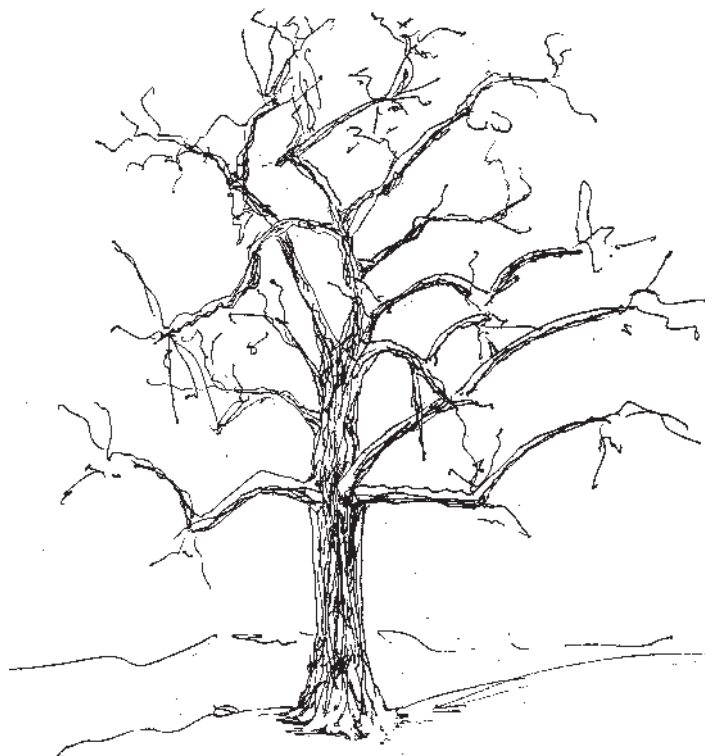
Most of the food that the Belmont schools purchase comes from California. Browne buys California produce for the same reason that most people buy it: cost, availability, and variety. Still, he has managed to increase the amount of locally raised food that he purchases from 1 to 7 percent over the last two years. His supplier for local produce is Costa Fruit and Produce, a private company in Charlestown that works with over a dozen area farms that practice sustainable agricultural methods. This fall Costa is delivering locally grown fruits and vegetables to the Belmont Public Schools on a weekly basis. Browne doubts that students are familiar with terms like "organic," "conventional," "genetically modified" (GM), or "integrated pest management" (IPM), but he

does indicate on the school menus which items were grown locally.

Browne himself is dedicated to organic food and was one of the judges for the Belmont Farmers' Market apple-dessert contest, held in October. He would love to increase the quantity of locally grown food, but given the current cost of lunches—\$2.75 at the high school—this is not viable. It is important to realize that the cost of lunches must cover kitchen repairs, workers' salaries, health care, and food. And those last two budget items are growing faster than the average inflation rate because of significant increases in fuel and health-care costs.

To get an "eat local" program off the ground, the Belmont schools would need some financial support, probably in the form of a grant. Perhaps more importantly, they would also have to see if Belmont families are willing to pay significantly increased lunch costs to support buying local food.

I believe that for this to happen there would have to be a fundamental change in the way Americans view food. Today, the majority of Americans are quite happy to put the cheapest food they can buy into their bodies, yet these same people would never consider buying the cheapest car available. But high quality food is just as important to our health and safety as seatbelts and airbags. Moreover, when you pay a



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premium for local, sustainably grown food, chances are you are also paying for workers who are given fair wages, land that is not polluted by pesticides and runoff, and animals that are treated humanely. When it comes down to it, nothing is truly cheap. The question is, which costs are you willing to pay?

—*Carlha Vickers is a writer for Edible Boston, Farmers' Markets Today published in Cedar Falls, Iowa and the Belmont Farmers' Market newsletter Roots and Sprouts. She also hosts a documentary and film series on food at the Belmont Public Library on the second Tuesday of each month.*

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### Events continued from page 2

basement of Neville Place, 650 Concord Avenue. Please register to receive important information on parking; e-mail Elizabeth Wylde at [friendsoffreshpond@yahoo.com](mailto:friendsoffreshpond@yahoo.com) or call (617) 349-4793 and leave your name and phone number.

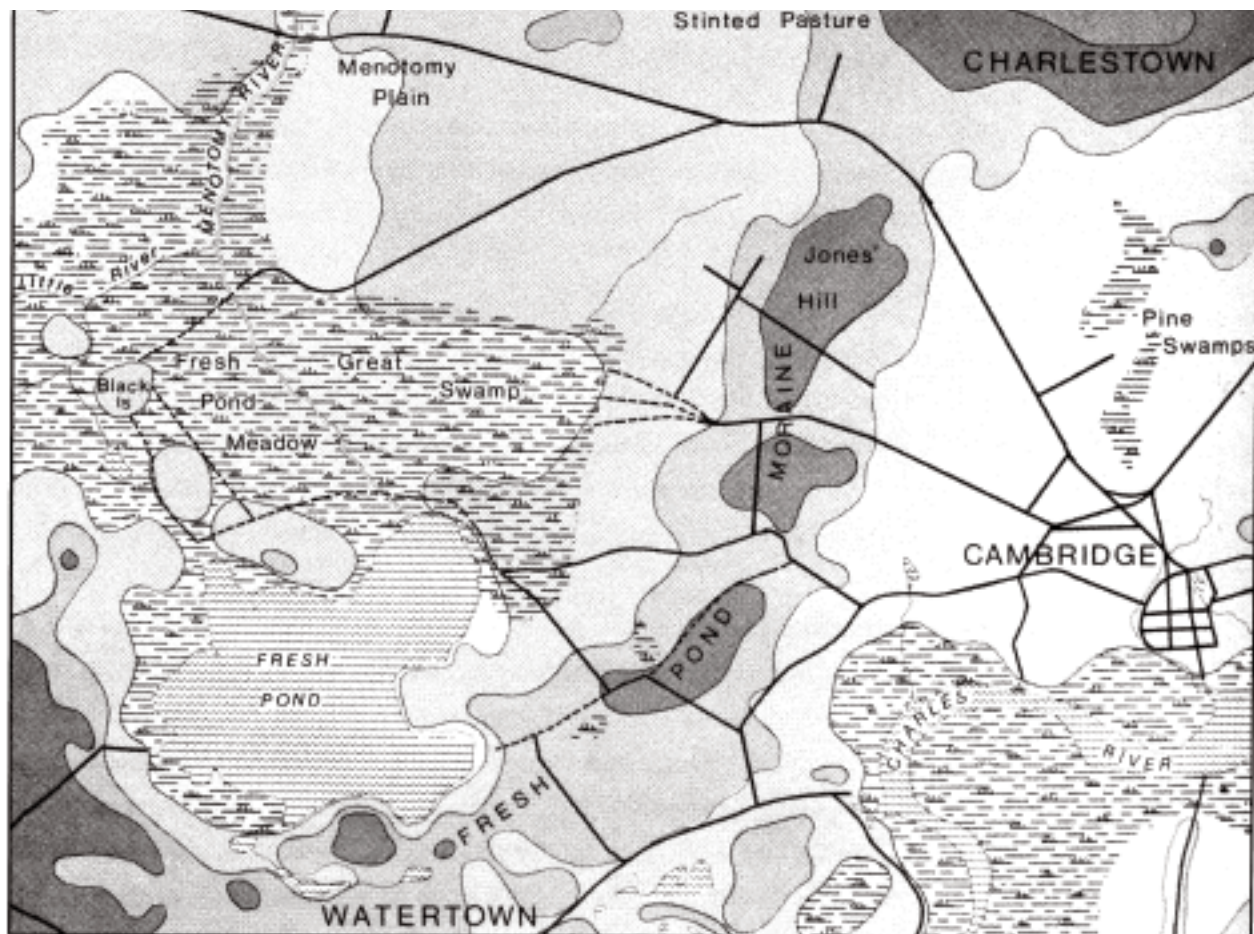
**Walk/Ride Days.** Friday, November 26 and Friday, December 28. Join this program to encourage Boston-area residents to give up their cars for an alternative mode of transportation on the last Friday of the month. Walk, bike, or ride public transportation while wearing something green, and visit participating Cambridge businesses for special discounts, raffles, and free passes. Sponsored by Green Streets Initiative, a Cambridge-based grassroots organization. For more information, see [www.gogreenstreets.org](http://www.gogreenstreets.org).

**Alternative Transportation.** Wednesday, December 5, 7 p.m. Steve Miller from the Livable Streets Alliance will speak about ways that towns can create community buy-in for alternative transportation methods (biking and walking). Meet at the Belmont Public Library Assembly Room. This free meeting is sponsored by Sustainable Belmont. Contact [sustainablebelmont@gmail.com](mailto:sustainablebelmont@gmail.com) for more information.

**Winter Solstice Celebration.** Saturday, December 15, 1 p.m.–3 p.m. Come share this special program at Habitat as we approach the shortest day of the year. Soon, the sun will reach its southernmost point in the northern hemisphere. Traditional solstice activities and stories, warm cider, and a few surprises will be

part of the day. Meet at Habitat, 10 Juniper Road, Belmont; return transportation provided. Program fee \$ 8 for Mass Audubon member adults and children, \$10 for non-members. Sponsored by Habitat. To register for this program contact Habitat at (617) 489-5050 or [habitat@massaudubon.org](mailto:habitat@massaudubon.org).





*The ponds and marshes of Alewife ca. 1631. Detail of map by Eliza McClennan, Cambridge Historical Commission. Courtesy of Cambridge Historical Commission.*

### **Alewife continued from page 1**

Uplands property is former tidelands. Bracken won a Supreme Judicial Court decision last year barring a development in East Cambridge because it involved building on filled tidelands. The Uplands situation is apparently not affected by current legislation on landlocked tidelands.

Historic maps show the original route of Little River before it was relocated in 1908 as extending into the O'Neill property and running close to a proposed parking lot. Along with the maps, the coalition submitted an analysis by Steve Kaiser, a Cambridge engineer, arguing that a 20- to 30-foot width of the old channel is not developable because it is protected under state tidelands law. Kaiser believes that O'Neill's plans will require grading the contours of some of the protected land. "In addition, any construction of utilities, including gas, water and possibly sewer, will also cross this corridor," Kaiser's analysis concludes.

### **New Map May Scrap Faces Plans**

The new FEMA map seems to be worse news for a major redevelopment project proposed for Route 2 in Cambridge. On September 19, Jack Englert of Criterion Development Partners met with local conservationists to propose redevelopment of the former Faces nightclub into 250 housing units. However, the new map of Alewife shows that property in a floodway area – defined on the FEMA maps as "the channel of a stream plus any adjacent floodplain areas that must be kept free of encroachment so that the 1% annual chance flood [a 100-year flood] can be carried without substantial increases in flood heights." In other words, the floodway appears to be a no-build zone.

Asked for reaction, Rich McKinnon of the McKinnon Company, who is working with Englert to purchase the property from the Martignetti brothers, said he believes they will still be able to build as

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## Floodplains and floodways

In the effort to keep residents high and dry, engineers and environmental regulators have coined words and phrases to describe the risk of flooding.

A **100-year storm** is the amount of rain that has a 1 percent chance of occurring in any particular year. While we might have two 100-year storms in the same year or decade, just as the same number can come up on dice 10 times in a row, the probability of any such storm occurring each year is just 1 percent, so on the average they occur only once in 100 years.

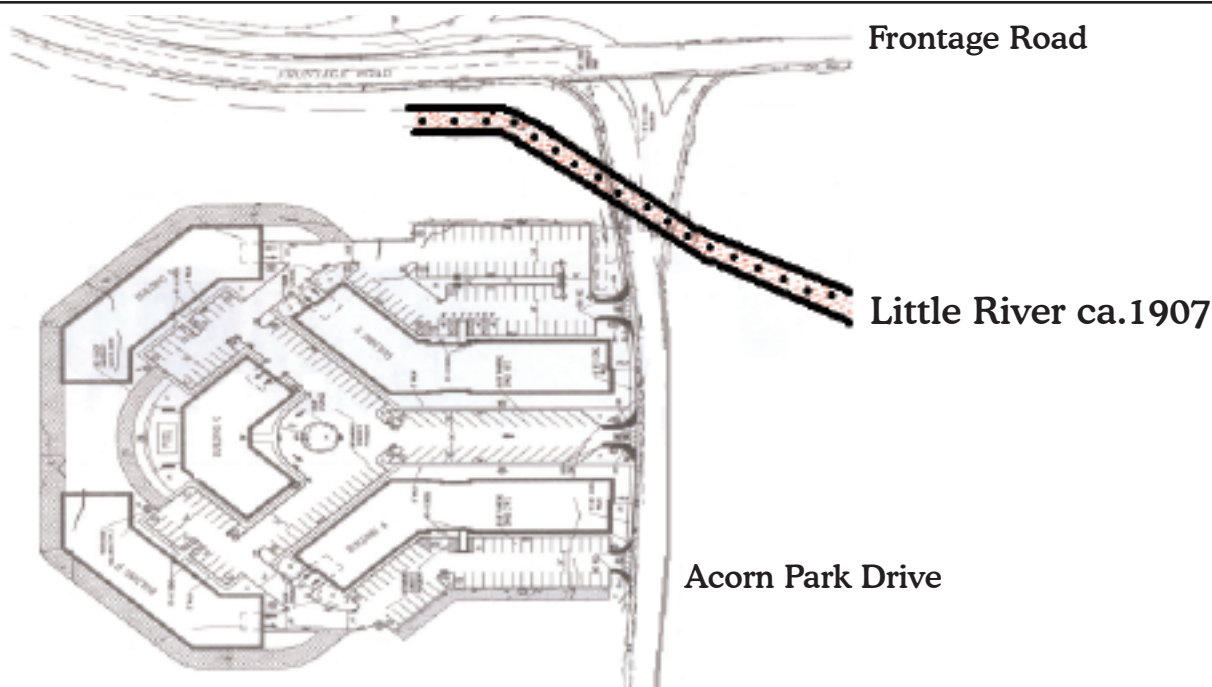
Usually a **100-year flood** is what results from a 100-year storm (and a 25-year flood from a 25-year storm, etc.) But sometimes, especially if the ground is frozen, the flooding can be worse than would be expected from a particular amount of rainfall.

The **100-year floodplain** is the land area that is predicted to flood in a 100-year storm. Generally if a developer builds on a portion of the 100-year floodplain, he must provide compensatory flood storage elsewhere on the property.

A **500-year storm** is a storm so severe that it has only a 0.2 percent chance of occurring in any particular year. Thus, on the average such a storm will occur only once in 500 years. The 500-year floodplain is the land area that is predicted to flood in a 500-year storm.

A **floodway** is defined as the area within a 100-year floodplain in which flood waters are likely to drain.

—Sue Bass



*Schematic map of the proposed Uplands apartment complex and the original channel of the Little River, prior to its 1908 relocation. Courtesy of Steve Kaiser.*

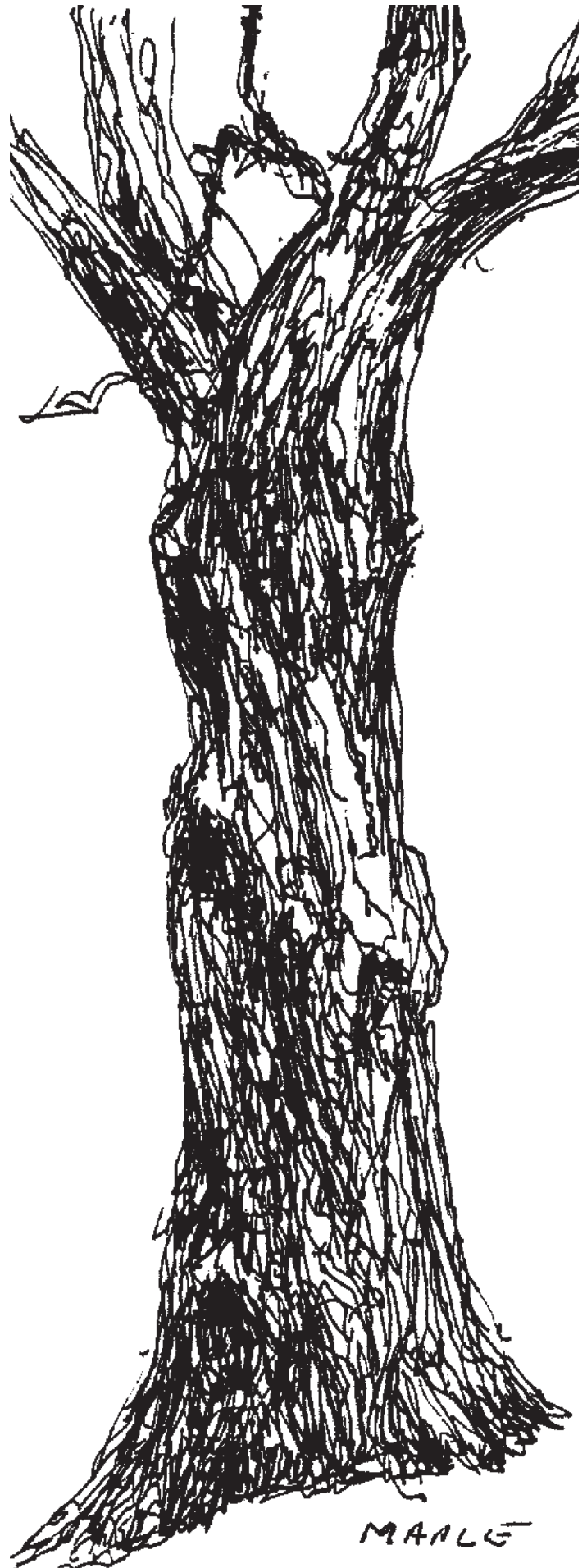
planned. In comparison with the largely paved site there now, McKinnon said, the proposed development would be much more environmentally friendly. Englert does not plan to build to the maximum height or maximum number of units and will stay out of the wetland buffer zone, McKinnon said. They know they will have to satisfy Cambridge about flooding. “The flood storage issues have to drive the design, rather than the other way around,” McKinnon said.

The floodway area in Cambridge and Arlington appears to cover all of the commercial land on the south side of Route 2 – not only the Faces site but also the adjoining motel, the bowling alley, and all of the Bulfinch land at Cambridge Discovery Park on Acorn Park Drive. South of Alewife Brook, almost all of the area around Cambridge Park Drive is in the 100-year floodplain, though not in the floodway. The 100-year floodplain also covers a big piece of the Quadrangle, an area that Cambridge recently rezoned for new development. The Quadrangle is bounded by the Fresh Pond shopping center, Concord Avenue, Blanchard Road and Brighton Streets, and the MBTA commuter rail tracks. Most of the rest of the area is in the 500-year floodplain.

Jennifer Wright, director of the Cambridge ConCom, said that Cambridge is hiring a consultant to help figure out what this all means. The city is requesting “shape” files from FEMA so the new map information can be laid over the 1982 FEMA map to see what the changes are. “It’s virtually impossible to make comparisons with the naked eye,” she said. Wright also noted that the floodway is not regulated under the state Wetlands Protection Act and is therefore not subject to conservation commission jurisdiction. In Cambridge it would be a matter for building inspectors, she said.

In Arlington, Kevin O’Brien, director of Planning, said most of the floodway area is on the town’s Thorndike and Magnolia fields, already open land. The floodway crosses onto the Mugar site, but he observed that more than half of that site is not in the floodway. Most of it does appear to be in the 100-year floodplain, however. Draft flood plain maps covering Belmont are available in the Community Development section of the town’s web page. The map covering most of Alewife is #419.

—Sue Bass is a Director of the Belmont Citizens Forum .





# ***Belmont Case May Change State Sewer Reviews***

*By Sue Bass*

Nearly six months after a state administrative magistrate recommended allowing nearly 83,000 gallons a day of new sewage to flow through Belmont, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has not yet acted on that advice.

Magistrate Bonnie Cashin issued her opinion on May 22, but the final decision must come from the DEP commissioner. The decision may have been delayed by the transition to a new commissioner on September 4.

Cashin acknowledged sewage problems but was not convinced “that these problems are the result of inadequate [sewer] system capacity.” She seems to have misunderstood the testimony of Belmont’s town engineer, Glenn Clancy. Cashin said he cited no evidence of sewer overflows; yet Clancy listed sewer manholes in Winn Brook that overflowed during the 2006 Mother’s Day storm, and cited 11 Winn Brook houses where sewage backed up into basements.

## **State Reviews Under Scrutiny**

The case began in October 2005, when McLean Hospital filed for a sewer-connection permit to add up to 82,920 gallons per day of sewage to new pipes leading down from the hospital campus to Pleasant Street for Freedom Commons, a planned continuing care retirement community, and a 150,000-square-foot research and development building planned by Belmont ValueRealty Corp.

The pipes have been installed under Olmsted Drive, which meets Pleasant Street near Shaw’s Market. The sewage will flow through Belmont’s Winn Brook neighborhood in the town’s old pipes – some of them very old and leaky. When the DEP approved the permit early in 2006, the Belmont Citizens Forum and a dozen Belmont citizens filed an administrative appeal.

Belmont’s sewer case is more than a local concern. The issue is whether the state can approve adding thousands of gallons of sewage to a system just because the town has signed off on the application without investigating the system’s capacity to handle additional flows.

State policy requires increased mitigation “if

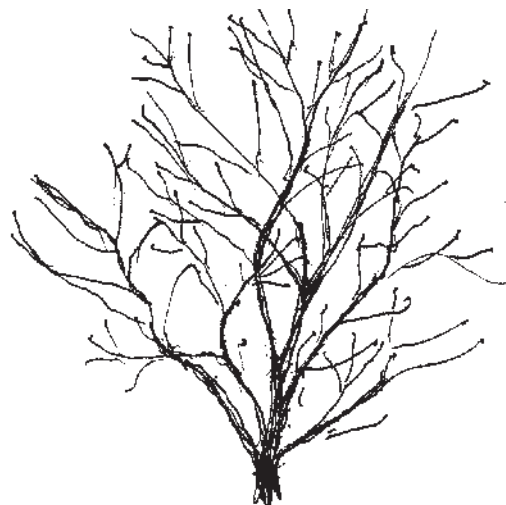
specific flow constrictions/overflows already exist in the service area to which the new flow is added,” as Ian Bowles, Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs, noted in a letter in September on a similar issue in Lexington. This policy has no teeth if the state fails to determine existing flow constrictions and overflows – both major problems in Belmont. The overriding issue is whether the state is enforcing and implementing its own policies and regulations.

## **Belmont Plans Extensive Sewer Repairs**

Meanwhile, Belmont has completed a \$3 million project to re-line sewers in Winn Brook and Harvard Lawn and is applying for \$10.5 million from a state revolving loan fund for additional sewer work in town. That work includes responding to a July order from the DEP to reduce high levels of contamination dumped into Clay Pit Pond from Wellington Brook.

According to Mary Beth Dechant, director of the Mystic Monitoring Network of the Mystic River Watershed Association, the DEP’s May sampling found over 24,000 E coli colonies per 100 milliliters of water at the inflow to Clay Pit Pond and nearly 20,000 in Wellington Brook under Common Street, where it emerges from culverts carrying streams from McLean and Pequossette Playground. Clancy said the work in the Wellington Brook watershed – which covers a substantial section of Belmont south of the railroad tracks – would bring water quality in the streams up to the safe boating standard of 1000 or fewer colonies per 100 milliliters of water.

*—Sue Bass is a Director of the Belmont Citizens Forum .*



# Neighborhood Updates

*By Bill Ellet*

## Bakery or Bust on Concord Avenue?

Like the windows of the derelict Sandler skate shop, the redevelopment of the 58 and 70 Concord Avenue site remains murky.

The town has been facilitating discussions between Murray Sandler, the property owner; Eli Jammal, holder of development rights to the property; and a potential tenant, Kay Wiggin, a Belmont resident and owner of Quebrada Baking Co. with locations in Arlington and Wellesley.

According to sources involved in local real estate, Jammal has been working on site plans for the proposed bakery. Jay Szkut, the town planner, said, "To my knowledge the bakery is still moving along."

Last spring, a group of abutters and neighborhood residents wrote a letter to Glenn Clancy, director of Community Development, asking whether the longtime use of the property as a parking lot was legal. He replied that the use was not permitted by the zoning by-laws and informed the owners. A lawyer for Sandler replied that the use was legal. Selectman Dan Leclerc recently asked the abutters and nearby residents to refrain from forcing the issue as long as a development option was on the table, and the group agreed, though one homeowner who lives on Concord Avenue close to the property thought that enforcement might create pressure to move ahead with a development plan.

## Our Lady of Mercy Overlay District Approved

On October 22, Town Meeting unanimously approved an overlay district for the Our Lady of Mercy property at Belmont Street and Oakley Road. The overlay provides a framework for developing the property. It includes density guidelines, a mix of market rate and affordable housing, design standards, and administrative rules for the development process.

Under the current zoning, only single family homes can be built on the land, and the economics aren't attractive for developers. The overlay district allows greater density to improve the economics but ensures that new housing is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.

The vote was the culmination of a long collaboration between the town and the Oakley Neighborhood Association. Neighborhood residents banded together to exert as much influence as possible on the development of the church property once it was clear it was going to be sold. In recognition of their efforts, Jeanne Mooney, a Precinct 6 town meeting member, offered an amendment to the motion to change the name of the district to The Oakley Neighborhood Smart Growth Overlay District. The amendment was approved.

*— Bill Ellet is a member of the Belmont Citizens Forum Newsletter committee.-*



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## Traffic Calming *continued from page 16*

postings, and traffic lights. Vehicles, pedestrians, bicycles, and even playing children all have to share the streets.

The changes are meant to improve both safety and vehicle throughput. Areas with second-generation traffic calming look so different from ordinary roads that drivers know when they enter these areas that the usual rules do not apply, and they must be alert. Not every street should get this treatment, but proponents of second-generation traffic calming claim that it does work. The underpass in Belmont Center has some of the characteristics of second-generation traffic calming. The lack of clear direction through that intersection forces drivers to be cautious and negotiate, to take turns and think.

If your neighborhood does not have an annual block party, here is what you can do. First organize a neighborhood group of fifty to a hundred households. Choose a date, choose a location, organize the grill, and then visit the Selectmen's Office in Town Hall. Fill out a form and pay \$20. You must specify on the form what streets will be blocked and for how long. Your plans must be approved by the Selectmen, the police and the fire department.

The highway department will deliver the required street barricades to your neighborhood, and pick them up afterward. The barricades may or may not have a sign that says "Street Closed," but the barricades will not completely block the street. In our experience on Village Hill Road, a few cars drove around the barricades, cautiously, and passed through the playing children. The children were not the least bothered. They were having fun, they felt safe, and the children were happy to share their road. The children were safe because the drivers were fully aware that they did not own the street. It worked great.

— Sumner Brown is a Director of the Belmont Citizens Forum.



Belmont Citizens Forum  
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**What Can We Do About  
TRAFFIC?**  
Thursday, Nov 15, 7:15 p.m.  
First Church Belmont  
See Page 5 For Details

### People Are Asking

## Could My Block Use Second-Generation Traffic Calming?

*By Sumner Brown*

If you live in Belmont, you can, and should, do a neighborhood traffic experiment. With the town's blessing, you can partially block off a stretch of residential street for an afternoon and encourage children to play in the blocked area. Some cars will come through cautiously while the children are having their fun, and everyone will happily share the shut-off street. This event is called a block party.

My neighborhood group, the Belmont Village Hill

Association, has had a block party every year for many years. Watching children actively enjoying a blocked street is good for the soul. Talking with neighbors is also good; most Belmont residents are so busy that neighbors have difficulty getting to know each other without deliberate organization. Every neighborhood should have a block party and see what second-generation traffic calming is like.

Some European planners solve traffic problems by turning the conventional wisdom of traffic engineering on its head. [See "How Bad is the Belmont Center Underpass?" *Belmont Citizens Forum Newsletter*, September 2007, p. 16.] They remove the usual structures that separate pedestrians and vehicles, such as sidewalks and lane markings, and devices that control drivers, such as stop signs, speed limit

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